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Myth-Making and Mineral Water: Identity, Industry, and Indigeneity in Monterrey, Mexico

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Since 1895, Compañía Topo Chico has bottled mineral water from the Topo Chico hot springs at the base of Cerro Topo in northern Monterrey, Mexico. Utilizing iconography and a fabricated myth of an Aztec princess, the company has capitalized on representations of indigenous women to market their product. To read this representation, I theorize the creation of cultural identity within Monterrey at the intersection of discursive and economic production, seeking to understand the evolution of ideas of indigeneity in the *norteño* understanding. I argue that the longevity and growth of this company reflects Monterrey's

corporate move to modernity and discursive sense of exceptionalism. Yet I decenter the role of regional identity with the advent of new national discourses following the Mexican Revolution and so indicate the power of the nation-state to control images and symbols in the national imaginary. However, the growing power of the post-revolutionary Mexican state manifested itself materially as well, as the government facilitated the privatization of the thermal waters and the consequent expansion of capitalist logics in Topo Chico. Lastly, I look at the consumption of Topo Chico in Mexico and the United States, exposing how representations of indigenous women on consumable products reify colonial ideas of indigenous women as consumable themselves.

1. The Exotic Indian Princess and the Production of Culture

A friend forwarded me the article, knowing my increasing interest about the increasing popularity of Topo Chico, this Mexican mineral water. I read it, *How do Texans Beat the Heat? With Water from Mexico* in 2016, right out of the New York Times. Someone outside that big state had noticed, seen the change of trend, the rise in consumption; bottles of Topo Chico were becoming important to Texans, part of the endless movement of foods and goods across the border. As Kate Murphy writes in the New York Times piece, glass bottles of the mineral water “are tabletop everywhere in Texas...including tatty *taquerías* in the Rio Grande Valley and reservations-only restaurants in Houston” (Murphy 2016). Indeed, we Texans of all different types were drinking this water, in hole-in-the-wall dives and the Dallas Country Club.

Although I knew little history and understood less theory, I noticed the thirsty little Aztec girl placed central on the bottle’s tag. She bent over a pool, hair wrapped back in a band, drinking from the thermal waters of Topo Chico, a small mountain in the northern outskirts of Monterrey. Then many consumers seemed to notice when she changed in 2015, her hair hanging loose, side cleavage showing, her cupped hands bringing the water to her mouth. A rebranded bottle at just the right moment, as this Mexican company found for itself a growing market north of the Rio Grande.

The image of the princess carries with it a story, a myth made up by Compañía Topo Chico itself. According to the company’s website, Moctezuma II’s daughter was deeply ill, all treatments by the king’s staff to no avail. The Aztec king heard of magical thermal waters in a far northern land that could revive and restore. So the king’s daughter was sent off in a caravan and upon reaching these waters and drinking and bathing in them, indeed her health

was renewed. This story and its visual representation on the bottles themselves have evolved and changed with the company throughout its many years of operation, but its importance to the product has only increased.

“Est. Since 1895,” the bottle reads, indicating a whole history, adding longevity to this recent trend. The bottling company Compañía Topo Chico began over a century ago, drawing from the thermal waters of the Topo Chico hot springs. The company and its product are iconically *regio*, the term residents of Monterrey use for themselves and their city. Monterrey has made a name for itself, owing to its successful industrialization, extensive manufacturing and production, and movement toward modernity. Known as “Mexico’s Chicago,” the city is one of the wealthiest in Latin America, holding one of the region’s most prestigious universities. As I will discuss in this thesis, the city has developed and maintained a unique regional identity to explain their exceptionalism, rooted primarily in claims to whiteness. In many ways, Monterrey’s location in northern Mexico enables this claim, owing to its geographic distance from Mexico’s more indigenous south. I began to wonder why a company out of Monterrey – a city proud of its whiter, more Western, and less indigenous heritage – would circulate and capitalize on an indigenous myth. It is this paradox that has served as the idea, intervention, intrigue of this project: why has a proudly *regio* company used an Aztec princess in marketing this mineral water? Yet, Compañía Topo Chico and its Aztec princess fit clearly into the national framework of a modernizing twentieth-century Mexico, pushing this project toward questions of national identity as well.

I propose that bottles of Topo Chico tell a story – of Monterrey, of Mexico, of the many Mexicos incarnated in the nation’s northern neighbor, and of the millions of consumers who drink this mythical mineral water. I argue this bottle of water is not simply a commodity,

but an ideal site to think about political economy and how processes of production are connected to the creation of culture and to relationships of power. This thesis puts forward two main assumptions: first that products are not isolated goods but are connected to political histories and processes of cultural production and second that representations are never lightly depicted but are embedded in these same patterns of history and culture. Thus, the choice to study a product and to interrogate a representation fosters a critical reflection into consumerism writ large and my role as an American consumer, leading me to ask what stories go unquestioned and consequently what voices go unheard in the endless cycles of production and consumption.



Figure 1.1: The changing iconography of Topo Chico.

To begin this chapter and this thesis, I turn to the theorization of the visual since the visual nature of the product, particularly with the recent rebranding, was the impetus of this project and is the obvious first observation of the consumer. The literature on visual culture offers theories and strategies by which to place the representation of the Aztec princess into a larger framework within Mexico, Latin America, and an earlier and now ever-globalizing world. Before theories of discursive formations, political economy, production and consumption, we will start with our senses, not sipping this water but rather seeing the way it is presented.

1.1 Visual Culture and the Sense of Sight

Through visual culture studies, I investigate how representations of the indigenous female body has been historically deployed, hoping to deconstruct the layers of meaning embedded in Topo Chico's iconography. Walker and Chaplin suggest that visual culture "can be roughly defined as those material artefacts, buildings and images...which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic, or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent" (Walker and Chaplin 1997: 2). Within this broad definition, the visual influences both cultural understandings and political ideals. Deborah Poole chooses to use the term 'visual economy' instead of visual culture as she believes that "visual images are part of a comprehensive organization of people, ideas, and objects" (Poole 1997: 8). In their essence, visual depictions produce and reproduce long-held customs, cultural norms and governmental projects, maintaining and reinforcing social and political discourse. Consequently, visual culture cannot be analyzed apart from the power relations that have created customs and controlled discourse.

The reality of the visual is obviously rooted in the sense of sight, that is the eye itself. In Martin Jay's twentieth-century intellectual history, he explores how sight became "the noblest of the senses" in Western philosophical thought and the legacies of this leaning known as ocularcentrism (Jay 1993: 21). The very nature of visuality is connected to a historical emphasis on the eye, observation, performance, and perception. Exploring the work of recent thinkers, particularly French thinkers, Jay demonstrates the connection of the privileging of sight to the structuring of hegemonic relationships both in social structures and colonial paradigms. As Walker and Chaplin succinctly summarize, "vision, its critics considered, was complicit in social oppression via surveillance and spectacle," which Jay demonstrates through the writings of Michel Foucault and Guy Debord (Walker and Chaplin 1997: 19).¹ However, the oppressive nature of sight historically has affected certain populations.

The privileging of the visual has implications along two distinct lines – ethnicity and gender. First, sight and the culture of observation structured colonial power dynamics, placing the West and whiteness as the beholding eye in encounters with other peoples. Second, the encompassing power of the eye facilitated the objectification of women through the 'male gaze,' now a paradigm in popular culture. Luce Irigaray, a French feminist theorist, critiques sight's status as male dominance. Instead, she elevates the other senses, particularly touch, writing that "the eye objectifies and it masters" (Irigaray, quoted in Jay 1997: 493). Thus, the white male historically has had the ability to contemplate, classify, and control, structuring the power relationships implicit in visual culture. To engage with visual culture is to understand

¹ See Chapter Seven, "From the Empire of the Gaze to the Society of the Spectacle: Foucault and Debord" in *Downcast Eyes* (Jay 1997). See also *The Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault 1963).

the legacies of this long-standing hegemony. As representations are part of contemporary visual culture, I contend that they draw upon the same hegemonic relationships, giving the white male power to produce social and political understandings.

1.2 Images of the Exotic and the Interminable Uses of the Indian Princess

Seeking to historicize the emergence of the exotic within Western understanding, Peter Mason also asserts that the production of visual difference has functioned inside a hegemonic relationship, writing that “exoticization is predicated on power” (Mason 1998: 63). To represent the exotic, Mason argues that images and ideas pass through a process of decontextualization and recontextualization, indifferent to ethnographic or geographic precision. His study investigates the fragmented nature and consequent geographic irrelevance of ‘exotic collections’ in Europe, the disregard for spatialities in order to create exotic spectacle, and the combining of exotic tropes in visual portrayals of ethnic difference. These examples stretching across the past 500 years since the European-American encounter expose the malleable and unsubstantiated nature of visual representations of the exotic.

Deborah Poole questions the role of images in constructing racial and cultural hegemonies and facilitating the maintenance of these hegemonies throughout the colonial period (Poole 1997). By charting the changes in visual representations of Incan women, Poole investigates how the indigenous female body as always been a site within visual culture to ascribe difference, construct desire and assert male hegemony. Sharon W. Tiffany and Kathleen J. Adams offer more robust insight into this very concept in their work, *The Wild Woman: An Inquiry into the Anthropology of an Idea*. The authors argue that the earth has been conceptualized as female within Western tradition, the discovery of the New World

connected unexploited resources and virginal land with innocent, untainted and vulnerable female sexuality. Thus, the colonial aspiration to conquer America carried with it associations of sexual desire and dominance. Tiffany and Adams write, “the image of the Wild Woman as America promising erotic delights is a prologue to conquest in which European men invited themselves through sexual metaphors of lust and mastery” (Tiffany and Adams 1985: 63). The image of the indigenous female body has historically symbolized both dominance and conquest, innocence and desirability. Thus, portrayals of the exotic, particularly exotic women, reinforced European male hegemony and cultural dominance.

However, these same representations also worked conversely, bolstering an emerging American identity. Visual depictions of indigeneity became a way to distinguish the Americas from the West through this distinct history and culture. Rebecca Earle articulates how images and iconographies were used by elites and by the nation-state during the independence movements and nation-building periods, discussing the centrality of representations of indigenous women, particularly Indian princesses, in constructing the national imaginary (Earle 2007). In tracing the lineage of the advent of representations of Indian princesses, Earle returns to the European allegorical tradition of “depicting the continents as female figures” with America “represented as an Indian queen, naked except for her crown of feathers” (Earle 2007: 51).² This iconography continued throughout the colonial period, placed on medals and coins so that “the use of a regal Indian to represent Spain’s American colonies was well established by 1810,” the beginning of the revolutionary movements (Earle 1997: 51). During the struggles for independence, the iconography of the Indian princess was transformed by

² See Also Fleming, E. McClung (1965). “The American Image as Indian Princess 1765-1783.” In Winterthur Portfolio, Volume 2 (65-81). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Republicans “to represent American autonomy rather than imperial unity and indigenous submission” (Earle 1997: 51). Following independence, figures of indigenous princesses were placed on varying emblems of the state, coats of arms, coins, and flags, as the icon of new American republics. Ironically, the imagery of the Indian princess herself came out of a European tradition and an emphasis on Western visual culture. Thus, the intended revolutionary aspect of this icon subsumes a visual history laden with the emphasis on the European man’s gaze.

The iconography of an Indian princess is the image structuring the visual dimension of this project, in which I analyze an Aztec princess who has been decontextualized and recontextualized in order to portray a certain stereotype of exotic. Compañía Topo Chico has drawn upon a long history of appropriated images of female indigeneity. The image on bottles of Topo Chico reflects the symbolism of indigenous women, as representatives of the abundance of America and as reminders of sexual desire in the New World. Yet, it also draws on the secondary assertion of this icon, which comes from its use as a symbol of American autonomy and of distinctive heritage from the Western world. Consequently, the image of the Aztec princess symbolizes two things simultaneously – the virginal, untainted indigenous women in the New World and the distinctiveness of America from European paradigms and power despite the heavy irony of this portrayal. It appears that many contemporary representations, which intend to distinguish the Americas from Western tradition, paradoxically reinforce the very tropes of European visual culture. Furthermore, it also reinforces a colonialist fantasy that the indigenous woman is a commodity, inviting others to consume her literally and figuratively, a subject of concern in my final chapter.

1.3 The Many *Mujeres* of Mexico

Looking more specifically at the women in Mexican visual culture, an array of different representations surrounding femininity emerge. Ideas of the exotic, aspirations for modernity, and traditions of motherhood and sexualized subjugation all comprise distinct aspects of how the female has been envisioned through visual discourse within the Mexican imaginary. However, to understand the emblematic portrayal of womanhood in Mexico necessitates a return to the colonial period in which the figures of La Malinche and the Virgin of Guadalupe entered Mexican culture in the interstices of history and fiction.

Octavio Paz, the prolific Mexican poet and philosopher, offers a vivid rendering of the symbolism these two figures have come to represent in his essay, “The Sons of La Malinche,” compiled in his famed work, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. In his view, both the Virgin of Guadalupe and La Malinche symbolize motherhood, functioning in cultural understanding as the distinct mothers of the Mexican people; however, one is the virgin mother and one the violated. The cult of Guadalupe has become a central component of Mexican Catholicism, rising out of a mythic encounter in which the Virgin Mary appeared four times to an indigenous peasant named Juan Diego in the sixteenth century. The figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe has come to symbolize “the universal Mother,” “the Mother of orphans,” “the consolation of the poor, the shield of the weak, the help of the oppressed” (Paz 1961: 85).

However, Doña Malinche, mistress of Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico, is the *Chingada*, “the Mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived” by the Spaniards (Paz 1961: 79).³ Paz writes that “it is appropriate to associate [the violated mother] with the Conquest,

³ In his essay, Paz offers an evolution of the term *chingar* and what it represents culturally in Mexico. *Chingada*, the past participle of this verb, quite literally means ‘the fucked one.’ See “The Sons of La Malinche” in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1961).

which was also a violation, not only in the historical sense but also in the very flesh of Indian women” (Paz 1961: 86). She is the mother who abandons her children and who in turn has been abandoned by the Mexican people for her betrayal. And significantly, both mothers are passive figures. “Guadalupe is pure receptivity” while the Chingada’s “passivity is abject: she does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood, and dust,” losing her name and identity, “she is Nothingness...the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition” (Paz 1961: 85-86). Thus, Paz draws a very passive and problematic portrayal of the Mexican woman, who has always been conceived of as the Mother. She is both virginal and violated, comforting and cast aside, universal yet unknown and undesired. This very ambiguity is what *chicana* feminist Gloria Anzaldúa takes up in her work, writing of the multiple Mexican mothers, how “this obscuring has encouraged the *virgen/puta* (whore) dichotomy,” and its perpetual reoccurrence in Mexican culture (Anzaldúa 1987: 53).⁴ Along this dichotomy, social understanding has been formed and consequently, visual representations have developed.

Turning to visual portrayals of Malinche in Mexican culture, María Herrera-Sobek argues that these visual depictions express an ever-changing relationship between the Mexican people and this figure (Herrera-Sobek 2005). Beginning with colonial-era depictions, Herrera-Sobek exposes how Malinche herself was subjected to the romanticizing representations of indigenous women, portrayed as exotic yet still beautiful by European standards. La Malinche was revered for her malleability between two cultures, seen as the idealized intermediary of two worlds. However, in more modern images such as the work of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, Malinche is caricatured and ugly, “projecting the

⁴ See also the work of *chicana* feminists Cherrie Moraga and Norma Alarcón.

contempt and disrespect many contemporary Mexicans have” for her (Herrera-Sobek 2005: 127). In contrast, contemporary Tlaxcaltecan and Tabascan works and the works of *chicana* writers have sought to reconfigure her memory more positively through visual representations.

Thus, the place of Malinche within Mexican visual culture exposes the controversy behind her person and present significance. Herrera-Sobek explores how the realm of the visual has become a site to question and contest cultural understandings as well as expose the shifting relationships between nations and their histories. Although representations draw on long-standing traditions, meanings are continually being interpreted to meet the national moment. Furthermore, in examining “the discursive layers that have structured a mythical image of Malinche,” Herrera-Sobek implies that pictorial representations have reconfigured historical fact and relegated her to subjective folklore (Herrera-Sobek 2005: 113). Visual renderings have the tendency to mythologize the past and its peoples and cultures, forging history for contemporary popular conceptions, and in doing so, expose the ever-changing nature of the negotiations nations make with their histories.

In particular, images of indigenous women from southern Mexico have tended to folklorize indigeneity, relying on the long-standing portrayals of the exotic out of Western visual tradition. Howard Campbell and Susanne Green expose both the continuity and the changes of how Zapotec women have been depicted and who has mediated that process (Campbell and Green 1996). In analyzing images from the past several centuries, “Zapotec women’s beauty is conceived as exotic, bright, and mysterious. The women themselves are described as creatures of nature, whose attractiveness springs from and reflects the tropical vegetation around them,” alluding to the Western tropes connecting the American indigenous

woman to nature, untainted beauty, and virginal purity (Campbell and Green 1996: 165).

Although Campbell and Green do argue that these images of difference worked to reproduce social hierarchies – both male supremacy and Western cultural domination, they problematize the simplification of this discourse through looking at the representations by Mexican artists and intellectuals themselves in the twentieth century. In researching the work of modern Mexican artists, such as Miguel Covarrubias, Diego Rivera, and Frida Kahlo, the authors expose how the realm of visual appropriations was coopted by the Mexican citizenry.

Although their ends were distinct from earlier artists – to bolster a national identity, the authors assert that they ultimately reproduced the dominating Eurocentric male discourse through drawing on the same strategies of the visualization of the exotic and the female. Thus, in the visual culture of twentieth century Mexico, the control of representations drifted from the hands of foreigners into those of Mexicans themselves, domesticating exoticism, although their work contributed to the “process of idealization, distancing, and appropriation of indigenous culture by non-Indian intellectual elites of Mexico City” (Campbell and Green 1996: 176).⁵

Historian Joanne Hershfield exposes how consumption was a key site for domesticating exoticism within Mexico (Hershfield 2008). As domesticated exoticism, particularly gender-derived, became a central component of Mexican visual culture and identity, “commercial industries appropriated images of exotic femininity to sell commercial products ‘made in Mexico,’ such as cigarettes, beer, tequila, medicinal salves, and toothpaste” (Hershfield 2008: 130). Society women within Mexico City adopted the folkloric costume of

⁵ The work of Graciela Iturbide is a quintessential example of intellectual elites’ appropriation.

the *huipiles* worn by Zapotec women as fashion statements, famously incarnated through the figure of Frida Kahlo. Indigeneity itself became marketed as something that could be put on and taken off as a display of culture and heritage. Representations of indigenous women served as an opposing pole by which to imagine modernity through a gendered and ethnically-generated framework; images of white femininity alongside contemporary consumerism were contrasted with nostalgic, picturesque depictions of indigenous women as Mexico's idealized past. Thus, representations of the woman in Mexican visual culture have centered around the ever-developing icon of the indigenous woman both as a national symbol and as a visual standard by which to differentiate modernity.

In Mexico, images of indigeneity have worked to exoticize native culture and visualize national identity. The nation domesticated portrayals of indigeneity toward the invention of a national past. As images of indigenous women entered the marketplace, idealized notions of the exotic became consumable, facilitating access to indigeneity for all Mexicans. In both governmental portrayals and market-driven depictions, representations of female indigeneity have drawn upon a romantic vision of the past; yet, as John Mraz asserts, "nostalgia is always a negation of history, an unrealizable fantasy to return to a fetishized past" (Mraz 2004: 28). Thus, the icon of the Aztec princess markets nostalgia, negating history through a fictionalized myth in order to cater to trends of consumption. The imagery fetishizes a distinct Mexican past but also the virginal American lands, an aspiration for a time long past, drawing the princess into a cyclical relationship between the national and international visual representation of the feminized, exotic Other. These notions of the Indian woman and her connection to nature, purity, simplicity, health, and wholeness have historically transcended

cultural paradigms and continue to do so, as bottles of Topo Chico now move across borders, capitalizing on the very same fantasies and sense of nostalgia.

Although this representation could be read and interpreted solely as a visual appropriation, I argue that the princess of Topo Chico is deeply embedded in sexual and racial histories, economies, and politics of Northern Mexico, of Monterrey, and of the nation itself. In order to understand the symbol and story, it proves necessary to use a wider historical lens, taking this Aztec princess out of the realm of the visual and connecting the representation to processes of identity formation and cultural production. I contend that this representation, like culture itself, stands at the intersection of discursive and economic production. I trace the role of regional discourse from conquest through capitalism in developing a *norteño* identity and a specific *regio* sense of exceptionalism. I assert that local discourse evolved along ethnic and gendered lines of difference, giving insight into the local setting, ‘the culture’ that produced this mineral water. Economic production, then, exposes how discourses become embedded into local and national imaginaries, in this case, how the production of Topo Chico reinforced these cultural understandings. Drawing on the framework of political economy enables me to understand how this product is connected to politics and relationships of power both locally and nationally and so reinforces cultural hegemony in its circulation.

1.4 Cultural Production and Compañía Topo Chico

Relying on the theorization of anthropologist William Roseberry, I investigate how culture is not simply produced but also is a producer itself. In responding to the work of the anthropologists Clifford Geertz and Marcus Harris, Roseberry asserts that both scholars “treat culture as product but not as production” (Roseberry 1982: 26). He understands cultural

creation as a “form of material production,” “not simply as socially constituted but also as socially constituting” (Roseberry 1982: 26, 28). Roseberry exposes the integral role of culture in its own evolution. Expanding this argument to the case of Compañía Topo Chico, I argue that the mineral water with its Aztec princess is indeed a product of culture but also constitutes culture, disseminating ideas through consumption. Thus consumption proves an obvious place to observe how culture works to reinforce itself, yet notably only certain aspects, traditions, and stories within a particular culture are included.

Roseberry exposes how these perpetually reproduced cultural customs draw on a selective tradition, alluding to Raymond Williams’ “revaluation of the idea of tradition, defining it as a reflection upon and selection from a people’s history” (Roseberry 1982: 26). This selection of tradition is deeply embedded in hegemonic relationships, “tied to relations of domination and subordination,” as Roseberry writes (Roseberry 1982: 26-7). I suggest that the myth and marketing of Compañía Topo Chico represent a selection of tradition and so uphold the ideas of the dominant culture. In this thesis, I posit that both the *regio* and Mexican dominant cultures have developed through discourse and discursive continuity in region and nation, respectively. And, as demonstrated through Topo Chico, these discursive identities are reproduced through economic production, a power-laden process. Both discursive and economic production prove to be inherently hegemonic, in turn solidifying certain relationships of power. By analyzing the production of Topo Chico, I investigate the hegemony of the dominant culture – to spread discourses, to reproduce them through commercial production, and to structure social meaning through consumption – as it has played out in Monterrey and in Mexico in the last couple centuries.

By the term discourse, I am drawing on the extensive theoretical work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a French social theorist whose career sought to understand how language has developed to create knowledge and structure meaning. To Foucault, discourse is “defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation,” that is statements are related in such a way as to offer a coherent language to discuss particular topics (Foucault 1972: 107). These groups of related statements evolve into discourses through a process Foucault calls ‘discursive formation,’ “the principle of dispersion and redistribution,” accomplished through ‘discursive practice’ (Foucault 1972: 107). These “concepts were not formed against the...living background of ideas, but on the basis of forms of coexistence between statements” (Foucault 1972: 72). Discourse does not draw upon natural, inherent relationships but is produced by practice, the reiteration of related statements by individuals, institutions, books and *oeuvres*. Thus, the formation of discourses is about the production of knowledge and meaning and how “the knowledge which a discourse produces constitutes a kind of power [as] those who produce the discourse also have the power to make it true – i.e. to enforce its validity” (Hall 1996: 204-205). The production of knowledge influences social practice, and its discourse’s influence on social practice upon which this thesis heavily relies.

I am particularly interested in how the practice of discourse creates identity and consequently constitutes culture. I have found that the Aztec iconography on Topo Chico’s bottles stands in the interstices of many distinct discourses within region and nation, proving the analysis of the development of these discourses to be significant for reading well this representation. Part of this project seeks to trace the role of discourse in regional identity formation in Northern Mexico, the *norteño* identity, and in Monterrey, the *regio* identity, in

order to understand the cultural setting of production. Yet, the product of Topo Chico connects to a wider national identity, necessitating an analysis of the state-facilitated discourse following the Mexican Revolution.

Prior to European arrival, the Aztecs in central Mexico had cultivated a stable civilization whereas the indigenous of the north were nomadic, similar to the Apache and Comanche in present-day Texas. This distinction was captured discursively and generated a shared social understanding that people were civilized in the south and barbaric in the north. Furthermore, the process of conquest and colonization in Northern Mexico proved challenging, as the land was harsh and the indigenous people hostile. As Northern Mexico became the forming nation's frontier, discourses surrounding civilization became an integral aspect of identity formation. Ideas of ethnic purity or whiteness, masculinity, and individuality were connected to civilization itself through discursive practice. Essentially, the *norteño* identity evolved with the 'savage Indian' encompassing the opposing pole; this identity predicated itself on everything that was not indigenous.

As Monterrey industrialized in the late nineteenth-century, becoming one of the wealthiest cities in Latin America, I contend that these same discourses connecting civilization to whiteness, masculinity, and individual industry were utilized as the explanation behind the city's economic exceptionalism and social success. This discourse expanded to include notions of modernity; modernity was coded as white, male, and economically independent. In recent years, historians, such as Barbara Weinstein and Nancy Appelbaum have returned to the role of the region to understand the relationship between ethnicity and

modernity within enterprising cities in Latin America (São Paulo, Lima, Medellín).⁶ Pointing to the rise of ethnically-driven regional hegemonies, these histories have shown their effects on material distribution, political power, and violence; that is, these discourses are productive of social understanding and practice. Although this argument has been made and historicized in the context of other cities, I intend to use this framework to interpret discourse's role in Monterrey's sense of exceptionalism.

Turning to discourse as it has affected the national imaginary, I will focus on the discourse disseminated by the Mexican government after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). In the years following the Revolution, there was a concerted effort by politicians and government agents to construct a cohesive national identity as the country segmented into regional, class-based, and ethnically-driven factions throughout the decade of fighting. The government concentrated on ideas of a shared national heritage – the Aztec civilization – to represent cultural continuity within the nation at large. Glorified representations of the past civilization flooded the nation in government-sponsored entertainment and events, art and architecture, museums and monuments, and, of course, images and iconographies. Together, these mediums solidified the discourse that all Mexicans are descended from the Aztecs, inventing a national identity and placing indigeneity firmly in the past. As a result, this discourse produced a renunciation of the contemporary indigenous peoples throughout Mexico, an eclipsing of their modern struggle for rights and resources.

⁶ Barbara Weinstein centers her study on the *paulista* sense of exceptionalism in which the southern region of Brazil was coded as white, distinct from the nation's racially diverse north (*The Color of Modernity*, 2015).

Nancy Appelbaum's history of Antioquia, Colombia focuses on the Antioqueño ideals of stability, productivity, and the nuclear family where racial others were stereotyped as sexually deviant, lazy, unruly, and unproductive (*Muddied Waters*, 2003).

This particular discourse has been well theorized and thoroughly historicized, probing and problematizing the government's rhetorical and representative efforts to create a national cultural past and present identity. The post-revolutionary national-building project of Mexico has made its way into a wide array of disciplines, most notably history where prominent historians like David Brading and Alan Knight have written on this trend.⁷ However, little work has been done to understand how this discourse and resulting appropriations of indigenous culture were carried out commercially, moving from the political sector to the economic in which production serves as the means to reproduce said ideas. How does the Aztec appropriation of Compañía Topo Chico represent a corporate move to undertake the state's ambitious project? How does this particular shift in marketing strategies point to the growing power of the state over cultural production?

However, the increasing presence of the state was not rooted in the realm of the discursively symbolic; rather the symbolism of the princess reflects a tangible trend in the state's efforts to bring the economy under its control. In order to understand the politics behind the state's ambitious aim, I rely on the framework of political economy. In its essence, the study of political economy is concerned with the intersections of the political, the economic, and the cultural, asserting how the state controls the market and how these cycles of power and production affect society, custom, and culture. First, I explore how local politics facilitated the company's initial rise through the industrialism and growth of capitalism in late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century Monterrey. Then, turning to the role of the

⁷ Alan Knight's article, "Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940," has become a seminal piece on this discursive practice, read across disciplines and cited in a considerable number of related studies.

national government, I investigate how the Mexican state's post-revolutionary politics affected Topo Chico. It was the national government itself who facilitated the privatization of the waters of Topo Chico, enabling the expansion of economic production and the continuation of capitalist logics to the detriment to the local community. I contend that the state's post-revolutionary discourse and its economic agenda worked congruently toward the constitution of culture and so established the power of the state over local forms of production.

Thus, Compañía Topo Chico serves as an ideal site to observe the competing discourses and claims to resources between region and nation. Through this small bottling company in the outskirts of Monterrey, I observe how Nuevo León and the nation-state have vied for control over both discursive and material production in order to maintain authority over identity formation and the constitution of culture. Yet in this process, as Raymond Williams suggests, both Monterrey and Mexico have drawn on select traditions toward the creation of a hegemonic dominant culture. Compañía Topo Chico's Aztec princess and fabricated legend expose how cultural production has worked congruently with the political aim to dominate, suppress, and consequently eclipse and erase. Bottles of Topo Chico tell a complicated story, hegemonically conceived, creatively represented, coercively marketed, and unconsciously consumed.

To tell this story, I begin locally, looking historically at the conquest of the north, at the founding of Monterrey and at the story of Topo Chico, tracing it from hacienda to hotel to high-dollar water in the second chapter. I use the history of Topo Chico to reconstruct *regio* history. As the city industrialized in the late nineteenth century, the creation of the bottling

company paradigmatically represents industry and the rise of capitalism in Monterrey, the company becoming iconically *regio*. I focus on the historical developments of the discourses previously indicated – the connection of whiteness, masculinity, and individuality initially to civilization and eventually to modernity and the way in which this discourse has been utilized to explain the city's economic success. Furthermore, I discuss the advent of the princess into Topo Chico's marketing strategies in the early twentieth century, contrasting her place on bottles of mineral water amidst these discourses. What tradition is being conjured and maintained toward the creation of a dominant culture?

In the third chapter, I place the Aztec princess and Compañía Topo Chico in the national imaginary, seeking to fit this company and their product into a wider understanding of modern Mexican history. I argue that the advent of the Aztec princess draws this bottled mineral water into the state's discursive production of a Mexican identity following the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Yet I analyze how the princess offers space to observe the material presence of the state in Monterrey through the privatization of the Topo Chico hot springs. As the iconography and legend cohered in the post-revolutionary period, I suggest that the product of Topo Chico represents a corporate move to take up the state's ambitious project, a commercial appropriation of Mexico's invented indigenous heritage. Economic production worked seamlessly with the state's political agenda to create a collective identity, resting on the arrival of modernity and growth of consumption. I question how these shifts in discursive and economic production point to the rise of the state as the cultural mediator, disseminating certain ideas of indigeneity through the products circulating within its borders.

It is to consumption, and the consumer, that this thesis shifts in the fourth and final chapter. The framework of visual culture exposes why the trope of the Indian princess sells,

drawing on the history of representations of the exotic and the female in Mexico and in the West. So the question becomes what is being consumed, in this case imbibed, through these mobile bottles of mineral waters? How do commodified representations affect the consumer, bolster ideas of essentialism, foster expectations for cultural purity, and distort modern indigeneity? And what does it sell about Mexico itself as its exported, questioning the role of commodities in representing the producing nation? The product of Topo Chico with its fabricated myth and elaborate iconography is producing and reproducing certain cultures and traditions, allowing consumption to perpetuate the misconstrued past and present. Lastly, I ask how romanticized representations serve as a continuation of colonial thought, positing indigenous women themselves as consumable and consequently vulnerable to sexual and corporeal violence.

Monterrey has become of place of production – literally making steel and glass and beer while also creating certain discourses of a regional identity that place our princess at the center of a great paradox. I remind of my paradox, the central question of this project: why has a company from Monterrey, a city where discourses of whiteness, masculinity, individuality, and exceptionalism have been historically grounded and continually reinforced, whose identity has been predicated on all that is nonindigenous, chosen a representation of a female Indian in marketing its product proudly *regio*? Why did the myth emerge as a marketing strategy at just the moment it did, as the state-led discourse of fabricated national heritage spread throughout Mexico? And how do bottles of pure water sell polluted histories, cultures, traditions reproducing the very distortions that facilitated initial production? Herein, I think, lies the significance of these questions – what cultures are being eclipsed and what populations are left vulnerable through consumption?

2. Regional Identity, *Regio* Exceptionalism, and the Bottling Company

The name Topo Chico has carried many connotations, the shift in significances giving a simple sketch of its history. El Topo or Cerro Topo is the name of a hill in the northern stretches of Monterrey, mistakenly believed for many years to have been a volcano. Topo Chico, in one sense, has existed for over 400 years, since it was the name of a hacienda at the base of Cerro Topo. In another sense, Topo Chico developed in the mid-nineteenth century, as the place of the famous baths that drew international attention. Thus, when in 1895, the bottling company chose to call its product Topo Chico, the name already carried a multiplicity of meanings. Today, Topo Chico is the name of the *barrio* (neighborhood) in Monterrey, home to these thermal waters and the current bottling company. It also signifies a prison, Penal del Topo Chico, made infamous in recent years for the riot caused by rival factions within a drug cartel, leaving 49 dead.⁸ Thus, the name Topo Chico casts a wide net – a hacienda, thermal baths, a bottling company, a neighborhood, a prison – offering insight into the complexity of the history of this hill across the centuries following the Conquest.

Topo Chico tells a story of city and region too, of the development of regional identity, of race and representations, of industrialism and exceptionalism, and of the rise of modernity. This history, which I describe in this chapter, emblematically represents the history of Monterrey, spanning the decades from colonization to capitalism. The story of the baths exposes the ever-changing interactions with the state's northern neighbor across the Rio Grande. Texans' relationship with Topo Chico predates the recent trend of consumption. I suggest that the bottling company paradigmatically exemplifies the industrialization of

⁸http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/02/160211_mexico_motin_fuga_carcel_topo_chico_muertos_jp

Monterrey as it follows the *regio* lore of locality while rooting itself in international capitalist structures. But, most importantly, I argue that the Company of Topo Chico reflects the longevity of *regio* discourse and discourse's role in constituting culture. Returning to the colonial period, I investigate how the distinct *norteño* identity was first formed and then maintained through processes of industrialization and economic production. I posit that Compañía Topo Chico exposes the production of culture to be both symbolic, through the dissemination of discourse, and material, through the bottled product itself, and consequently affirmed through patterns of consumption.



Figure 2.1: A photo of Cerro Topo taken from the company offices.

2.1 A Map of Monterrey

Monterrey, a city of millions, is the capital of the state of Nuevo León in the northeastern region of the nation. Whereas the southern states of Mexico are characterized by their lush, pleasant climate, northern Mexico is primarily deserts separated by mountain ranges, experiencing more extreme and severe seasons than southern regions of the nation. The city is surrounded by the Sierra Madres, a mountain range running along the eastern flank of northern Mexico, isolating the city, in a sense, from its neighbors and most notably, from southern Mexico. As Mexican anthropologist and historian Miguel León-Portilla writes, “the North has always been thought of as a physical and cultural frontier,” where “the development of life is not easy” (León Portilla 1972: 77). The depiction of the north of Mexico as harsh and hostile, a physical frontier, has been essential to regional identity and to the development of regional discourse.

Furthermore, in Mexican thought, the ‘savage’ Indians of the north came to mirror the unruly and inhospitable climate, attributing barbarianism to the region and relegating the north to a cultural frontier. There were believed to be over 250 distinct tribes roaming the lands now contained within and surrounding Nuevo León whom the Spanish referred to sweepingly as the Chichimecas. In the works of the early *nuevoleonese* historian Alonso de León, he portrays the Chichimecas as primitive and savage, characterized by minimal clothing, bows and arrows, and their lack of deities.⁹ Owing to their nomadic and warlike lifestyle, the Chichimecas resisted domination by the Spaniards, yet came to epitomize barbarianism and lack of civilization in the process. The severity of *norteño* geography and

⁹ Alonso de León’s history, written just fifty years after the establishment of Nuevo León, mirrors the Chichimecas’ absence of deities to the absence of civilization. Emphasizing their cruelty and cannibalism, de León depicts the Chichimecas as beasts, the clearest examples of barbarianism.

fierceness of the region's indigenous peoples affected the processes of conquest and colonization, complicating the European invasion of contemporary Monterrey.

The region's early history is distinct from the more commonly known history of the Spanish conquest of Mexico; there were no floating cities, no settled agriculture, no Aztecs, and no Cortés. The fall of the Aztec Empire in 1521 predated the arrival of Europeans to modern Monterrey by over fifty years, and the conquest of Mexico's north proved a lengthy and onerous task. Whereas Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in a little over two years, it would take centuries to colonize the North, the emerging nation's frontier. The city's founding anticipated the travails of colonization as it took three attempts to create a continuously inhabited settlement. After the failure of Alberto del Canto's establishment of Santa Lucía, the Spanish Viceroy Martín de Almanza ordered Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, a heroic voyager and controversially a Jew, to settle the northern frontier and subdue the Indians. However, after founding the Villa de San Luis and becoming governor of the Nuevo Reino de León, Carvajal was convicted for harboring Jews and the majority of his family consequently burned at the stake. So it was Diego de Montemayor, a captain under Carvajal, who signed a decree in September of 1596 to establish Nuestra Señora de Monterrey and is remembered as the founding father, a distortion of the city's earliest history.¹⁰

The state of Nuevo León has also served as a border between Mexico and the United States. There exists a plethora of studies which speak to the effects of the border on identity formation, social and personal understanding, economic development, and the role of

¹⁰ In her ethnography of Nuevo León, Marie Theresa Hernández discusses "residual history," how "Carvajal was subtracted from the history of the region and Montemayor was granted the position of founding father" (Hernández 2002: 72).

nationalism, both in Mexico and the United States.¹¹ As Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez argues, borderland residents did not “assume national identities” but “continued transnational practices” and “assumed strategic identities” (Valerio-Jiménez 2013:10). For centuries, the movement of peoples and goods across an unmaintained border created a unique regional identity that privileged regional and individual gain as opposed to national growth. Additionally, following the Mexican-American War (1846-48), the border moved substantially closer to Monterrey. This proximity facilitated the “migration of American cultural practices (and capitalism) into Nuevo León,” significant in understanding Monterrey’s industrial and economic success (Hernández 2002: 2). The baths and bottles of Topo Chico demonstrate the transnational culture that has developed in northern Mexico, forging particularly a unique relationship between Texas and Monterrey.

2.2 Discourse, Both Regional and *Regio*

As anthropologist Marie Theresa Hernández claims, “the entire history of the state [Nuevo León] revolves around the ‘Indian War,’ the moments of national toil [War of Independence (1810-1821), Mexican-American War (1846-48), Mexican Revolution (1910-20)] [serving as] only sporadic moments of distraction” from the continuing conflicts between the Indians and ‘whites’ (Hernández 2002: 55). Although there were periods of reprieve and temporary treaties between the indigenous and the colonizers, the looming threat of raids and endless cycles of strife structured lifestyle on the Northern frontier (Cossio 1925). This trying lifestyle created the distinct individual *norteño* personality of the ‘wild man,’ a frontier

¹¹ “Borderland theorists have noted that people living on either side of the border will have more in common with each other than they would with non-border citizens of their own country (Rosaldo 1977, Anzaldúa 1987, and Hannerz 1997).” (Warshauer 2003: 12).

cowboy who is independent, resilient, and as ruthless as his Indian enemies. Yet, anthropologist Ana María Alonso argues, frontier warfare was the “mother of civilization,” developing a social structure around these brutal and barbaric realities (Alonso 1995: 30).¹² Seeking to understand “the articulation of power and identity in the processes of subjection,” Alonso theorizes hegemony in relation to ethnicity and gender rather than solely in relation to class (Alonso 1995: 8). She historicizes the role of ethnic and gender honor, disseminated by local leaders, in *norteño* campesino culture, exposing the hegemonic process of this identity formation.

Ethnic honor was rooted centrally in whiteness. However, ethnicity, Alonso asserts, was indicated through cultural difference, allowing civilized existences to attribute a certain “ethnic purity” to campesinos. The Indian became necessarily depicted as barbarian and uncivilized, serving as a contrasting pole to the ethnically honorable campesino. The notion of male honor encouraged colonists to fight the Indians, shaping their “masculine ethos, which privileged strength, valor, and fighting skills” (Valerio-Jiménez 2013: 19). Furthermore, the male settlers feminized their Indian enemies, characterizing them as “dependent and untrustworthy” and so “asserted their own masculinity” (Valerio-Jiménez 2013: 19). Thus, the developing regional identity was predicated on whiteness and its connection to civility and masculinity and its connection to power. Ethnic and gender hegemony has played a central role in the conceptualization of the *norteño*, proving how identity formation necessitates the

¹² With this idea, Alonso is responding to Owen Lattimore’s well-known idea that “civilization was the mother of barbarism” in the development of the frontier. First, the conquest of the Indians was legitimated through construing them as barbarians; second, it was the Anglo-American and Hispanic expansion that prompted such violence from the indigenous peoples. See Lattimore, Owen (1968). “The Frontier in History.” In *Theory in Anthropology*. Robert Manners and David Kaplan, eds. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.

creation of subjectivities. As historian Juan Mora-Torres writes, “*fronterizos* developed a collective identity based on conquering and colonizing a region in which the “other” had been the indigenous population” (Mora-Torres 2001:14). And most importantly, these hegemonic relationships that facilitated identity formation were enacted discursively and translated into sweeping cultural understanding through the continuation of this discourse.

As the frontier developed, notions of civility, coded as white and male, expanded to include industry and economic enterprise. The role of hacienda and growth of mining, agriculture, trade, and commerce enabled the slow process of colonization despite the continued ‘Indian Wars.’ In the *regiomontano* imagination, the *indios bárbaros* served to create the untiring and industrious inhabitant of Monterrey. Nuncio includes the words of a *regio* élite, the “acción (del indio) está dirigida constantemente en contra del progreso, del desarrollo y de la paz” [the action of the Indian is directed constantly in opposition to progress, development, and peace] (Nuncio 1997: 24). Thus, as progress and development became cultural ideals of civility, the indigenous peoples continued to represent the antithesis of civilization. By the time Monterrey began to industrialize in the late nineteenth century, there were very few indigenous peoples remaining at all. However, the discourse grounding the *regio* identity continued, apparent in governor Bernardo Reyes’ speech to commemorate the 300-year anniversary of the city’s founding in 1896. He “repetía un viejo y renovado mito: las familias españoles...trajeron a esta tierra el trabajo y con él la redención de la barbarie” [repeated an old, renewed myth: the Spanish families brought work to this land and with it redemption from barbarism] (Nuncio 1997: 21). In the *regio* consciousness, it was the industrious white Europeans who brought civilization to the barbarous North and who would usher in modernity to Monterrey.

The story of Monterrey's industrial success has been studied and historicized by those within and without of the city. Alex Saragoza's seminal work offers a thorough explanation of Monterrey's capital accumulation, exposing how the profits generated by the traffic of cotton through Monterrey during the American Civil War and the influx of international investment in the 1880's contributed to rise of industry in "Mexico's Chicago" (Saragoza 1988). Drawing on Saragoza, Abraham Nuncio focuses on the high levels of United States immigrants to Monterrey that facilitated capital investment.¹³ Juan Mora-Torres centers his argument on the development of the border market and how this relationship enabled the early development of capital. Furthermore, Monterrey industrialized during the nearly 40-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz known as the Porfiriato (1876-1910). Díaz's government sought to integrate the nation into a capitalist economy and opened Mexico to foreign investors and corporations. The process of industrialization forged a tight, nearly impenetrable circle of wealthy Monterrey elites, comprised of about ten families. As wealth and power were concentrated among this small group of industrialists, elites assumed a unique system of company paternalism and relied on regional discourse to quell worker unrest (Saragoza 1988).

Despite that historical events, international investment, and proximity to the United States contributed to Monterrey's economic growth, *regio* discourse centered on their industrial, individualistic nature to explain this success. The resilient, hard-working *norteño* wild man became both the corporate industrialist and the industrial worker in a modern rendering of frontier ideology. *Regio* elites capitalized on this long-standing discourse to foster work ethic and local loyalty, to city and to company. In his analysis of the

¹³ Nuncio points to two English newspapers, The Monterrey News and Monterrey Era, as indicators of the significant presence of Americans within the city.

regiomontano narrative, Michael Snodgrass traces the frontier ideology of racially contrived notions of civilization and barbarianism into urbanity “where industrial pioneers and their blue-collar allies overcame the challenges posed by the modern equivalent of the *indios bárbaros*: revolution, communists, and a meddlesome federal government” (Snodgrass 2003: 12). Thus, the construction of Monterrey’s regional identity continued to be predicated on the discourse connecting indigeneity and barbarianism, crafting modernity and progress within ethnically-structured understandings. Consequently, I argue for discursive continuity, that the early discourses which connected civilization to whiteness and masculinity would be reinterpreted during the industrial period to connect modernity to whiteness and masculinity.

I place the case of Monterrey within a larger Latin American paradigm to understand how the *regio* elite’s discourse of exceptionalism contributes to a regional trend. As referenced in the introduction, there has been a recent historical interest in developed Latin American cities and how regional elites have explained their success and constructed their identity. São Paulo, Lima, Medellín, and I would argue, Monterrey aptly expose how ethnic perceptions, particularly surrounding claims to whiteness and the social implications whiteness has, have been promulgated by regional elites as the basis for their modernity and development. In her study of São Paulo, Barbara Weinstein investigates how the *paulista* discourse of exceptionalism distinguished the racially diverse north of Brazil from the southern ‘white’ region. Relying on Gramscian notions of cultural hegemony, Weinstein exposes how elitist discourses capitalized on race to explain regional success (Weinstein 2015). Nancy Appelbaum (2003) and Mary Roldán (2002) both look at the role of ethnically-driven discourses in the province of Antioquia, Colombia. Their distinct histories center the portrayal of racial others as sexually deviant, lazy, unruly, and unproductive, allowing

whiteness to be indicative of productivity and propriety. To these historians, elitist discourses are productive of social practice, affecting the distribution of power, wealth, and violence, in the case of Colombia.

As Snodgrass notes, “regionalism’s promotion was very often an elite project used to mobilize locals in defense of their own economic interests” (Snodgrass 2003: 9). Indeed, regional discourse had clear economic benefits for elites. However, like the regional historians, I am centrally concerned with how elitist discourses connecting race and modernity facilitate power relations regionally. Focusing on hegemony within regional relationships demonstrates how elites maintain power and affirm regional identity from within. As Alonso writes, “power is not just external but also internal, not just repressive but also productive” (Alonso 1995: 237). Following these scholars, I show how in Monterrey power-laden discourses produce symbolic cultural identity in their circulation. As Nuncio theorizes, “el orgullo inducido por las élites para su provecho es asumido por la mayoría, y a veces llega a convertirse en columna de identidad, en folclor” [the pride induced by elites for their benefit is assumed by the majority and at times transforms itself into part of the identity, into folklore] (Nuncio 1997: 24). Indeed, the modern discourse of the *regio* elites fomented local identity and reproduced long-standing assumptions.¹⁴ Whereas whiteness signified progress and development, the *indios bárbaros* continued to serve as a foil of civilization and modernity. Furthermore, as the formation of Monterrey’s business elites suggests, *regio* discourse continued to privilege the role of the male and of the individual in driving economic

¹⁴ Snodgrass discusses the extent to which the elitist discourse within Monterrey grew to be significant for a large portion of the population. He writes, “What made it unique was that this regionalist discourse became meaningful not only for its elite and middle-class proponents – as in São Paulo – but for working-class people as well” (Snodgrass 2003: 9).

growth. I return to Roseberry and his understanding of culture “not simply as socially constituted but also as socially constituting” (Roseberry 1982: 28). The reinterpretation of regional discourse exposes how culture is produced through power-laden processes.

Within this discursive framework, I place the contemporary representation of Topo Chico. Why has the company, for a century, chosen to use an indigenous woman as its symbol, in a city discursively privileging whiteness, masculinity and individuality? Furthermore, ethnicity and gender have been attached to civilization and modernity, yet the Aztec princess connects Mexico’s folkloric past to their product. Topo Chico from the baths to the bottling company has signified modernity to Monterrey rather than notions of an earlier Mexico. Although the Aztec princess appears to defy the discursive understanding of indigeneity within Monterrey, I contend that it exposes the place of the region within the nation at a historical moment in Mexican history, the subject of the next chapter. However, here I argue that Topo Chico serves as a microcosm of *regio* history. The industrialization of Topo Chico mirrors the arrival of modernization to Monterrey, and Compañía Topo Chico paradigmatically reflects a *regio* company. I seek to understand how Compañía Topo Chico has predicated its product on locality, overlooking the role of foreigners and foreign capital and negating the place of international capitalist structures in its success. This company marketing a myth has fabricated its own myth of locality and longevity.

2.3 From Hacienda to Hotel

In my earliest efforts to reconstruct the history of Topo Chico, I found a small folio published in 2003 in celebration of the “Los cuatrocientos años del Topo Chico” (the 400 years of Topo Chico). It is co-authored by three men, two of whom are local historians of

Nuevo León. The little booklet was my only textual history of the hill. Thus as I prepared to research in Monterrey, I contacted a librarian at the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo León and was immediately given the information of Juan Ramón Garza Guajardo, a retired historian that had worked at the university. After my initial meeting with Juan in the library on the UANL campus, I realized that he was one of three men who had written the brief history which I had relied on the past months. Juan's research of the history of Topo Chico had been a significant project for him. His niece who joined our first meeting affirmed her uncle's interest in Cerro Topo, relaying to me his excitement that a student from the States had come to Monterrey to research the community. Indeed, he was ecstatic to talk about Topo Chico, from the community's earliest years to the company's most recent endeavors.

Although the precise period for the naming of Cerro Topo is unknown, Juan had sifted through all the *Actos de Monterrey* (now digitized in the city archives), in search of the earliest official reference to the area. He discovered that the name was established by the time Don Diego de Montemayor arrived in Monterrey in the 1580s as the limits of the city included "los labores del Topo" in the foundation of Monterrey. Topo translates to mole in English, implying that the name was given owing to the hill's rounded and elongated shape. As the hill lies in the center of large and jagged mountains, its shape is indeed different from the other topography in the city. Juan was determined that I recognize Cerro Topo's distinct shape. We looked at topographic maps and pictures and drawings from different time periods, examining the ovular shape while Juan explained the once-locations of the two haciendas at the base of the Cerro. In May of 1603, Marcos González Hidalgo received a *Merced de*

Tierras along the southern stretch of Cerro Topo.¹⁵ José de Ayala founded the hacienda of San Nicolás del Topo along the eastern foothills of the Cerro Topo. These two haciendas became known as La Hacienda del Topo Chico and La Hacienda del Topo Grande, respectively.

Marcos González Hidalgo's land passed to his son Bernabé González then to his grandson, Lucas González Hidalgo, who was responsible for the establishment of the hacienda, San Bernabé del Topo. Upon making his residence at the base of Cerro del Topo, Lucas González Hidalgo began the process to legalize the lands (Treviño Cantú, Garza Guajardo & Segovia 2003:7). In 1713, Lucas presented his claims to the commissioner Francisco de Valenzuela Venegas who approved the possession of the lands but denied the claim to Cerro Topo. The *hacendado* offered to pay the Crown fifteen pesos, arguing that the hill was small and without trails. After consulting various witnesses, Valenzuela determined the hill to be worth considerably more and demanded a higher price. In the end, Lucas paid 92 pesos for Cerro Topo and became the first owner of the hill (Garza Guajardo). He dedicated himself to working the hacienda, turning it into one of the most prosperous in Nuevo León as Juan repeatedly emphasized.

When Lucas González Hidalgo founded the hacienda, he “estimó que lo único valioso en el cerro del Topo radicaba en los tres veneros de agua que brotaban en medio de la hacienda” [estimated that the only valuable part of Cerro Topo lied in the three springs of water that flowed in the middle of the hacienda] (Garza Guajardo). Upon his death, the hacienda was divided among his sons who used the water from the springs for agriculture.

¹⁵ A *merced* was a grant of land from the Spanish crown to spur colonization, given to those who aided in conquest.

Only owing to the knowledge of local residents did the sons realize the unique properties of the spring water. Thus in 1791, they solicited the governor for permission to build small rooms for those arriving to bathe in the springs of Topo Chico. Governor Manuel Bahamonde y Villamil requested authorization from the Viceroy, informing him that the springs were attracting people from provinces such as Coahuila and Texas (Garza Guajardo). The Viceroy approved the project, and the first baths were constructed in 1795. I note that in the initial construction of the baths, the introduction of economic incentive made the waters multi-regional in scope; the baths were to bring outsiders to Monterrey rather than solely facilitate local use.

The U.S. soldiers frequented the springs of Topo Chico during the occupation of Monterrey in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). Captain William Seaton Henry visited these baths and wrote of them in his campaign sketches, a lengthy summary of the war. He describes the baths as “truly delicious,” “sufficiently impregnated with sulphur” yet also “perfectly rude and uncivilized” with “women...washing clothes in the water as it flowed from the bath” (Henry 1847: 230). Henry’s work suggests a folkloric idea of Mexican life, a notion which becomes prevalent in American thought. Ironically, of course, Monterrey sought to civilize its surroundings, the baths no exception. Here I see the beginnings of this ideological tension wherein Americans idealized the rural and “rude” while Monterrey anxiously sought modernity. Nonetheless, Captain Henry’s work provides us with a description of the baths in the mid-nineteenth century at the brink of modernization’s arrival to Topo Chico and to the city.

Industrialization came to Monterrey in the form of the train, the railroads arriving in early 1880’s (Mora Torres 2001: 87). As Nuncio asserts, “la línea entre la sociedad con

excrecencias feudales y la sociedad a la que moldea el capital es en América Latina la que va trazando el ferrocarril” [In Latin America, the railroad traces the line between the society with feudal growth and the society that shapes capital] (Nuncio 1997: 93). Topo Chico mirrors the arrival of industrialization to the city as the railroad changed the panorama of the baths. Initially, the train that ran through Monterrey passed through a station two kilometers away from the springs of Topo Chico, bringing the baths that much closer to residents in downtown Monterrey. However in 1887, the company Ferrocarril de Monterrey constructed a line directly to the spring. As the newspaper *La Voz de Nuevo León* reported in 1888, “cada día es más concurrida la estación de baños termales del Topo Chico” [every day the station at the thermal baths of Topo Chico is more crowded] (Quoted in Garza Guajardo). *Regiomontanos* began frequenting the baths, the trip becoming a Sunday tradition for the wealthy (Treviño Cantú, Garza Guajardo & Segovia 2003:10).

José P. Saldaña, a prolific *regio* historian, writes nostalgically about the cultural routine. He opens with a description of the train ride out to Cerro Topo, listing the names of the various trees and plants passed in route and noting the fresh, pure air upon leaving Monterrey’s downtown. In this way, Saldaña paints the experience of going to the baths as a return to nature, ironically facilitated by the arrival of the train. Furthermore, the historian writes that friendship (“*amistad*”) entered the passengers when reaching the countryside, and they began singing and telling stories. “Domingo a domingo Topo Chico se vestía de gala” [Sunday to Sunday Topo Chico was dressed elaborately, in full] with families picnicking, children flying kites, and vendors selling coffee and candy in the park outside the baths (Saldaña 1945: 188). This picturesque portrayal expresses Cerro Topo’s place in the memory of Monterrey, as one of social harmony and communal appreciation of nature, albeit in a

curated natural environment. Yet, this ritual was one of aristocratic residents of Monterrey, speaking to the nostalgia associated with the lifestyle of the wealthy during the Porfiriato. Saldaña's account reflects how the industrialization of the baths signified the arrival of modernity to Monterrey, offering new paradigms to express cultural identity within the modernizing city.

With the entrance of the railroad came the renovation of the baths, as capital growth followed the movement of the train. In 1886, the same year in which the concessions were approved for the rail line to Cerro Topo, Julio (Jules) Randle and A.C. Schryer, both American businessmen, purchased a forty-year contract of water use from the community of San Bernabe de Topo Chico and renovated the baths (Saldaña 1945: 182, Walsh 2015: 7, Vizcaya 1969: 24). Two hotels were constructed in the years following the remodel of the baths. Built in 1893, Hotel Marmól (marble) has become an iconic structure in Monterrey, made of stone from the Cerro Topo itself (Treviño Cantú, Garza Guajardo & Segovia 2003:10). The builder and first proprietor was an American woman by the name of E.R. Glass. She moved to Monterrey to invest a considerable sum of inherited money (Walsh 2015: 7). Thus, the renovation of the baths and the construction of Hotel Marmól reflects the movement of North Americans into Monterrey and how this immigration instigated economic growth and development.

The thermal baths of Topo Chico and Hotel Marmól began to appear in American newspapers, advertisements, and travel guides, the majority of which came from Texas.¹⁶

¹⁶ In his 1899 travel guide to Mexico, Reau Campbell describes Monterrey as “a much Americanized city, with its great smelters, factories, and breweries” and claims that the baths of Topo Chico “resemble the great Hot Springs of Arkansas that they are only to be as well known to make them equally popular” (Campbell 1899: 212, 215). See also Houston Daily Post, October 11, 1896

Recently, Topo Chico mineral water has been called “Texas’s unofficial drink” (De Hoyos 2016). I find it intriguing that Texans also frequented the baths more than a century prior, pointing to Cerro Topo’s place in the story of the two states. In April of 1891, The Fort Worth Gazette published a short piece on an excursion from Austin to Monterrey where the travelers would “be given an opportunity to visit the famous Topo Chico hot springs” (Fort Worth Gazette 1891). The excursion planned to be in Monterrey to observe the 5th of May celebration including “a grand military display and a bull fight” (Fort Worth Gazette 1891). Americans, particularly Texans, began traveling to Mexico intending to experience folkloric Mexican culture. Yet, such folkloric depictions are juxtaposed with ideas of modernization, as the article portrays the Mexican National railway as the facilitator of the excursion.



Figure 2.2: A drawing of the Hotel Marmól in a Sonoran newspaper, 1899.

This same contradiction is visible in an advertisement from San Antonio of Monterrey and Topo Chico written by businessmen A.C. Schryver and Julio Randle. They write that the traveler “will see much of the past in real life – manners and customs and...the Aztec and the Toltec, pure and simple as in the days of the Montezumas” (Schryver & Randle 1887: 5). Obviously the Aztecs and Toltecs did not inhabit Monterrey, making this description both geographically inaccurate and anachronistic. Connecting the female to the romanticized past, the advertisement describes “women grinding corn on the *metatas*” and “dark-eyed señoritas with their urns at the fountain for water” and compares them to Hebrew women and characters from the Bible. However, Schryver and Randle also focus on the baths of Topo Chico as modern, claiming that “one of the largest and handsomest bath houses on the continent has recently been erected at the Springs” with “the latest improved baths...hot, cold, electric and swimming baths” (Schryver & Randle 1887: 8). As the baths’ owners, Schryver and Randle sought to generate business at the springs. They portrayed Topo Chico as modernized yet still surrounded by the romanticized Mexican past, notably centered around depictions of women.

In many ways, this ironic depiction reflects the contemporary rhetoric of Compañía Topo Chico. As I will later argue, the company markets both antiquity and modernity. Thus, the bottling company would later utilize the language of the Americans to portray their product, mirroring the role of the Americans in the material development of the baths. The role of foreigners in the creation of many distinct facets of Mexican and Monterrey identity is extensive, this example but one of many. Initially, however, to *regiomontanos*, the baths of Topo Chico represented industry and development, a pastime for the elite during the Porfiriato. The nostalgia associated with Topo Chico in the *regio* understanding was the

antithesis of the American imagining – the early rise of modernity rather than a folkloric past, falsified indigenous presence, and romanticized Mexican women with *metatas*.

I have argued that the early industrialization of the baths of Topo Chico mirrors the arrival of modernity to Monterrey. The initial growth of the baths during the mid-eighteenth century reflects the border relationship that facilitated the movement of people and the early accumulation of capital. The baths themselves industrialized quickly as a result of the arrival of the railroad and the influx of North Americans, just like the city itself. However, the centrality of foreigners and foreign investments to the growth of Topo Chico and of Monterrey remains outside the discourse, privileging the industrious *regio* wild man as the reason for such success.

2.4 The Birth of the Bottling Company

Turning to the beginnings of the bottling company, I suggest that Compañía Topo Chico paradigmatically represents a *regio* company. The bottling company began during the height of the Porfiriato in the 1890s when Monterrey's "mother" industries were founded – the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc owned by the Garza-Sada family and the integrated steelworks, Fundidora de Fierro y Acero controlled by the Prieto family (Saragoza 1988: 2). In 1895, Julio Randle, the American entrepreneur who renovated the baths, began to bottle the water from the hot springs, contracting water rights from the community of Topo Chico and founding the Fábrica de Aguas Minerales de Topo Chico (Garza Guajardo, Walsh 2015). In 1901, Pedro Treviño, one of the wealthiest residents of San Bernabé Topo Chico, started La Gran Fábrica de Aguas Gaseosas de San Bernabé, likely receiving capital from outside

investors (Walsh 2015: 8). The two bottling companies joined in 1908, forming the Embotelladora Topo Chico S.A.

The contemporary Topo Chico website offers a slanted history of the company, highlighting the role of *regios* in the company's success. Emilio Helli6n, a French industrialist based in Monterrey, bought into the company and appointed Manuel Cantu Trevi6o, "renowned industrial of the textile industry" as the president (Topo Chico USA).¹⁷ Despite that Helli6n was a foreigner, the website implies that a famous *regio* industrial elite ran the company. The *embotelladora* merged with a New York firm Wilson and Company that named American Eugene E. Lasting to take over management. However, the website includes that his duties were assumed by *regio* Cayetano Ancira owing to his long absences. In 1914, regional businessmen Manuel L. Barragan and Leonides Paez joined the company, and after several years, foreign investors sold them their shares in the company. Topo Chico's website claims that foreign investors offered to sell their shares to the businessmen "without any guarantee but their work and moral character," painting the two *regios* as hard-working and upright (Topo Chico USA). However, Walsh posits that "foreign investors in the Topo Chico bottling fled" owing to the social upheaval of the Mexican Revolution (Walsh 2015: 12).

In looking at the early entrepreneurs behind the bottling companies, it is clear that outside investment and foreigners themselves facilitated this process. However, the history told by Compa6ia Topo Chico portrays the rise of *embotelladoras* (bottling companies) as a local enterprise. The information given on the company website minimizes the role of outsiders and exaggerates the role of *regios*. Compa6ia Topo Chico's claim to locality

¹⁷ Saragoza discusses Manuel Cantu Trevi6o's arrival into the elite circles of Monterrey through his swift social climbing and his marriage into an elite family (1988).

exemplifies the discourse explaining Monterrey's industrial success, predicating modernization on the civilized and industrious *regio* personality. The company's description of Barragan and Paez, who would become the owners, represents this discursive identity. Yet, the rise of two *regio* owners shows how the bottling company saw the development of industrial elites, further suggesting Compañía Topo Chico as an emblematic representation of Monterrey's industrial enterprises.

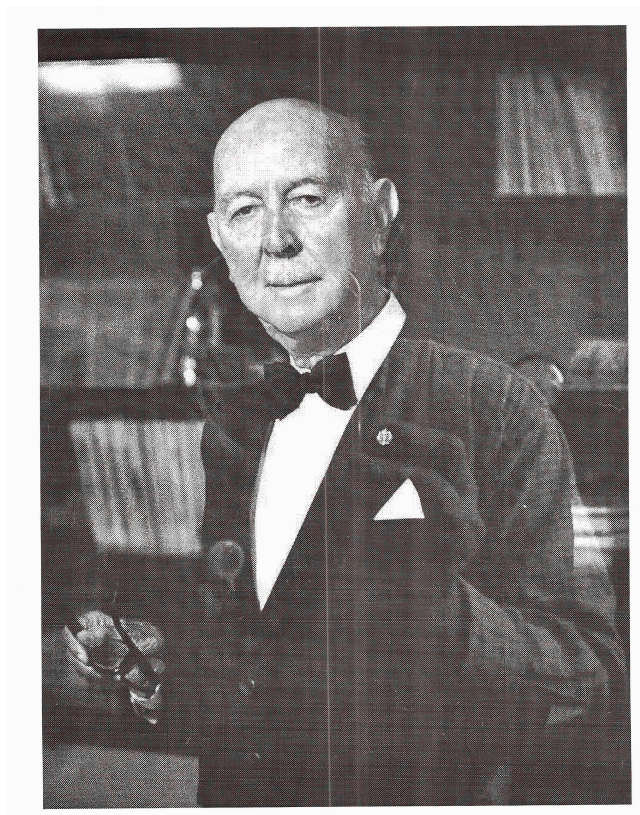


Figure 2.3: Manuel L. Barragan

The industry itself was paradigmatically *regio*. Owing to the success of the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc, brewing and bottling came to identify the industry of Monterrey. In the late 1910's, Barragan and Paez introduced a range of flavored sodas to their line of production. Cold soft drinks like beer became an iconically *regio* beverage, owing to the intensity of the

heat in Nuevo León. As Mora-Torres argues, “Monterrey’s beers and soft drinks were associated with progress because of their newness to Mexicans and because they were mass-produced” (Mora-Torres 2001:195). Thus bottled beverages represented modernity to consuming *regiomontanos*. The economic production of Topo Chico speaks to a shift in social understanding and to how material products were affecting cultural development and offering a sense of regional identity in their circulation. As *regio* discourse aided in the symbolic production of culture, the materiality of bottles of Topo Chico facilitated the evolution of modern culture in Monterrey.



Figure 2.4: The first (1895) and third (1912) bottles in their displays cases at Casa Topo Chico.

The company has used seven different bottles with a variety of looks and labels over the course of production. I was able to see them on a private tour of the Casa de Topo Chico, a small museum on the Compañía Topo Chico's property. The early bottles drew on the idea of locality, making representations of Monterrey central. The first bottle (1895) featured local images of the Cerro de la Silla (Saddle Mountain), the iconic landmark in Monterrey, of an irrigated ranch and a plaza likely in the community of Topo Chico, and of a lion to represent Nuevo León. My tour guide at Casa de Topo Chico called it a nod to "*Monterrey rústico*." The third bottle, produced in 1912, was simpler, carrying only the brand name yet still centered the emblem of the lion to identify the place of production. Topo Chico was marketed as an iconically *regio* product from the proud state of Nuevo León.

However, in 1926, Compañía Topo Chico obtained the Coca-Cola franchise, making it the first bottler in Mexico to produce Coca-Cola. Herein lies the irony of Topo Chico's claim to locality – the company embedded itself in international capitalist structures in its earliest decades. As soft drinks had become a quintessentially *regio* product, the city boasted many bottling companies during the twentieth century, including Casa Guajardo, S.A., Embotelladora del Bravo, S.A. de C.V., Embotelladora Peña Blanca, S.A., and Grapette de Mexico, S.A., to name of a few of the most famous (Directorio Industrial de Nuevo León 1968). Juan loved to reminisce about these different companies, nostalgically discussing the drinks they manufactured with older library employees. However, none of these companies exist today; Topo Chico is the only bottling company in Monterrey from the twentieth century to cross into the twenty-first. Thus, I contend that it was not Topo Chico's product exceptionalism or regional uniqueness that facilitated its longevity. Rather Compañía Topo Chico has relied on international networks to stabilize and sell their products.



Figure 2.5: Topo Chico becomes a Coca-Cola franchise in 1926.

The fourth bottle, entering the market in the same year that Topo Chico aligned with Coca-Cola, no longer carried images of lions or rustic Monterrey plazas. Instead, the Aztec princess was central on the bottle's label. As the company began to market the myth of the princess, they claimed a set cultural understandings. The choice to use this legend that draws on both regional identity and national imagining represents a selection of tradition (Williams 1977). The company consequently presented a limited and specific kind of indigeneity, using a myth to maintain ideas of the dominant culture. In this stylized representation, based on a myth, indigeneity was reinforced as a folkloric notion of the past, a contrasting pole to the modern and civilized Monterrey. These ideas drawn by elites circulated widely with the bottles of mineral water, proving how economic production can serve to affirm and reproduce

the understandings of the dominant culture. Topo Chico's princess, then, functions as a site to observe the integrated role of discursive and economic production in constituting cultural and social understanding.



Figure 2.6: The fourth bottle carrying the image of the Aztec princess.

I ask what changed for the company as the princess became an integral part of Topo Chico's production? Why did it change at the particular moment it did? Why did the company shift from privileging representations of the region amidst Monterrey's strong regional discourse? I suggest that the increased role of the nation and its post-revolutionary project in the years following the Mexican Revolution offered a distinct discourse placing indigeneity in relationship to the state. What discursive connections can be drawn to growing national

imaginary? And, what economic dependencies between region and state can be developed? I argue that despite the continued claims to locality, Compañía Topo Chico relied not only on foreign capital and international alliances but on the nation itself to facilitate resource consolidation, the privatization of the waters of Topo Chico springs. How does the role of nation-state also debunk myths of Compañía Topo Chico's locality?

3. A Princess, National Projects, and Political Economy

The early twentieth century proved chaotic for Mexico, yet crucial for the development of national consciousness in a modernizing state. Following the economically conservative dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, the nation threw itself into a ten-year revolution (1910-1920). Different regional factions vied for state power, drawing *campesinos* and importantly the nation's indigenous peoples into a fight for land and lofty ideas of equality and justice. The Mexican Revolution was indeed national in scope and the process of reunifying the country all the more extensive. In this chapter, I will consider how the increasing presence of the nation in the wake of the Mexican Revolution affected Monterrey and in turn, Compañía Topo Chico. I trace how a small bottling company in the outskirts of the city demonstrates the evolving tensions and dependencies between region and nation, particularly as *regios* have long been distrustful of the federal government.

As we have seen, geographic distance to the national capital affected the *regio* relationship to the Mexican state, “creat[ing] a schism...regarding *nuevoleoneses*’ lack of identification as citizens of *la patria*” (Hernández 2002: 2). *Regiomontanos* viewed the federal government warily and distrustingly; the complicated nature of this relationship dates to the colonial period. As historian Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez explores, the central government did little to assist and protect the colonists from Indian incursions, instead encouraging the colonists to protect their towns as acts of “patriotism” (Valerio-Jiménez 2013: 45). However, this “indifference” affirmed the “colonists’ growing sense of alienation from the national government” (Valerio-Jiménez 2013:46). The government’s inability to protect the frontier from the Indians expanded to include the Anglo-Americans in the wake of the Mexican-American War, solidifying a regional distrust toward the nation and inducing skepticism of its

competency. As regional identities became more meaningful than national ones, *regiomontanos* learned to subvert the national government to the benefit of regional growth. Contraband across the border became central to *nuevoleoneses*, demonstrating the regional propensity to subvert national laws. Juan Mora-Torres writes, “the Mexican government had condemned contraband for ruining native industry and for undermining Mexican finances;” however, the frontier residents “proudly subscribed to the central government’s equating of smuggling to the northeast” (Mora-Torres 2001: 35).

During the city’s industrialization, the business elites followed this proclivity to subvert national control, distrusting involvement and interventions from the government. As the Mexican state sought to bring the economy under its control, the elites worked to protect their industries and entrepreneurial enterprises, clashing with the state over policies and regulations, particularly surrounding labor (Saragoza 1988). Much of the elites’ subversion of the government was carried out discursively: elites connected “authority, discipline, and work ethic...traditionalism, and moral rectitude” to *regio* control while the Mexican government “meant centralization, despotism, and corruption as well as immorality, laxity, and disorder” (Saragoza 1998: 7). Thus in the post-revolutionary period, national unifying efforts were met with the same distrust and wariness, clearly demonstrated in the elitist responses to the Mexican post-revolutionary project. So again, I find the Aztec princess on Topo Chico’s bottles in a paradox – why has this company used a state-developed representation in a city where the government has historically been distrusted, subverted, and discursively ignored?

Following the place of the princess leads me from regional pride to national projects – projects of unification and inclusion, privatization and redistribution. In this chapter, I look at the role of the post-revolutionary government’s distinct discourse, constructing a shared

national heritage and symbolically representing indigeneity in particular ways. I place this new national discourse in opposition to the *regio* discourse, problematizing regional identity and exposing the discursive strength of the state. I then turn to the Mexican state's role in facilitating the privatization the waters of Topo Chico, questioning again Compañía Topo Chico's claims to locality. I seek to understand the shifting political and economic factors in the twentieth century that challenged and changed practices of production within Monterrey. Yet the shift in economic production would influence discursive production, enabling the rise of the state symbolically in the *regio* imagination and solidifying state hegemony over cultural production in Mexico. How has Compañía Topo Chico paradoxically affirmed the post-revolutionary discourse, reinforced state power, and reproduced cultural hegemony, eclipsing communal history and contemporary indigeneity in the process?

3.1 The Aztec Ideal and the Post-Revolutionary Project

The princess speaks to a shift in cultural production in Monterrey, a revaluation of regional identity in relationship to the Mexican state. We have seen the strength and longevity of the regional and *regio* identity, developed and reinforced discursively from colonization to industrialization. However, Topo Chico's change of representation and shift in marketing strategies points to the rise of a new national discourse, competing with the well-established *regio* understanding. Seeking to include notions of indigeneity, the Mexican government turned to representations of past civilizations, glorifying the Aztec empire. Visual culture – images, art, and iconographies – constructed and affirmed this new national discourse disseminated by the post-revolutionary government. In this way, Topo Chico's Aztec princess

is a paradigmatic representation, fulfilling the state's project to symbolically include the Indian.

In order to understand the rise of the post-revolutionary discourse, I look to history to reconstruct the ideas and uses of indigeneity in the Mexican framework of state-building and identity formation, primarily expressed through the elevation of the Aztec empire. As historian Rick López writes, "Mexicans sometimes seem to be 'obsessed' with the question of identity;" the question of how the Indians fit into this identity has persisted since the earliest ideas of an independent Mexico (López 2010: 6) The role of indigenous peoples in the national understanding has evolved, at times ignoring, at other moments idealizing its native population. Nonetheless, each new discourse disseminated to consolidate the nation-state has attempted to answer this 'Indian question,' to integrate the indigenous peoples toward progress and national cohesion.

Beginning with the discourses of the independence movement in the late eighteenth century, the Mexican focus on national identity is already apparent. David Brading, the prolific historian of Mexico, distinguishes the Mexican independence movement from the other American struggles owing to the ideology of Creole patriotism and its "quest for a social identity" (Brading 1984: 39). In order to invent ideas of a shared Mexican identity, Creole intellectuals and the clergy, began to portray the Aztec empire as the glory of the Mexican *patria*. As the Spanish discourse asserted Creole incapacity and Aztec barbarism to discredit ideas of independence, the Creole elites discursively refuted these claims by privileging the Aztec past. John Leddy Phelan asserts that the Creoles adopted the Aztec empire as their own 'classical antiquity' so as "to secure roots that sank deep into the history of the New World" and create "an American past" disconnected from Europe (Phelan 1960: 761). Mexican

historian Enrique Florescano exposes how Creoles “appropriat[ed] the indigenous past to give historical legitimacy to their own claims” to independence (Florescano 1994: 191). Thus, Mexican elites drew on the Aztec civilization to justify their independence and conceive an idea of a nation, romanticizing the Indian past and overlooking the present Indian plight.

Yet upon gaining independence, the discourse changed, recognizing the contemporary “Indian problem” and what it signified for the governing of the new nation. Charles Hale argues that “the racial question” developed slowly after 1867 as the post-Reforma liberal establishment noticed and sought solutions to the violent rural uprisings such as the guerrilla movement of Jalisco, the Maya caste war of the Yucatán, and the fierce resistance of the Yaquis of the north (Hale 1989). The rise of the ideology of Comtean Positivism suggested that the national issues surrounding the ‘unruly’ Indians – “the Indian problem” – could be alleviated through scientific investigation. The development of the sciences, particularly archeology and anthropology, also led to the collection of pre-conquest artifacts and so cemented the romanticized place of Indian cultures in the national imaginary (Earle 2007). During the Porfiriato, with the embrace of Hispanic origins, elites asserted that the indigenous population lacked interest in government participation and buried the notion of indigenous citizenship. Instead, they constructed Mexican nationalism around a rhetoric of homogeneity, permitting the exclusion of the contemporary native peoples (Earle 2007: 175) The racial theories of Spencer and Darwin were particularly salient, exposing how scientific discourse was utilized to conceptualize and marginalize indigeneity within the nation.

Nonetheless, Aztec symbolism expanded under the dictatorship of Díaz through projects to beautify Mexico City. Díaz appointed Vicente Riva Palacio as Minister of Development who focused his urban renewal project on the Paseo de la Reforma. In the

center of the Paseo, the Porfirian government chose to place a statue of Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, “a high point in the exaltation of the Indian past under Díaz” (Keen 1971: 417). As Barbara Tenenbaum writes, “the statue vividly proclaims the government’s decision that Mexico would officially identify itself with its pre-Columbian Indian past” (Tenenbaum 1994: 23). However, the historian argues, the use of Aztec symbolism manipulated the public, legitimating Díaz’s control of the country and confirming the power of Mexico City to rule by inheritance (Tenenbaum 1994). Thus the perpetuation of Aztec symbolism by state actors was hegemonic, an appropriation of a past civilization to reinforce contemporary power relationships.

The Mexican Revolution proved significant for the construction of national identity, shifting from the narrow, exclusionary, and elite constructions of Mexico, characteristic of the Porfiriato to the mass-based ethnicized and inclusive identity of the twentieth century. The revolutionary period saw the mobilization of the modern Indian, aligning with the competing factions in the national struggle. As the Revolution exposed “the Indian’s capacity for either troublesome sedition or supportive mobilization,” the post-revolutionary government was given the ideological task of integrating the Indian into modern society (Knight 1990: 83). Thus, the conflict of the Revolution transformed the incorporation of the Indian into an integral part of consolidating the nation.

A new discourse developed in response to this task; *indigenismo* aimed to celebrate the nation’s indigenous past while facilitating the assimilation of the contemporary indigenous into the nation-state. Historian Alexander Dawson claims that *indigenismo* was both an “ideological project” and an attempt to “extend the physical authority of the state throughout the country” (Dawson 2004: xxi). Thus in the dissemination of this ideological discourse, the

post-revolutionary government sought national control and the incorporation of the vast population toward stability, homogeneity, and modernity. In other words, the ideology of *indigenismo* was aimed to reorient the nation “from a traditional, indigenous, agrarian economy towards a modern, Western, capitalist one” (Swarthout 2004: 69). Although part of a political project, two key thinkers, an anthropologist and a philosopher, formulated the emerging ideology of *indigenismo*. Their understandings of contemporary indigeneity differed and so demonstrate the multiplicity of theories following the Revolution aiming to bring the recently politically-invigorated indigenous populations into the fold of the nation-state.

Manuel Gamio, the Columbian-trained anthropologist, studied under Franz Boas and succeeded him as the director of the School of Archeology and Ethnology which Boas had established in Mexico City (Swarthout 2004). Gamio’s great contribution was the reconstruction of the archeological site of Teotihuacán, which became the “greatest public site in Mexico and effectively reinstated Indian civilization as the foundation of Mexican history” (Brading 1988: 78). In his book *Forjando Patria*, Gamio called for widespread assimilation of the Indian population into the Mexican nation (Keen 1971). He founded the Dirección de Antropología in 1917 which carried out his ideas of assimilation and heavily influenced the development of *indigenismo* as discourse of the state. Supporting the aesthetic achievements of Indian civilization, Gamio launched a campaign to revive artisan industries, primarily textiles, ceramics, and metals (Brading 1988). However, Gamio would fail “to encounter any value in Indian culture other than its artistic production” (Brading 1988: 83). Thus, as one of the earliest engineers of revolutionary *indigenismo*, Gamio asserted the glory of the Indian civilization to be in the past while the contemporary Indians had little to offer outside of pots and blankets. And as the Dirección de Antropología served as the first tool of the state to

spread ideologies of indigenous incorporation, the political discourse of *indigenismo* reflected Gamio's intent to symbolically include the contemporary indigenous.

Philosopher and educator José Vasconcelos has become one of the most recognizable figures in Mexican cultural thought. In the years following the Revolution, Vasconcelos served as the head of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) which sought more concrete and tangible implementations of *indigenismo* through education in rural indigenous communities. The SEP would come to play a significant role in the post-revolutionary project to extend governmental control in rural Mexico (Dawson 2004). Brading argues that Vasconcelos was the "first Mexican Romantic" as his ideas were in opposition to the scientific knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon world and to the Porfirian thinkers' commitment to Spencer and Darwin (Brading 1984: 73). His famous and now highly contested work, *La raza cósmica*, describes his notion of the cosmic race, "a mystical blend of European, Amerindian, African, and Asian components...destined to become the world's fifth and last great power" (Swarthout 2004: 108). Despite that Vasconcelos relied on Romantic notions rather than the anthropological ideas of Franz Boas, he nonetheless believed that "the aestheticization of culture held the key for Mexican national unity" (Swarthout 2004: 107). Thus his lofty ideas remained in the realm of the symbolic, framing *indigenismo* as a movement of the Mexican nation toward a modernity in which the indigenous were assimilated into a mythical fifth race.

Importantly, "the Indians themselves...[became] the objects, not the authors of *indigenismo*" (Knight 1990: 77). However, these authors of *indigenismo* were connected to transnational dialogues and heavily influenced by foreigner thinkers. Post-revolutionary *indigenismo* in Mexico reflected a regional pattern of thinking about the Indian and the "Indian" problem in order to modernize the nation (Knight 1990). Ironically, the Mexican

discourse of *indigenismo* sought to counter the hegemony of the United States by elevating an ethnically distinct idea of Mexican identity. Yet anthropologist Franz Boas represented one of the many foreign influences, including figures such as economists, artists and art dealers, diplomats, historians, writers, and singers (López 2010). Historian Rick López problematizes the construction of *Mexicanidad* by non-Mexicans, showing how foreigners facilitated a “postrevolutionary ethnicized authenticity” as much as Mexicans themselves (López 2010: 61). The aspects of Mexican culture valued by foreigners became most significant to Mexicans demonstrated through Swarthout’s understanding of Vasconcelos – “Vasconcelos recognizes only those cultural elements of indigenous societies perceived as valuable from the European perspective” (Swarthout 2004: 110). Thus, representations of an ethnicized Mexican identity were as much a result of the Western imagining as they were nationally-generated expression of *Mexicanidad*. As Compañía Topo Chico adopted the language of the Americans in their marketing, the discourse of *indigenismo* that developed the princess was similarly a partial product of foreign influence. Here I find yet another paradox – the princess supposedly encapsulating authentic *Mexicanidad* was heavily envisioned by non-Mexicans.

Indigenismo was enacted through governmental policies, programs, and institutions like the Dirección de Antropología and the SEP, indicating the state’s role as a social and ethnic arbiter in the post-revolutionary period. But as the two primary architects of *indigenismo* indicate, the discourse became fully rooted in the realm of the symbolic through processes of aestheticization. For the purposes of the reading Topo Chico’s Aztec princess, I seek to understand how *indigenismo* functioned as an aesthetic, visual project that placed indigeneity firmly in the past while doing little to alleviate poverty and racism in the contemporary moment. Alan Knight summarizes the paradoxical dilemma of post-

revolutionary *indigenismo* this way: “official ideology proclaims [indigenous peoples’] worth, even their superiority; but sociopolitical circumstances repeatedly display the reality of prejudice” (Knight 1990: 101). Through her fieldwork in the town of Hueyapan in southern Mexico, anthropologist Judith Freidlander offers ethnographic evidence of this very reality. She suggests that “Indian-ness is more a measure of what the villagers are not or do not have vis-à-vis the Hispanic elite,” exposing how ethnic identity became tied to material and social limitations (Friedlander 1975: 71).

Art, architecture, imagery, and iconography became the site in which to implement state ideology of *indigenismo*. As Rick López demonstrates, the post-revolutionary government utilized the centennial celebration of Mexico’s independence in 1921 to represent the newly cohering national identity visually. Analyzing the Exhibition of Popular Art, he argues that the committee aimed to authenticate indigenous art as the national popular art, esteemed “for its independence from Western visual traditions” (López 2010: 92). “Popular art” integrated Pre-Columbian and Hispanic traditions while establishing a non-Western aesthetic for the nation (Swarthout 2004). The exhibition created a market for this form of “folk art,” indicating how indigeneity began to be consumable by the mestizo population. Furthermore, the government sponsored an *India Bonita* contest, a nonthreatening way to include Indian culture in the state’s incipient project as indigenous women reminded of traditional patriarchy and ethnic hierarchy (López 2010). Thus, the contestants solidified the Indian woman as the “symbol of the new post-revolutionary cultural nation and icon of the nationalist imagination...disempowered, feminine, innocent, agentless, authentic” (López 2010: 60-61). The visual dimensions of the state’s discourse reasserted racialized

understandings of indigeneity and naturalized long-held understandings of difference, further demonstrated in the muralist movement of the period.

As head of the SEP, José Vasconcelos commissioned three artists – Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco – to paint murals in educational buildings in Mexico City, aiming to represent visually a national heritage celebrating the Indian (Keen 1971: 465). Diego Rivera would become the largest proponent of *indigenismo* idealizing Mexico's Aztec heritage and viewing the contemporary Indian as "the prototypical national symbol... represent[ing] a being uncorrupted by Western decadence (Keen 1971; Swarthout 2004: 75). As Swarthout suggests, Rivera "created a new iconography that linked the idealized figure of the Indian...with the forces of Nature" (Swarthout 2004:75). Indeed post-revolutionary art and iconography reified the long-standing ideas connecting the Indian to nature. And this iconography would become easily marketable as indicated by the princess on Topo Chico's bottles. The Indian in general and the Indian women specifically became symbols of the new nationalism, the forming post-revolutionary identity which asserted an authentic *Mexicanidad*. Thus Topo Chico's Indian princess paradigmatically exemplifies the symbolism of the state, particularly her folkloric identity as an Aztec princess.

Aztec imagery and symbolism persisted throughout the post-revolutionary period, transforming from a tool of political legitimization to one of identity construction. By symbolically drawing on the Aztec past, *indigenismo* asserted a shared Aztec heritage for the Mexican population. The discourse suggested that all Mexicans descended from the Aztecs and so broadened the idea of indigeneity within the national understanding. Thus *indigenismo* institutionalized the Aztecs as the nation's ancestors and cemented "the authorized ideology of Mexico [as] the history of the Aztecs" (Hernández 2002: 48). However, as Alan Knight

reminds us, the elevation of the Aztec empire facilitated the hierarchal stratification of the nation's native peoples based on their forms of civilization (Knight 1990). Other indigenous groups, particularly from northern Mexico have remained at the marginality of the national narrative. Marie Theresa Hernández explores the consequences for Nuevo León, writing that the Chichimecas “are relegated to an invisible history in a nation that proudly displays its indigenous heritage,” becoming “the Other in Mexico's indigenous world” (Hernández 2002: 62). Instead, *norteños* assumed the imagery of the Aztecs to connect with Mexican ideologies disseminated in the post-revolutionary period, represented clearly in Topo Chico's Aztec princess first produced in 1926. The advent of the princess demonstrates the shift in discursive production in Monterrey. However, this new form of symbolic cultural production necessitated the expansion of economic production, rooted in the control of natural materials, in this case the waters of Topo Chico.

3.2 Privatization and Material Production in Topo Chico

As anthropologist Casey Walsh explores, the slow privatization of the Topo Chico hot springs serves as a process Karl Marx defines as primitive accumulation, “how land was initially wrested from peasants and made available to capital” and importantly, “enabled by the state” (Walsh 2015:4). As the national government and state of Nuevo León would clash over control of the waters, the community's ancestral claims would be lost to the bottling companies. However, this particular history – the privatization of a local community's water supply and the place of the Mexican state in facilitating this process – is eclipsed from Compañía Topo Chico's discourse of locality. Here, I argue that the privatization of the waters of Topo Chico exposes how the growth of economic production facilitated the rise of

the new national discourse within region. Indeed, material production would influence symbolic production, represented in the princess herself, together reconstituting culture and integrating national identity in Monterrey.

As early as 1898, the national government under Porfirio Díaz declared the drainage waters of the Topo Chico springs to be national waters, as they eventually reached the Río Bravo (Walsh 2015). Despite the initial federal claims to the waters, community members continued to control the resource, renting out the waters to the bathing and bottling companies as discussed in the previous chapter and using the rest for domestic and agriculture purposes. During the Mexican Revolution, *agraristas* “reinforced local control of the hot springs,” ruling them to be “private rather than national waters” (Walsh 2015:10). However, wealthier community members sought to control the water supply, leading to struggles and uprisings over the uses of the Topo Chico’s drainage. Thus, in the post-revolutionary period, “local rebels of Topo Chico adopted the politics of agrarian reform” (*agrarismo*), hoping to have the land of the of the wealthy members nationalized and awarded as an *ejido* (Walsh 2015: 11).

Seeking to quell unrest in Topo Chico, the governor of Nuevo León transferred land from large landowners to the *agraristas* in 1923 (Walsh 2015). *Nuevoleonese* politicians aimed to prevent the federal nationalization of the land by enacting land transfers locally. Here again, the *regio* tendency to undermine and ignore national projects subverted the federal program of redistribution. Throughout the 1920s, Walsh argues that “both Nuevo León and the federal government of Mexico asserted control over the springs using scientific arguments about the origin and destinations of the waters” (Walsh 2015: 14). Both parties hired scientists, conducted research, and compiled reports regarding the flow of Topo Chico’s drainage, science serving as the tool of the state. Whereas Nuevo León aimed to prove the

water remained within state lines, the Mexican government argued that it eventually flowed into the Rio Bravo and consequently fell under national jurisdiction. The thermal springs of Topo Chico became a site of contestation between the state of Nuevo León and the national government, ignoring the demands of the *campesinos* who had used the water for centuries. The clear winner of the conflict would be the bottling company, proving the continuation of capitalist logics in Topo Chico.

Eventually, the state government would approve the creation of an *ejido* in 1923 and so reinforce “the federal government’s position...[as] the only legitimate owner and administrator of national land and water” (Walsh 2015: 13). By awarding an *ejido*, communities members no longer had an ancestral claim to the resources of the springs, rather the thermal waters fell under national control. The national Secretary of Agriculture adjudicated who could use the water and for what, any uses not formally recognized were considered illegal including established communal uses (Walsh 2015). The Mexican state repeatedly allotted the water from the Topo Chico springs to companies, particularly Compañía Topo Chico owing to its relationship with the Coca-Cola Company; by 1940, the entirety of the thermal waters was used by the bottling companies (Walsh 2015). Thus it was the national government that facilitated the consolidation of resources for Compañía Topo Chico and enabled capitalist development to overtake local ancestral claims.

It is this very history –the loss of communal lands to capital enterprise – that the symbolism of the princess eclipses. Prior to the iconography of the princess, the bottles featured agricultural scenes, likely of the community of Topo Chico. The princess replaced these localized images, reflecting the integration of national symbols in the post-revolutionary period. Thus, the princess not only eclipses Mexico’s indigenous culture, both past and

present; the icon of the princess represents the banishment of local history, an erasure of the community and their claims to the waters of Topo Chico. Through the privatization of the springs, the state facilitated the expansion of economic production and the dissemination of its emerging national identity. The post-revolutionary Mexican government, through economic and discursive control, brought cultural production under state power. Again, I problematize the Compañía's claims to locality; the production of Topo Chico was not simply embedded in international capitalist networks but these networks were propagated and sustained by the Mexican state.

However, my experience at the Topo Chico corporate offices seemed to tell a different story. The current Topo Chico offices are housed in the iconic Hotel Marmól, constructed by Mrs. Glass in 1893. The company bought and restored the decaying building in 1980. Negotiating a visit to these offices was itself a feat. When discussing my various failed attempts with *regio* historian Dr. Juan Ramón, he half-smiled knowingly – “muy familiar la empresa.” He indicated the tight-knit, closed nature of the company, the corporate distance they maintain. This struck me as interesting, particularly as I had seen the company's new slogan – “Es lo que somos” (It's what we are) – plastered on buses throughout the city. The company simultaneously claimed communality yet sought to remain removed from residents of (and in my case, guests to) Monterrey. Ironically, the Casa de Topo Chico, the company's beautifully done museum, is not open to visitors.

But the employees seemed proud to be a part of this iconically *regio* enterprise. Each person I met indicated the years they had worked for the company. My tour guide to the Casa de Topo Chico, Pablo, had worked for the company for over 20 years. Furthermore, they aimed to emphasize the continued locality to processes of production and employment.

Ruben, the head of national sales who miraculously set up my visit, claimed that over 80% of the production workers come from the *barrio* of Topo Chico. Pablo expressed his family's long-standing relationship with the company, stating that his mother's *quinceanera* had been held in a dance hall formerly owned by Topo Chico. I left thinking that perhaps the large structures of national redistribution, privatization, and international capitalism were fictionalized and that the company employees had ancestral claims to these waters after all.



Figure 3.1: Hotel Marmól converted into Topo Chico's corporate offices.

3.3 Political Economy and the Hegemony of the State

Thus the iconography of the princess reflects the shifting political and economic factors of the period, demonstrating how the state entered the region and influenced the

evolution of local political economy. Compañía Topo Chico clearly demonstrates the strength of the state's new ability to affect local forms of economic and discursive production and to redefine the political aspirations of a small bottling company. It is a corporate interpretation of the post-revolutionary project, evidencing how these ideas were carried out commercially. How did economic production affirm the national discourse, reinforcing state goals of consolidation and control?

In looking at the historiography of *indigenismo*, little work has been done considering the role of commercial production in fulfilling the aims of state's lofty national project. Joanne Hershfield agrees that "little attention has been paid to the production of a domestic exoticism that serves the intertwined interests of nationalism and of commerce," that is the political and the economic (Hershfield 2008: 130). Her work offers insight into the commodified production of exotic femininity in the post-revolutionary period. This commodification process entails "an agency appropriat[ing] a 'colonized,' domesticated version of an Other to meet its own needs" (Santaolalla 2000: 10). Hershfield traces how the nationalist symbol of the indigenous women became marketable in the 1920s, drawing on the artistic production supported by the state. A 1923 ad for Tequila Victoria, she argues, "repeats motifs found in indigenous craftwork and contemporary murals and paintings" (Hershfield 2008: 131). The government's project to visualize *Mexicanidad* through the popularization of indigenous craft and the muralist movement became translatable to commercial appropriations drawing on the same aesthetics. For the private sector, the state itself had done the majority of the marketing, defining difference and making it consumable to mestizo populations. In her study of tequila and Mexican national identity, sociologist Marie Sarita Gaytán points to how the Mayahuel, the Aztec goddess of agave and fertility, became an icon

of the industry as her “indigenous qualities inexorably linked tequila to the origins of *lo mexicano*” (Gaytán 2014: 110). By utilizing indigenous imagery, particularly of the Aztecs, companies were able to market themselves as authentically Mexican, validating their products while reinforcing the power of the state over national identity.



Figure 3.2: An ad from the *regio* newspaper *El Porvenir*, September 1941.

In relation to the shifts in the post-revolutionary political economy, I wish to think about how the consolidating state justified its power to hegemonically control tradition. As Raymond Williams theorizes, the selection of tradition is a political process (Roseberry 1982). Indeed, looking at the role of the discourse of indigeneity and the development of *indigenismo*, the role of politics in controlling Mexico’s traditions and historical

understanding is undeniable. This selective tradition facilitates the hegemony of a “dominant culture” (Roseberry 1982: 27). Thus, I contend that the post-revolutionary government became a producer of dominant culture within the Mexican imaginary. Relying on discursive production, the Mexican state legitimated itself and proved its position as the social arbiter of the nation (Knight 1990). However, the production of dominant culture was importantly mediated through the realm of the visual. By visually implementing the ideas of *indigenismo*, the state economically incentivized the reproduction of the motifs and symbols that comprised its post-revolutionary project. Essentially, the state opened space for the production of indigenous icons and imagery. And in their circulation, the hegemony of the revolutionary state and of the dominant culture was reinforced.

Again, the Aztec princess on Topo Chico’s bottles exemplifies a paradox. Ironically, the product of Topo Chico exemplifies the power of the state to construct a national identity rather than an assertion of local identity. The 1926 icon of the Aztec princess speaks to the newfound presence of the nation-state in Nuevo León during the post-revolutionary period. This presence was discursively symbolic but also quite tangible, demonstrated through the nationalization and privatization of the spring’s waters. I argue that Compañía Topo Chico sought to market authentic *Mexicanidad* following the state’s *indigenismo* project although this discourse was ironically developed in part by foreigners. Nonetheless, the Aztec symbolism legitimized the bottling company as a true Mexican producer, an attempt to claim national recognition while maintaining its local pride. The story of the princess functions as one of national greatness, glorifying the shared Mexican past but placing the magic of the myth in Monterrey. It serves to both integrate the region into an imagined national identity while still espousing *regio* exceptionalism. Thus, in understanding the political economy of

Topo Chico, I am speaking to the varying levels of hegemonic cultural formation as disseminated locally and nationally. This cultural hegemony, developed at the intersections of discursive and economic production, has been drawn spatially and racially, symbolically elevating and consequently eclipsing indigeneity.

In this chapter, I have sought to understand the processes and powers in production before problematizing what consumption produces in consuming populations, the subject of my next chapter. But there is one last place to think about the production – the production of the myth that travels with each bottle of Topo Chico. The company has utilized a folkloric tale that takes the princess from the realm of the visually symbolic to the fictive. It is this myth that intrigued me initially, inspired this project, and puzzles me still. I aimed to find some textual evidence, some written source to explain the origins of this legend. I, like every consumer, wanted an authentic story rather than a fictional appropriation. I searched in databases of all sorts, including libraries in California and in Monterrey. I read through old *nuevoleonense* and *norteño* folktales, hoping to find some semblance of origin. Yet in all the searching, I was repeatedly redirected back to Topo Chico's USA website, the only textual telling of the myth by the company itself. I give you what I have, the story as published on topochicousa.net.

This legend speaks of the virtues of the water that since 1895 has given its name to one of the most important drinks in all of Mexico: Topo Chico Mineral Water.

There was a beautiful Aztec princess who suffered a terrible disease. A disease so strange that no doctors of her father, Moctezuma I Ilhuicamina, successor in 1440 of the King Itzcoatl, had been able to cure.

Desperate, the King turned to the older priests in the kingdom to find a cure for his beautiful daughter. They told him that according to the timeless stories of travelers, in a far away northern land, there were strange and hidden waters which flowed at high temperatures.

Waters in which one only needed to bathe in or drink from to regain vigor, joy, strength, and refreshment.

Encouraged by this news, Moctezuma I ordered an immediate expedition to take his daughter to this amazing place. After traveling long and rugged roads, the Princess and her expedition reached a fertile valley flanked by mountains. To the east, they saw a mountain with the form of woman's face (now Cerro de la Silla) and a mole-shaped hill, from whose slopes flowed the prodigal waters.

After spending some time there, taking baths and drinking from the water, the daughter of Moctezuma I, his priests, and chiefs returned to the Anahuac lands optimistic, strong, happy, and refreshed. The news about the Princess's recovery spread throughout the kingdom and has passed from generation to generation up until modern times.

I arrived in Monterrey determined and found for certain what I figured all along. I asked my historian friend Juan Ramón; he smiled and shook his head. I pressed the archivist at the city's primary archival collection, and he too just grinned. Their responses were the same as all the Uber drivers and fellow taco eaters. "No se puede." "Como es posible?" "Uno llega de allá hasta acá caminando?" "Hoy día la capital es ocho horas en auto, ocho horas!" [It cannot be. How is it possible? A person arrive from there to here walking? Today the capital is eight hours driving, eight hours!] Thus the *regios* who directed me, drove me, and fed me made me feel the absurdity of the quest for authentic origin. Juan Ramón, looking over the top of his glasses, asserted "puro marketing." The myth came from the company, an imaginary rendition of local lore. As one of the marketers on the 2012 rebranding team (discussed in the next chapter) affirmed, "la leyenda de la Princesa es mezcla de la leyenda sobre las propiedades curativas del Topo Chico y el folclor de la marca durante sus primeros 30 años." [The legend of the princess is a mix of the legend of the curative properties of Topo Chico and the folklore of the brand during its first 30 years.]

Nevertheless, the company employees seemed to love this myth, almost as if they believed the folklore like they bought into the company's continued locality. Pablo claimed

this princess had a name ‘Cithale,’ yet I never managed to receive an explanation where this name came from. Paintings of the princess drinking from the thermal waters hang around Topo Chico’s offices in the renovated Hotel Marmól which the company purchased and renovated in 1980. In the courtyard to the beautiful, iconic hotel, there is a fountain with a colorful statue of the princess drinking from the water. Right next to the statue sits one of the company’s old pick-up trucks from the 1930s and 1940s, the period marked by immense growth in production. I continue to mull over this ironic placement, indicative of the large-scale paradoxes of this project. To me, the antiquated princess alongside the automobile reflected the incommensurability of Compañía Topo Chico’s folkloric visions and modern aspirations.



Figure 3.3: The company courtyard decorated with princess and pick-up truck.

But what does this folkloric myth do? What productive work is it accomplishing? In analyzing the disappearance of the indigenous past in Nuevo León, Marie Theresa Hernández argues that myth has filled this empty space. She seeks to understand how “those in power have used regional legends and folklore to relegate the indigenous” populations to a place outside of historical remembrance. Translating *regio* academic Abraham Nuncio from *Visión de Monterrey*, Hernández incorporates his claim that the indigenous populations became ‘objects of phobia and prey...which makes history forg[otten]’” (Hernández 2002: 48). The dissemination of folklore aids in the erasure of certain histories. Yet, like representations, it also constructs contemporary understandings, reinforcing skewed ideas about indigeneity and portraying certain populations as consumable in the process.

4. The Myth in the Modern Imaginary

By the time I tried my first Topo Chico, the bottle of bubbly water had already been appropriated by Austin's hipster culture. In the city's gentrifying east side, I drank a "Topo" alongside my Americano, gulped one down with my *cochinita pibil* tacos. The princess had not yet had her makeover; the icon on the bottle was still the blobby seal with a faceless Aztec woman. I was finishing up school, observing the shift from obscurity to popularity over the span of months. I moved abroad for a year and returned to find bulk packages of Topo Chico sold at Costco with a new princess on each bottle. It was this convergence – of popularity and of a redrawn princess – that transformed my mindless consumption into a curious and critical investigation. As anthropologist Néstor García Canclini suggests, "when we consume we also think, select, and reelaborate social meaning" (Canclini 2001: 26). It is how consumption induces us to elaborate social meanings that will be the focus of this last chapter.

Thus far, I have sought to understand the place, historical process, and power dynamics of the production of Topo Chico. I have placed the princess at the intersection of discursive and economic production, seeking to understand the varying roles of the local, the national and the international in developing this product. I contend that bottles of Topo Chico have reinforced *regio* discursive identity, affirmed state projects of national identity formation, and reproduced ideas of the dominant culture. Here, I look at the consumption of Topo Chico, where its being consumed and by whom. Both the visual representation of the princess and her accompanying myth circulate with each bottle of Topo Chico consumed. I am centrally concerned with what the mineral water's consumption produces in its consuming populations.

To draw on Canclini again, I rely on his notion of consumption “not so much as the individual possession of isolated objects, but rather as the collective appropriation... of commodities that provide biological and symbolic needs, and that serve to transmit and receive messages” (Canclini 2001: 46). Thus, I argue that Topo Chico as a commodity – water – is a symbolic need, and the representation of the princess functions to transmit messages of health and purity to the modern consumer. The princess, then, is a commodification of indigeneity which suggests not only health and purity but also a multitude of other tropes – connection to nature and the earth, sexual innocence and desire, and a romanticized, folkloric and importantly premodern culture. How does consumption reproduce certain understandings of indigeneity in Mexico and in the United States, affirming essentialized and exoticized ideas through a romanticized representation? Lastly, I suggest that the commodified Indian princess turns a population into something to be consumed; such a sexualized representation reinforces colonial notions of indigenous women as consumable, a long-standing assumption with contemporary effects.

4.1 The Recent Rebranding and the Revitalization of the Myth

Initially, Topo Chico’s new bottles – cleaner, sleeker, brighter – were a rarity in Austin, the newness a novelty that only a few places offered. As the stocks of the older bottles emptied, the new princess became omnipresent in the city, sitting tabletop at coffee shops and taco stands. However, in Monterrey, the two icons of the princesses continue to co-exist. Owing to the extensive bottle reuse program, the old logo is still in circulation. Yet images of the company’s new marketing fill the city, advertised on billboards and buses and in corner markets. The bold, bright colors, the distinct font, and enlarged images of the princess are

attention-grabbing and appealing, as polished as much of the city is. The company's new branding is undeniably trendy and contemporary, connecting with visual repertoires of current consumers. In this rebranding, the antiquated representation of an Indian princess is refurbished and modern, showing again the paradoxes in the company's simultaneous quest for modernity and folkloric nostalgia.

The push for modernity has manifested itself in the company's many mergers, "the fusion of big business" as the Topo Chico website states (Topo Chico USA). After Compañía Topo Chico succeeded in achieving the Coca-Cola franchise in 1926, the company grew quickly, shipping products to neighboring states of Nuevo León. When co-owner Leonides Paez died in the 1940s, Manuel Barragan became the sole owner and founded Bebidas Mundiales SA. In my tour of the Topo Chico property in 2017, it was apparent that Barragan is remembered as the company's great businessman; his portrait looms large in the gallery of the Casa Topo Chico. Juan, the historian, called him "un ejemplo de este empresario regio" [an example of the *regio* businessmen]. In the 1970s, the Barragan family institutionalized their business, forming a board of directors and naming the new enterprise PROCOR. In 2001, PROCOR would merge with two other bottling groups, creating Embotelladora ARCA SA which again merged with international bottling company, Grupo Continental to form ARCA Continental.

It was ARCA Continental that commissioned the rebranding to celebrate the 120th anniversary of Compañía Topo Chico, ironically commemorating the bottling enterprise of the American Julio Randle. In the press release detailing their rebranding, the company claims to celebrate this anniversary "con nuevas etiquetas y una imagen moderna para conectar con las nuevas generaciones" [with new tags and a modern image to connect with the new

generations] (Topo Chico Prensa). Throughout the press release, the clear focus of the marketing campaign is to renovate its image for younger consumers both in Mexico and in the United States. Yet despite the move to modernize, the company asserts that it is their history that connects them to their consumers. Guillermo Adam Faisal, a director at ARCA Continental, suggests that “el futuro de Agua Mineral Topo Chico está en su origen, en su historia, en su autenticidad” [the future of Topo Chico Mineral Water is in its origin, in its history, in its authenticity] (Arca Continental). The company seeks to draw on its historical longevity and the idea of origin while simultaneously promoting its contemporaneity.

ARCA Continental hired Interbrand, an international brand consultancy, to lead the marketing project. Through a connection of a friend, I was placed in contact with the lead designer of the Interbrand team. In developing a new marketing strategy for the company, he affirmed that the team sought to underline the brand’s history through the bottle itself and the renovated visual identity of Topo Chico. The reports he sent me claim that the new logo is a reinterpretation of the original 1895 bottle, yet the image of princess first appeared in 1926, the year in which Compañía Topo Chico became a Coca-Cola franchise. In returning to the “origin” of the company, its original history, the rebranding team omitted the first 30 years of Topo Chico’s marketing. Instead of using the earlier icons of lions and rustic plazas, the team landed on the princess as the primary identifying image. The new icon of the princess is scratchboard engraving, the lead designer explained, ironically drawn by a Canadian artist.

The representation itself stands at the intersection of distinct tropes of indigenous women rooted in the colonial encounter. To the marketers, the story of the princess “embodies [a] legacy of healing,” pointing to the representation’s reliance on constructed associations between Indian women, health, and purity (Interbrand). The redrawn representation also



Figure 4.1: The evolution of the engraving of Topo Chico's new princess.

reminds of the colonial notion of the Indian woman's sexual innocence and availability. In all three bottles before the rebranding (1926, 1943, and 1970), the Aztec princess is portrayed facedown, drinking from the thermal waters of Topo Chico. Although the faceless Indian princess is problematic, the new princess is far too visible. The icon is of the princess' profile, accentuating her bare, rounded back and side of her breast. While the overt sexualization of the princess is new to Topo Chico, it draws on a history of sexualized representations of indigenous women that reproduce colonial sexual understandings. Yet the half-clothed princess also cements tropes of indigeneity as "nakedness is one of the primary ways that indigenous bodies are marked in the popular imaginary" (Briggs 1996: 445). Furthermore, the clothing she does wear is emblematic of popular ideas of indigenous dress. As Juan suggested, the princess is "una indígena muy folklórica con la vestimenta que aparece más como apache o comanche que las de aquí (Nuevo León)" [a folkloric indigenous woman

whose dress appears more Apache o Comanche than those from here (Nuevo León)]. Thus, the icon of the princess solidifies visual stereotypes of indigeneity while explicitly drawing on ideas of the indigenous female's connection to health, purity, and sexual availability.

The choice to privilege the representation of the princess underlined the legend of the Aztec princess as the company's story of origin. Ironically, to modernize their product and make its appeal more contemporary, the company drew on their antiquated myth. In a concluding report from Interbrand, the marketers asserted that "Topo Chico's heritage became the driving factor behind its appeal, embodied by the legend of the site of Topo Chico itself" (Interbrand). Thus, the company and Interbrand team centered the myth in Topo Chico's marketing. On the Topo Chico USA website, the written retelling of the legend is placed on the homepage, the text overlaid on the icon the princess. In the concentrated angle of the image, the princess's eyes are no longer visible while her chest certainly is. Yet on the Topo Chico Mexico site (that interestingly can only be accessed in Mexico), there is a three-minute clip, a dramatized rendition of the story. I watched this clip for the first time in my apartment in Monterrey, the exaggerated characters making the representation on Topo Chico's bottle that much more salient.

The legend portrayed in the film has all the exoticized elements that have come to identify indigenous culture in the popular imaginary. Told by a male narrator with the quintessential deep, staccato voice, the story begins with "en los tiempos de la gran Tenochtitlan" [in the times of the great Tenochtitlan]. Immediately, the temporal distance between the supposed time of this myth and present is underlined. The score is a compilation from films such as Avatar, The Lion King, and The Road to El Dorado, all ironically dealing with past or distinct worlds. The embedded auditory associations with this style of music does

the work for the watcher, placing this story in a different temporality and within an imagined world. The costumes, however, might be the strongest exoticization in the visual performance. The men are dressed in large headdresses, loin cloths, and capes, the princess has on a short skirt and an elaborately decorated chest covering, and all characters wear large jewelry and colorful face paint. As anthropologist Charles Briggs shows in his research surrounding performances of Warao dances in Venezuela, the costumes of the participants are essential in meeting the expectations and fulfilling the stereotypes of contemporary viewers (Briggs 1996). Indeed, these costumes reify stereotypes of indigenous dress as well as highlight the central role nakedness plays in the social imagination. Other elements also draw on tropes of indigeneity such as the rhythmic dances, the role of magic, and the prevalent use of fire.

However, as the telling of the legend ends, the video abruptly shifts to images of industrial bottling machines and contemporary (attractive) consumers drinking Topo Chico on rooftops in the sunset. As Briggs suggests, “discourses of modernization... juxtapose images of past and present as a means of opening up a gap that renders the two incommensurable” (Briggs 1996: 449). Thus, I am brought back to incommensurability of the company’s portrayal of and aspiration for modernity while relying on romantic notions of the indigenous past. The narrator asserts that the princess “vive en cada gota milagrosa, en cada botella, en cada trago. Representa nuestra origines” [lives in every miraculous drop, in every bottle, in every sip. She represents our origins]. As historian Rebecca Earle suggests with the earliest of indigenous folklore, “myths and legends were meaningful not because they were true but because they were beautiful and symbolic” (Earle 2007: 118). Indeed, this symbolic utilization of the legend “convert[s] indigenous history into a sort of mythologized folklore” (Earle 2007: 118). That the princess “represents our origins” suggests that this Aztec history is

the antecedent to both city and company, their story of origin. The brand's new logo – “Es lo que somos” [it's what we are] – also points to the idea of origin and the claim to a heritage that is not their own.

This notion of origin, history, and Aztec heritage is exported with bottles of Topo Chico. The representation of the princess reifies the socially-constructed Mexican past to consumers in the United States; the Aztec civilization is affirmed as the nation's shared history. In the United States, the product and princess is simply indicative of *lo mexicano* – an attractive Aztec woman, a magical natural world, a glorious past civilization transformed into folklore. On the 1970 bottle, the label said only Topo Chico Mineral Water. Yet the new bottles have many written identifiers – “Bottled at Source,” “Est. Since 1895,” “Made in Mexico,” “Imported Mineral Water” – to remind of the company's past and place of production. By emphasizing that the mineral water is imported from Mexico, the company highlights the exotic nature of their product, selling notions of *lo mexicano* with each bottle.

4.2 Cross-Border Consumption and Compañía Topo Chico

One morning, after eating breakfast at one of the many trendy restaurants in East Austin, I walked to the parking lot to find two men wearing cowboy hats and singing folk songs in Spanish outside the neighboring house. One held a guitar and the other an accordion decorated to mimic a Mexican flag. Their friends sat around listening, joining in the singing at times, and drinking Topo Chico. Inside the restaurant, Topo Chico was served, either in its bottle or mixed into cocktails. This quiet corner in Austin was a microcosm to see the myriad of settings in which Topo Chico is consumed. During my time at UT Austin, I took a history class called the Politics of Food in Latin America. The professor focused on how the

consumption of food products is a platform by which we formulate our understandings of other cultures. At the time, this was revolutionary to me, having thought little about the role of tacos and tamales in the Texan lifestyle. As Marilyn Halter suggests, “consumers look to the marketplace to revive and reidentify with ethnic values” (Halter 2000:13). This learning became my new critical lens to think about Topo Chico. What was being consumed about Mexico through this bottled bubbly beverage?

Compañía Topo Chico began exporting to the Rio Grande Valley in south Texas in 1987, a nostalgic reminder for Mexican immigrants. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the exportation grew considerably. Initially, only gas stations near the border carried bottles of Topo, but it is now safe to assume the beverage can be purchased anywhere San Pellegrino is sold. The owner of a favorite (and quasi-famous) burger joint in Dallas began to stock Topo Chico, calling it the “best bubbles.” Even the Dallas Country Club has switched from selling European brands of sparkling water to Topo Chico. The recent growth in sales – such as the 83% growth between 2012 and 2016 – is an inexplicable phenomenon outside the birth of trends and role of branding (Murphy 2016). Today, Topo Chico is sold in 34 states adding up to 30% of the company’s total sales. In her New York Times piece, journalist Kate Murphy suggests that “Topo Chico did not set out to become a meme,” that “efforts to market the water to a nonimmigrant audience began only recently,” that the “family” company has “limited resources” and has waited for marketing opportunities to come to them (Murphy 2016). It is this rhetoric that capitalizes on the consumer quest for authenticity; in the consumer imagination, Topo Chico is still an authentic Mexican product that has not been widely marketed and so lost its local connection to the place of production.

Despite the Texan love of Topo Chico, the sparkling water is a site to observe the tenuous relationship between Texas and Mexico. As sociologists, anthropologists, and historians have shown, the American population's perspective of imported or ethnic foods reflects larger social and cultural understandings in particular moments. Historian Jeffrey Pilcher observes the changing perspectives of Mexicans in Texas through the role of the chili queens, the Mexican women who sold chili on the central plaza in San Antonio during the first decades of the twentieth century. He suggests that the female vendors were "exoticized and eroticized," "conjur[ing] up a nostalgic and sexualized image redolent with the fantasy heritage of San Antonio's Spanish past" (Pilcher 2008: 194, 182). However, as the city sought to modernize, discourses of health and cleanliness led citizens to protest and consequently city leaders to outlaw the chili stands on the plaza. In this case, Pilcher demonstrates how ethnic foods and the people preparing them are subject to competing discourses of a nostalgic, ethnic past and of a homogenous, orderly modernity.

Sociologist Marie Sarita Gaytán investigates the history of the production and consumption of tequila, arguing American interest has shifted in accordance with larger discourses about Mexico and Mexicans. During the early twentieth century period, Gaytán argues that tequila became "a metaphor for Mexican deviance emerged from and...structured within a range of material and symbolic registers related to the changing logic of U.S. national expansion" (Gaytán 2014: 57). Thus, political objectives have controlled discourses about ethnic consumption, "projecting negative meanings about Mexicans onto material objects" and so disseminating this rhetoric in the marketplace (Gaytán 2014: 59). However, today tequila is widely consumed in the United States, proving the malleability and impermanence of these perspectives in accordance with their political moment. In the twenty-first century,

Gaytán suggests that tequila is “memorialized as indelible to the idea of Mexican heritage itself, one rooted in a romantic, innocent, and above all invented past” (Gaytán 2014: 99). Thus, tequila has been a site to both relegate Mexicans to perceived social degeneration as well as romanticize Mexican folkloric culture.

These studies demonstrate how the consumption of Mexican food and drink has been tied to questions of health and fears of deviance. Thus I contend that Topo Chico exports a very specific, tailored idea of *lo mexicano* to the United States, one that does not remind of these larger American concerns of the Mexican population. The representation of the princess deters ideas of deviance as her overt sexualization underlines her dominated role to colonizers and to modern consumers. The folkloric myth set safely in the past ensures that the princess does not transgress gendered and ethnic hegemonic structures. Rather, she promulgates an unproblematic portrayal of Mexican identity, one that is normative and nostalgic with woman and Indian rightfully subdued. And of course, the myth centers around the pursuit of health through the purest substance – water. Yet ironically, the sipping and selling of this magical mineral water has demonstrated the American propensity to question the purity of Mexico itself. In the New York Times article, Murphy writes: “To be sure, travelers and even locals in Mexico are warned against drinking the water, but Topo Chico has been bottled and consumed there since 1895” (Murphy 2016). On Thrillist, a popular lifestyle website detailing food, drink, and travel, an article on Topo Chico records, “Despite the fact that regular Mexican water ~~can damn near kill you~~ will definitely kill you, Topo Chico is actually healthy” (Gentile 2013). As media sources aimed at the American consumer indicate, the princess and the product represent purity, health, and rejuvenation, placed in stark contrast to the polluted Mexico.

Thus Topo Chico occupies a unique space in the American imagination, elaborating social meaning as Canclini indicates. It markets a certain Mexico, a mysterious, magical world of Aztec princesses and natural beauty. This Mexico can be contained in glass bottles and consumed, offering “a classic and enduring experience” as the Interbrand reports claim (Interbrand). Indeed, Topo Chico offers an experience of Mexico to consumers in search of ethnic authenticity, looking for the “real” Mexico rather than mass-produced Mission tortillas. And I suggest that it is the sexualized representation of the Aztec princess that bridges this divide, authenticates the product, repurifies polluted Mexican waters, and so structures social understanding. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai emphasizes consumption “as a focus not only for sending social messages...but for receiving them as well” (Appadurai 1986: 31). What social messages are received not solely about Mexico but about indigeneity itself through the consumption of Topo Chico?

4.3 The Reification of Identities and Ideas of Essentialism

In his history of visual aesthetics of the postrevolutionary Mexican state, historian Rick López, drawing on the work of Edward Said, points to how reified identities are taken as assumptions and consequently remain unquestioned. This reification “naturalizes the existence of such identities and inspires one to defend their supposed innate qualities rather than interrogate the historical construction and implications of this formation” (López 2010: 23). In response to this theorization, I question how representations work to reify identities and to reproduce assumptions, particularly surrounding ideas of indigeneity. As Canclini writes, “Today, identitarian references are shaped not by the arts, literature, and folklore...but by textual and iconographic repertoires furnished by electronic communications media and by

the globalization of urban life” (Canclini 2001: 80). The Aztec princess, then, is part of the contemporary globalized repertoire of iconographies that identify populations and define indigeneity in the social imaginary.

However, Aníbal Quijano shows how this repertoire of iconographies is not a recent phenomenon but related to the coloniality of power. He contends that the repression of colonial domination “fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification...intellectual or visual” (Quijano 2007: 169). The visual “colonization of the imaginary,” then, is a recurring process, using representations to reify the identities created by colonial powers (Quijano 2007: 169). Feminist philosopher María Lugones expands this theory to include the coloniality of gender, exploring how “the men/women dichotomy as a normative construction of the social... was and is constantly renewed” (Lugones 2010: 748). Together these theorists show how this representation must be read in response to colonial structures of knowledge and visual/symbolic production that continue to produce specific ideas of race and of gender.

Here I seek to understand the ideas and expectations of indigeneity produced in the social imaginary through the representation of the Aztec princess on Topo Chico’s bottles. As discussed, the company’s marketing draws on tropes of indigeneity from dances to dress; the image of the princess points to the indigenous woman’s connection to the natural world, health, and purity as well as reminding of her sexual accessibility. The icon and legend essentialize indigeneity, reifying romantic ideas of the native population, past and present. How do representations, like that of the Aztec princess, promote false ideas and consequent expectations of cultural purity? Anthropologist Audra Simpson points to anthropology’s role

in cementing desires for cultural purity in the state and social imaginary. In her work with the Mohawk, Simpson explores how the discipline prioritized indigenous traditions as “a unit of analysis,” reflecting the “desire for order, for purity, for fixity, and for cultural perfection” (Simpson 2014: 7). She suggests that the anthropological desire and state demand for purity and tradition wed effortlessly with settler colonial projects, construing an “anthropological relationship to Empire” (Simpson 2014: 112). Amidst the colonial fervor, the discipline acted as a subservient intermediary in rationalizing government demands, justifying the territorial expansion through the essentialist expectations for tradition and alterity. As a result, research “rendered meaningless any elements of culture that appeared familiar to the Western eye” and so solidified these expectations for unrealistic cultural authenticity (Simpson 2014: 73).

Ruth Phillips, an art historian, shows how the quest for cultural purity entered social understanding through the debate over primitive art in the “Museum Age” (1840-1930). She contends that the “romantic primitivists” sought to define authentic art as “an escape from industrial modernity,” alluding to the expectation of indigenous craft as inherently premodern (Phillips 1995: 100). ‘Tourist art’ or indigenous crafts produced and sold to tourists were excised from museum collections as they represented “foreign influences” and “White contact” (Phillips 1995: 101). This form of mass-consumed, commodified craft was not defined as culturally pure, owing to its contemporaneity and familiarity. Nevertheless, tourists widely consumed Indian imagery, finding it sufficiently exotic and antiquated. Phillips’ study exposes the long-standing social expectations of indigenous cultural purity as well as the differing desires and demands for this authenticity by different populations.

As expectations of cultural purity entered state demands and social understandings, essentialist discourses of cultural purity have continued to determine ideas of indigeneity. In

response to the state and social desire for cultural purity, contemporary indigenous groups and indigenous advocates have utilized essentialist ideas and discourses strategically to achieve rights, recognition, resources, and land. However, human rights lawyer Karen Engle critiques this form of strategic essentialism, arguing that the reliance on essentialized notions of culture provides an unrealistic and stereotyped portrayal of indigeneity (Engle 2010). Furthermore, essentialism creates unattainable standards of cultural purity, demanding that indigenous peoples perform tradition and purity to meet the expectations of both the state and of the nonnative citizenry. In what she terms “the cunning of recognition” anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli exposes how expectations of essentialist identities create an impasse and structure impossible demands for the performance of this cultural purity. Through her field work in Australia, she posits that the Aborigines must “perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state” (Povinelli 2002: 6).

Povinelli, alongside many other anthropologists, has shown how the enactment of an essentialist, pure indigeneity has real effects on rights and resources. It is within this context that I problematize what representations do to foster these essentialist identities and expectations of cultural purity. How do representations like the Aztec princess disseminate unrealistic ideas of indigeneity to consuming populations and structure social expectations for the contemporary indigenous as a result? Anthropologist Alexander Laban Hinton “asks us to pay greater attention to that which is redacted by the frames and articulations that mediate our everyday lives,” which I expand to the commodities of the everyday (Hinton 2016: 35). I posit that commodification weds individual consumption practices to the solidification of social understandings. But what is obscured and excised by the banality of daily commodities?

Elizabeth Povinelli also discusses the consumption of indigeneity by the non-native population contemporarily through the commodification of Aboriginal cultures in Australia. The non-native Australian embrace of indigenous tradition became “a nostalgic memory-trace of all that once was and now is only partially” (Povinelli 2002: 56). She posits that this commodification generated new images of indigeneity, allowing a detachment from the nation’s shameful history surrounding the treatment of the Aborigines. Thus, the affect of shame demands in a sense the commercialization of Aboriginal culture to foster a disavowal of past abuses in exchange for the sentiment of a multicultural appreciation of alterity through processes of consumption. I find this argument compelling – that the commodification of indigeneity offers a site to ignore colonial pasts and romanticize the indigenous of the present.

In his work on the disappearances during the dictatorships in the Southern Cone, Luis Martín-Cabrera points to the role of the market in memory production, exposing how memory has also become an exportable commodity; “memory narratives tend to be transformed into commodities crafted for mass consumption” (Martín-Cabrera 2011: 52). The commodification of memory “works in tandem with the oblivion of the past and the closure of history,” producing memory that excises colonial terror and closes contestation to historical remembrance (Martín-Cabrera 2011: 50). In centering a fictive story paired with an elaborate iconographic rendering, *Topo Chico* commodifies certain memories and so narrows colonial history to the romantic, the nostalgic, the mythic. Thus, this portrayal not only erases culturally-driven forms of traditional memory but also eclipses the violence of the conquest through its invented, folkloric representation; the memory of the crimes of colonialism is rendered invisible and so serves as a continuation of colonial violence.

Furthermore, following market logics, I suggest that the continued crime of disappearance travels with the commodity of Topo Chico across the Rio Grande. The commercial control of colonial memories works to accompany state processes of exclusion, exporting excised memories of violence and of the conquest toward a narrow, obscured telling of history. Thus I assert that the romanticized depictions of the colonial period foster forgetfulness, indifference, and ultimately, disavowal. A sexualized Indian princess magically healed by thermal waters marketed on a bottle of mineral water represents one of the many modern depictions which elevates the exotic pre-conquest society, excises memory of the terror of the conquest, and reinforces temporal distance and general irresponsibility for what was done. This is the danger of commodification and its mitigating, marginalizing, and mediating power over the everyday practices of consumption – the persistence of individual and social disavowal. Yet, the consumption of indigeneity perpetrates colonial violence in more tangible ways, portraying indigenous women themselves as a consumable population.

4.4 Consumption of Water, Consumption of Women

The city of Juárez, 650 miles north of Monterrey and slightly south of the border with Texas, has become infamous for the deaths of thousands of young women beginning in the 1990s. While these brutal murders have been written off by the Mexican state as drug violence, the affected, local activists, and academics have termed these deaths femicide. The murders have been theorized as class-based violence owing to the presence of the *maquiladoras*, foreign-owned factories that have increased since the introduction of NAFTA in 1994 (García del Moral 2007). The *maquiladoras* mostly hire young women motivated by poverty to work the demanding long hours, driving internal migration and unprecedented

population growth in border cities (Enríquez Acosta 2009). However, many of these female migrants to cities are indigenous, complicating the class-based understandings of violence with issues of race (Velasco Ortiz 2007). As journalist Brooke Binkowski suggests, “there is a strong element of structural racism that contributes to the apathy of Mexican authorities when indigenous women disappear” (Binkowski 2015).

A similar phenomenon of death, disappearance, and institutional apathy has played out along the border in Canada. The Highway of Tears is a stretch of Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia where several Aboriginal women have been found murdered while others still remain missing. However, these deaths, beginning in 1990, remained outside of public attention until the death of a young white woman in 2002. Now, the Highway of Tears has been made widely notorious, serving as a platform to expose the indifference of the justice system toward indigenous women (García del Moral 2007). In the United States, the situation is much the same. The statistics put forth by the National Congress of American Indians expose how American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.5 times more likely to experience violent crimes compared to other races.¹⁸ In January of 2018, fifteen representatives presented a bill to the Washington state legislature, ordering a study to increase the investigation of missing Native American women. On the blog, the Last Real Indian, Elisabeth Guard, an attorney at the American Indian law firm Galanda Broadman discusses the context for the introduction of bill WA HB-2951.

Native women in the United States experience some of the highest rates of sexual assault in the Nation: more than half of Native women will be the victim of domestic violence or sexual assault; four out of five are expected to encounter violence in their lifetimes; one in three will be raped in their lifetime; and the murder rates of Native women exceed ten times the national average in some tribal and urban communities. The most alarming data comes from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention,

¹⁸ NCAI Policy Research Center 2013.

which reported that in 2016 the third-leading cause of death for Native women between the ages of ten and twenty-four was murder. (Guard 2018)

The bill commissions a study “to determine how to increase state criminal justice and protective and investigative resources for reporting and identifying Native American women in the state” (Wash. Legis. 2951. 2018). The state of North Dakota passed a similar bill in 2017, named Savanna’s Act in honor of a missing 22-year-old Fargo woman, requiring an annual data report of missing and murdered Native American women to Congress (Levine 2018). Despite these state-led initiatives, there is still no system of comprehensive data collection on the number of missing and murdered Native women within the United States (Schaffer 2018).

At the North American Leaders Summit in June of 2016, the Presidents of Mexico and the United States and the Canadian Prime Minister discussed the violence against indigenous women, reflecting the continental scope of this problem. As anthropologist Shannon Speed indicates in relation to the cases in Juárez, “the realization eventually emerged that, rather than a sinister group of evil-doers in Juárez, we were [are] witnessing a much broader social dynamic, with perpetrators throughout the social fabric” (Speed 2016: 285). The vast spatiality of violence against indigenous women speaks to its integration into social understandings across time and place. Andrea Smith exposes the central role of gendered violence during the conquest, asserting that “the project of colonial sexual violence establishes the ideology that Native bodies are inherently violable” (Smith 2005:12). The contemporary violence against indigenous women then is simply a continuation of the conquest. How is that indigenous bodies are still violated and justice is not rendered?

In her comparative study of *las muertas de Juárez* and the disappearance of Aboriginal women in Canada, sociologist Paulina García del Moral inquires “why these women’s bodies

are constructed as disposable through social, historical, political, and cultural mechanisms and how, as a result, the violence that has been perpetrated against them has been rendered unimportant” (García del Moral 2007: 12). She traces the violence against marginalized women to national histories of (neo)colonialism that placed women’s worth in “the expectation that they will abide to traditional, macho perceptions of femininity” and so remain submissive docile bodies (García del Moral 2007: 66). I posit that the representation of the Aztec princess reifies this very colonial idea of indigenous femininity. She indeed is a submissive docile body inanimate on a glass bottle, offering herself to be consumed. There is a myriad of ways that colonial conceptualizations remain embedded in the civilian imaginary, yet consumption does the sly work of transmitting social ideas to unconscious consumers. The stagnant, sexualized form of an Indian woman on a disposable product portrays indigenous women as disposable themselves, to use Paulina García del Moral’s words.

The representation of the Aztec princess, then, reincarnates colonial violences by controlling stories and excising memories and by ensuring indigenous women’s vulnerability to sexual and corporeal violence. It structures essentialist ideas and expectations of indigeneity and markets the incommensurability of this indigeneity and modernity. And it sells a specific Mexico, masked in a folkloric nostalgia and falsified stories of origin. These ideas move with bottles of mineral water across state and national borders, elaborating social meanings to return to Canclini. I have relied on his argument of consumption as site of transmitting and receiving messages, seeking to understand the message *Compañía Topo Chico* markets and the population receives. In the wide circulation of *Topo Chico Agua Mineral*, the market functions as the mediator of historical remembrance and contemporary civilian thought.

4.5 Coca-Cola and Capitalism

In October of 2017, The Coca-Cola Company bought Topo Chico from Arca Continental, the mineral water's parent company in Monterrey that commissioned the rebranding in 2015. Coca-Cola's Venturing and Emerging Brands unit brokered the deal, paying \$220 million for Mexican brand. The Coca-Cola Company sought to benefit from the upswing in mineral water sales, "investing in brands that are on trend" as the unit's vice president Matt Hughes stated (Cowan 2017). Topo Chico's popularity within the state of Texas – 70% of Topo Chico's sales within the U.S. are in Texas – caught Coca-Cola's attention (Sullivan 2017). Hughes explained that the company aims to "thoughtfully expand the brand's geographic presence – to create more 'Texases'" (Cowan 2017). As if to mitigate the disillusion of the product's hipster clientele, Coca-Cola representatives emphasized their plan to "honor and respect Topo Chico's century of heritage," bringing the "legacy team" into The Coca-Cola Company (Cowan 2017). It appears that Coca-Cola intends still to market the product as authentically Mexican, as true to its origins, as a symbol of home and heritage.

So I am brought back to the strength of international capitalist structures that facilitated Topo Chico's initial expansion in the 1920s and will now fuel its next wave of growth. The power of the market will distribute bottles of Topo Chico more widely, carrying an image of a princess and certain social implications. The market appeal of this product remains rooted in its exoticism. As the Dallas economic journalist writers, "the brand's glass bottles and retro logo have also helped position Topo Chico at the nexus of several major beverage trends: Millennial drinkers who chase artisanal -- and photogenic -- products and a resurgence by older sparkling water brands" (Cowan 2017). Thus the princess passes through more portals, mediated through modern technology. Trendy glass bottles fill photographs and

social media stories, serving as a tailored aesthetic in consumers' personal portrayals. The Indian woman will continue to be a nostalgic relic, inanimate and antiquated amidst the fast-moving, modern life of the contemporary consumer.

The National Museum of the American Indian is currently running an exhibit called "Americans," exploring the paradoxes of visual representations of indigeneity. As these images have become normalized into visual repertoires, the exhibit aims to bring visitors to understand the centrality of indigenous imagery in the formation of an American aesthetic. Through the endless images of Indians on products, the visitor is forced to recognize the extent to which indigeneity has been used as a tool of marketing. As the Comanche curator Paul Chaat Smith at the National Museum of the American Indian states, "American Indians somehow add meaning or value to a product." He posits that "it never goes out of fashion...it always makes sense to name a product after Indians" (Smith 2018). Topo Chico is proving Smith's theory in its movement toward mass consumption; the market always makes space for the production of exoticism, the commodification of indigeneity, and the consumption of difference.

Conclusion: On Origins and their Emptiness

Sometimes I think most of my ethnography happened in an Uber, asking my drivers endless questions about their associations and experiences with Topo Chico. I thought often of the ironies – my experiences mediated through modern technology while I sought insight into an antiquated legend. It is the same irony I repeatedly returned to in this project – Topo Chico’s projection of modernity and marketing of antiquity, of origin. The company itself relies on this idea of *origen* – origin of the water itself, origins of the company, Topo Chico as part of a *regio* original identity. And I too began my project obsessed with the idea of origin, seeking mostly the origin of the myth, the legend of Topo Chico. Now, that quest seems trite for the project has centered on the fabrication of a myth, the invention of identity, and the reproduction of representations and tropes, finding little original at all. Indeed, my search for origins came up empty; instead I encountered a fictional story to mirror a fabricated portrayal of the past and present.

Rather than origins, I have discussed paradigms and paradoxes. I suggested that Compañía Topo Chico is paradigmatically *regio* from inception through industrialization and the princess herself a paradigmatic representation reflecting the post-revolutionary Mexican state. The central orienting paradox of my project – Compañía Topo Chico’s marketing of an indigenous princess from a region whose identity has been predicated on the lack of indigenous presence – has revealed a multiplicity of paradoxes. The distinct *norteño* identity has privileged masculinity and individuality, yet the myth paradoxically features a female from the communally-structured, indigenous south. The paradox of the princess and her myth obscure origins and instead suggest the incommensurability of the company’s project to wed indigenous origins to modern Monterrey. Furthermore, the company paradoxically relied on

the state for the consolidation of the waters of Topo Chico and on international capital for continued growth despite the rhetoric of locality and longevity. Paradoxically, Topo Chico has marketed the product as iconically *regio* yet also as iconically Mexican, catering to certain trends of consumption. And lastly, the product itself paradoxically has been as much the result of the foreign envisioning of Mexico as seen through the non-Mexican influence on the baths themselves and on the creation of *lo mexicano*.

Thus with paradoxes rather than origins, I return to my theoretical framework, suggesting the paradoxical nature of cultural production. Through the case study of Compañía Topo Chico, I have argued that *regio* and Mexican culture has been co-constituted by discursive and economic production, the expression of culture symbolically and materially. As Roseberry theorizes, culture itself is producing, constituting, and creating; it, too, is without origin. And as Raymond Williams's work makes clear, the production of culture facilitates the selection of tradition and the consequent structuring of hegemonic relationships. As culture is discursively and economically produced, it is symbolically and materially consumed, reifying hegemonic traditions and relationships of power. The consumption of Topo Chico gives a narrow cultural vision of both Monterrey and of Mexico that romanticizes and idealizes the indigenous past and asserts the important role of the modern (white) consumer.

The story of indigeneity in Mexico told here is itself quite paradigmatic too – the romanticized Aztecs, the disavowal of conquest violence, the erasure of the contemporary indigenous, the objectification of the indigenous woman. What I hope to have offered is a reading into the profound temporal and spatial reiterations of this story, seeing this hegemonic framework of indigeneity in modern Monterrey. I have shown that this vision of Mexican

indigeneity continues to be reproduced through discourse and consumption, constituted by and importantly constituting culture itself. Furthermore, through Topo Chico's wide exportation to the United States, these ideas of Mexican indigeneity are modified and marketed, a palatable rendering of the nation's indigenous past and present.

Although I have found many unique stories to tell of Topo Chico's princess, she still is just a visual trope, a paradigmatic representation reminding of ingrained ideas of Indian princesses. She is profoundly American yet an iteration of European male hegemony to visualize the exotic. She is an inanimate image of indigenous femininity, folklorized and sexualized as has been the pattern in Mexican visual culture. And she, the visual representative of virgin America, is widely accessible, offering the abundance of America to be consumed. Although our land is no longer so virginal, Topo Chico's princess suggests that American water and indigenous American women are still available for consumption. She structures the consumer aspiration for the original America, the land before violent conquest, environmental degradation, and invasive borders. Yet, an empty bottle of Topo Chico subtly suggests the emptiness of this very endeavor to find such origins.

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