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# Mayan Copàn, its Hieroglyphic Stairway, and Museum Collecting: Issues of National Identity in Honduras

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Issues of National Identity in Honduras”

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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter One: National Identity Under Glass: Institutions of Memory and Museum Collecting</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter Two: The Hieroglyphic Stairway in Copan: History of the Excavations and the Effects on National Identity</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Archaeological and Legislative Relations between Honduras and the United States: Cultural Diplomacy, Smart Power, and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology</b> .....	<b>62</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Richard Wagner, Amateur Mayanist: An Individual’s Experiences with Mayanization in Central America</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>100</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>106</b>

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I experienced some of the most rewarding and most challenging moments of my academic career while writing this thesis. As hard as it was at times, it was an incredible experience as I not only pushed myself as a historian and a writer but was also able to travel to Honduras - something I never thought I would do before taking on this endeavor - to experience my subject firsthand. I began pursuing the Maya without ever learning about them before, only knowing I was intrigued by their culture and history and their monuments and hieroglyphs in particular. A very sincere thank you to my advisor, Professor Dario Euraque, who helped cultivate my interests from the beginning, shaped the project into something a little more coherent, guided me through the difficult times, and shared his deep knowledge of Honduras with me.

I would also like to extend my genuine gratitude to Dr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle and Teresa Campos. My father and I could not have asked for a warmer welcome to Honduras and your hospitality for our entire stay was extraordinary. The knowledge I gained in the five days we were in San Pedro Sula and Copán was probably a semester's worth and even though it was overwhelming, it was equally valuable and fascinating. I cannot thank you enough for all you gave me.

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Thank you also to those at the Peabody Museum at Harvard and the CRIA in Honduras for all your assistance, as well as the family of Colin Leroy. I truly appreciate all you have done for making this possible.

A million thank yous to my family and friends who supported me through this entire process. Thank you for putting up with my workload, my stress, my nonsense, and my excited rants about what I was doing and still supporting me unconditionally. Thank you to my parents, especially - my father for sharing my Honduras adventure with me and my mother for supporting us and dealing with the logistics. I love you both so much.

So, as Jimmy Buffett once said, "We're goin' down to the land of the Mayans, they were here long before the cavemen were..."

## Introduction

On a warm day in mid-January 2014, I stood in an ancient Honduran Maya city called Copán surrounded by stone monuments with intricate, exotic, and mysterious hieroglyphs and carvings dating back to the eighth century. Although a rich history existed within each of the artifacts in my vicinity, my focus was directed toward a massive stone temple with a unique stairway ascending the western side. The Hieroglyphic Stairway depicts the history of Copán's rulers and stands around one hundred feet above the acropolis. While being of colossal historic significance, the Stairway has also been a part of some controversial affairs regarding the national identity and cultural heritage of Honduras. Although the archaeological park of Copán has become a symbol of such, it is also tied to the issue of "mayanization" as it has produced a vision of Honduran national identity that is functional to the needs of the international tourism industry.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dario Euraque has written extensively on this term and the issues of national identity that are a result, discussed in the first chapter. Copán and the Hieroglyphic Stairway are sources of national and cultural pride and heritage due largely in part to it becoming a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 1984. The issues of cultural heritage, diplomacy, and national identity are complicated facets of Honduras's history, detailed in the following chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> Darío A. Euraque, "The Honduran Coup and Cultural Policy," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 43, no. 2 (March-April 2010) 30.

My first chapter focuses on the broader issue of museum collecting and, more specifically, its impact on Honduran national identity using examples of the museums in the country. The second discusses the history of the excavations at Copán and the disparity of national identity and cultural heritage as a result of these foreign interactions. My third chapter delves into the archaeological relations between Honduras and the United States looking especially at the cultural diplomacy employed between the two. The final chapter looks at these issues through the lens of an individual also tied to Trinity, the late amateur mayanist Richard Dunbar Wagner. His extensive travels and work throughout the Mayan world, captured in both his private papers donated to Trinity and an oral history collected from his family, are a unique addition to my own work as my research is contextualized in the life of one extraordinary man. Honduras offers a rich history of the controversy of collecting and the following thesis examines the affect it had, and continues to have, on the country's national identity and cultural heritage.

On 13 January 2014 I began my travels to Honduras through the generosity of the Leroy Fund, a donation by the Leroy family in memory of their son, Colin, who graduated from Trinity College in 2010. The fund was established to assist history majors in research projects, including research outside the United States, which I had the privilege in being the first student to do so. I traveled with my father to San Pedro Sula where we met Dr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, former Minister of Culture from 1994

to 1998 and again from 2006 to 2009. We then traveled with his wife, Teresa Campos, anthropologist and director of the Museo de Antropología e Historia de San Pedro Sula (MAHSPS), to Copán, over four hours by car from the bustling metropolis of San Pedro Sula. Both Dr. Pastor Fasquelle and his wife were kind and hospitable people, but their knowledge of the ancient Mesoamerican world and specifically the Maya presence in Copán was most impressive.

After spending only four days experiencing the archaeological site in person, learning about the ancient city, and doing research at the Center for Archaeological Investigation (CIA), I was able to begin to understand the gravity of the way in which Copán and the Hieroglyphic Stairway continue to affect Honduran national identity to this day. Without this unique opportunity, I would not be able to even begin to comprehend its importance to the country, both historically and contemporarily.

The Hieroglyphic Stairway was discovered in 1885 by British archaeologist Alfred P. Maudslay, excavated in the late 1890s by Harvard archaeologists and reconstructed in the late 1930s and 1940s by the Carnegie Institute of Washington. During multiple excavations and reconstruction, original pieces of the Stairway wound up in the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Were these pieces purchased, acquired or stolen? Does their home at the Peabody Museum separate from the Stairway continue to affect Honduran national identity today? The following chapters are an examination

of how and why this situation came to be so and the complications surrounding the place of museums, collecting, and archaeology in shaping such an important piece of a nation's cultural identity.

The Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia (IHAH) is one of the most powerful cultural institutions in the country and is responsible for all matters of cultural patrimony. It also runs the national museums, archives, and archaeological sites in the country. The IHAH therefore manages the property of Copán and has been at the forefront of working towards the protection of cultural patrimony for Honduras.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Dario Euraque, a native Honduran, Trinity professor, and the respected former director of the institute from 2006 to 2009, is a strong advocate for the conservation and protection of Honduran national identity and was also involved in the 2009 coup d'état which removed him and many of his colleagues from their posts. Among these officials was also Dr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle. The coup, various acts of legislation regarding the protection of cultural heritage and national identity involving the IHAH, and Dr. Euraque's work are discussed in later chapters.

I will explore the controversial nature of museums and their practice of collecting cultural artifacts from other countries through examining the history of the Mayan Hieroglyphic Stairway in Copán and the removal of pieces to Harvard. Although the process of collecting antiquities is integral to the preservation of archaeological

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<sup>2</sup> Euraque, "The Honduran Coup and Cultural Policy," 30.



findings, the acquisition and removal of some artifacts (such as pieces of the Hieroglyphic Stairway at the Peabody Museum) have caused the origin countries to feel a certain loss of national identity. Museums attempt to capture the concept of national identity and cultural pride through displaying cultural heritage, but what happens when such museums display artifacts that belong to another country and culture?

UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as,

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.<sup>3</sup>

Oftentimes, national identity and the objects of cultural heritage associated result from social psychology instead of a cultural or material basis, although these concrete factors contribute to the overall understanding of it. Copán, for example, is a significant material source for the national identity of Honduras, as indicated by its depiction on the back of the national currency, the Lempira. The topic therefore dates back centuries to the ancient Maya civilization as well as to the collection process by museums today.

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<sup>3</sup> General Conference of UNESCO, “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage,” *UNESCO*, 29 Sept.-17 Oct. 2003, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006> (accessed 28 March 2014).

Why is the Hieroglyphic Stairway a crucial piece of national history and cultural heritage? Not only is it an impressive archaeological feature that is also represented on Honduran currency, but it is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

UNESCO, founded in 1945 in light of both world wars, believed that political and economic agreements are not enough to create lasting peace between nations. In order to do so, UNESCO recognizes that peace can be established on the basis of humanity's moral and intellectual foundations. UNESCO created World Heritage sites as a feature of the organization in order to protect cultural heritage and support cultural diversity by preserving sites of "outstanding universal value," therefore building an intercultural understanding among nations.<sup>4</sup>

Honduras joined UNESCO in 1947, just two years after it was created, although the ancient City of Copán was not recognized as a World Heritage site until 1980, then an archaeological park meeting the criteria required for such an honor. The design, preservation, and historical significance of the architectural complexes of the city as well as the inscriptions of the Stairway (the longest inscribed text in the Maya region) speak to the incredible achievements of the Classic Maya Period. The integrity and authenticity of Copán's features are what make it of considerable historic significance and prove its lasting value to become a intercultural gem and historic site today. In

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<sup>4</sup> "Introducing UNESCO," UNESCO, <http://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco> (accessed 26 December 2013).

addition, the recognition of the Archaeological Park as a World Heritage site is a great point of cultural and national pride for Hondurans.

Many historians and archaeologists have worked on the Stairway, but among the first was George Byron Gordon. He graduated Harvard University in 1894 and studied and excavated at Copán under the guidance of John G. Owens, also a graduate of Harvard, in 1891. The Peabody Museum, then led by Owens, was privileged to be the first full-scale archaeological excavation at Copán. When Owens died of fever in 1893, Gordon was left in charge. He returned to the site to direct the project in 1894 to 1895 and again in 1900. While Alfred P. Maudslay is credited with discovering the Stairway, Gordon was the first archaeologist to fully excavate and unveil it. Gordon also dealt with the cultural diplomacy between Honduras and the United States while collecting which also included the repercussions of the evolving legislation on the matter. He discovered fifteen of the sixty-two steps *in situ* but most were damaged or deteriorating, located in the pyramid debris. Thus, the first conservation project began; the Harvard team cleaned, individually photographed, and labeled blocks of the Stairway were and then carefully lowered to the plaza to be casted.

Some of Gordon's work is published in the *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum*. These detail his work with the Hieroglyphic Stairway as do the correspondence, field notes, and other archival material from the Peabody Museum. In the first volume of the *Memoirs*, Gordon surmises the reason for the Stairway's ruin was an earthquake,

causing the upper part to slide down over the lower and subsequently throwing the steps out of position. “The sequence of the greater part of the inscription upon the front of the steps is thus lost,” explained the Peabody’s curator F. W. Putnam in 1901.<sup>5</sup> What is so remarkable about Gordon’s work, however, is his ability to determine the Stairway’s inscription to date over seven hundred years later than any other inscription found in Copán, thus putting the antiquity of the great city into context of the Maya as an ancient civilization. In 1901, however, political turmoil erupted in Honduras and the Peabody Museum crew lost their excavation permit and were forced to return to the United States. Work on the Stairway did not continue until the 1930s when the Carnegie Institution continued the work of previous excavations and also began to reconstruct it.

Extensive work has been done on Copán in the last few decades including the Hieroglyphic Stairway, and museum collection. Among the contemporary historians, archaeologists, mayanists, and scholars whose works best embody the bulk of my own research are, William L. Fash, Ricardo Agurcia Fasquelle, Dr. Dario Euraque, Cordelia A. Frewen, Christina Luke, Benedict Anderson, and Richard D. Wagner, as seen in the following chapters. The works of these contemporary minds compared to the notes and work of the nineteenth century archaeologists on the initial excavations, such as Gordon, yield fascinating similarities, differences, and new discoveries and conclusions.

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<sup>5</sup> Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, “Memoirs of the Peabody Museum, Vol. I” (Salem, MA: Salem Press, 1904), 4.

William Fash, former director of the Peabody Museum, has done a significant amount of work with other mayanists such as Ricardo A. Fasquelle, a pivotal character in the creation of Copán as a historical site. Agurcia Fasquelle founded the Copán Association in 1990 in order to promote research and conservation of the Honduran culture and national heritage. Agurcia Fasquelle also worked on projects surveying the valley, mapping and excavating, and also served as the director of the IHAH in the 1980s. Fash also created the Copán Mosaics Project in 1985 which subsequently evolved into working with his wife, Barbara Fash, to initiate the creation, design, and construction via the Honduran government of the Sculpture Museum at the Archaeological Park in Copán which opened in 1996. The museum contains steles, facades, sculptures, and other artifacts from the surrounding site with detailed carvings and hieroglyphs containing a variety of motifs such as human figures, gods, animals, flowers, and crops. Fash is deeply intertwined with contemporary work on the Maya, specifically the site at Copán, and his long term involvement with the Peabody Museum only deepens his connection to my research.

A piece of work very closely related to my own is the Master's thesis by Cordelia A. Frewen for the University of Denver entitled, "Redefining, Crafting, and Re/Presenting Contemporary Ethnicities: Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006." Frewen, who completed her undergraduate degree at Trinity College, examines how three private museums and one state-sponsored project redefined ethnicity in

Honduran national identity. She also worked with Dr. Euraque and used many of his theories and ideas in her work, detailed further in the next chapter. The project she examines, Program for the Preservation and Promotion of Indigenous and Traditional Handicraft Production (PROPAITH in its Spanish acronym), is a decade-long state-funded project starting in 1995 that worked with seven of the nine indigenous Afro-descendant groups of Honduras and aided in officializing a multicultural perspective of contemporary ethnic identity in the country.<sup>6</sup>

Of the three museums she discusses, the most relevant to my thesis is the Museo de Antropología e Historia de San Pedro Sula (MAHSPS), of which Dr. Pastor Fasquelle's wife is currently director. The other two, Chiminike, Centro Interactivo de Enseñanza [Chiminike, Interactive Learning Center], and the Museo para la Identidad Nacional [Museum for National Identity] (MIN) are also important to the larger discussion of Honduran national identity relating to its presence in national museums and Euraque's critique of mayanization. Frewen's examination of these institutions and their exhibits, inner workings, and contributions to the discourse of multiculturalism and ethnicity in contemporary Honduras are critical to my own work as my methods of research and subject matter are very similar to hers.

Many scholars have previously explored the Maya, the Hieroglyphic Stairway, and controversies of national patrimony legislation and artifact collection, but the work

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<sup>6</sup> Cordelia A. Frewen, "Redefining, Crafting, and Re/Presenting Contemporary Ethnicities: Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006," (Master's thesis, University of Denver, 2012), 4.

of amateur Mayanist and collector Richard Dunbar Wagner provides a unique view on this topic. When Wagner, a resident of Simsbury, Connecticut, passed away in 2009, he donated his life's research, notes, and books on his findings to Trinity College. In addition to using his original papers, I have also collected an oral history from his family to delve into his life as an accomplished amateur Mayanist. He and his wife, Lina, traveled extensively throughout Mesoamerica, often participating in archaeological digs, projects, and excavations of Maya sites. His private papers contain numerous letters, newspaper clippings, lectures, conference notes, travel pamphlets, personal jottings, and miscellaneous odds and ends dealing with the Maya. His private papers and library are an integral and unique piece of my own research as well as Trinity's history as they have never been used previously.

Through looking at not only the Peabody Museum's exhibits and pieces of the Stairway but also their archival records, I discerned how and why artifacts came to be collected and their significance in the museum at Harvard today. Wagner's papers and biographical history provide a unique look at an individual in the field of Maya research and collecting which I could then apply to the Stairway and Copán. The correspondence and other archival materials, especially those by Gordon, allow me an introspective look into not only a revolutionary figure in regards to the initial excavations of Copán, but also the archaeological site itself.

Questions I will explore in the following chapters include why is the practice of museum collection and extraction of cultural artifacts so controversial? How does the excavation of the Maya Hieroglyphic Stairway at Copán affect the civilization's cultural identity and place in history? What is the relationship between the Honduran government and the Peabody Museum today? The first chapter will focus on museum collecting as a broader issue and its impact on national identity, the extent to which it affects Honduras by looking at the CRIA, IHAH, and MAHSPS specifically. I will introduce the Stairway's place in the controversy but will focus on it more in the following chapter. This chapter will instead discuss more of the complexities and controversies close to the issue of national identity as it is related to museum studies. The second chapter continues to discuss the Stairway in Copán primarily via its context in the ancient city and the excavations of the ancient city at the turn of the twentieth century.

The third chapter deals with the archival resources located at the Peabody Museum from which I can look at the provenance of the pieces of the Stairway now located at the museum. I use the documents and materials at the Peabody to further my research of the Stairway within the context of museum collecting looking primarily at the diplomacy and Honduran legislation. My final chapter explores the life and findings of the late Richard Wagner whose private papers were donated to Trinity after his death in 2009. I not only use those papers but also collected an oral history about



the amateur Mayanist and his travels and work on digs throughout his life through speaking with his wife and son. In the conclusion I present my findings and analysis and discuss the process and methodology I employed for my research. I also discuss the contributions and future research that can be done in this area, as well as contextualize my work in the larger historiographical picture and historical discussion.

## Chapter One: National Identity Under Glass: Institutions of Memory and Museum Collecting

Institutions of memory are found in almost every society as a way to eternalize its presence and spirit. Among such institutions are museums, libraries, historic sites, and archives which all act as repositories for material remains, both concrete and abstract, of various cultures. In Honduras, the Center of Archaeological Investigation (CRIA), Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia (IHAH), and Museo de Antropología e Historia de San Pedro Sula (MAHSPS) are among some of the nation's institutions established to preserve, maintain, and educate Honduras and its visitors on the national identity and cultural heritage of the country as well as to represent Honduran cultural politics. The issue of mayanization as a consolidated, collapsed national identity continues to affect Honduras as projected by archaeologists and socio-economic processes over time, as found mostly in Dr. Euraque's works. These three institutions of memory exemplify many of the issues of museum collecting and subsequently national identity in Honduras.

While preserving history within institutions of memory is important to commemorate and study societies and cultures, oftentimes the collection of such items is not legitimate. For centuries, societies and cultures were conquered or colonized by those stronger and ransacked for their cultural treasures. Looting has continued to be an issue for sites of archaeological or historical importance as objects are taken for a variety of purposes, including from Copán. The ancient city has suffered from a history

of looting from the time of the early excavations although contemporary legislation has tightened security in the Copán Archaeological Park (PAC), museums, and CRIA recently. Due to the past looting and collecting of objects such as parts of the Hieroglyphic Stairway, however, true ownership of cultural objects is blurred and still remains a controversial issue. Some people, especially native peoples as those in Honduras, maintain that some objects should not only be in the hands of those who originally created or possessed them, but they should not even be contained in museums or any institutions of memory.<sup>7</sup> Owning and controlling such objects of cultural heritage is therefore a prevalent topic of controversy.

Humans have a very common tendency of ‘museumification,’ or placing history, nature, and traditional societies under glass and subsequently showing a conceptual control over them.<sup>8</sup> Some call it preserving, some call it hoarding, some call it collecting, but it is all done with the same intentions. Museums began to capture and exhibit progress by gathering and collecting objects and ‘things’ and keep them unchanged - basically an empirical method.<sup>9</sup> So, what distinguishes a collection from a museum? In Knell, MacLeod and Watson’s book *Museum Revolutions* they believe that museums are about people and collections are subsequently sheer manifestations of

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<sup>7</sup> Elaine Heumann Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006) 42.

<sup>8</sup> Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1992) 23.

<sup>9</sup> Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson, *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and Are Changed* (New York: Routledge, 2007) xix.

human desires. Museums are the result of the human tendency to collect and to remember. Many institutions, such as the IHAH and the MAHSPS, attempt to direct Honduras away from mayanization by exploiting the rich histories and cultures of other indigenous peoples. The idea that mayanization is a process through which groups with legitimate ties to cultural heritage are being ignored and silenced, therefore not receiving social and economic benefits that can come from heritage management continues to affect the country, especially in regards to archaeology.<sup>10</sup> The problem began in part during the initial excavations of Copán, discussed in the following chapters.

As collections grow, time marches on and museums change and evolve since they are merely human products of different times, places, cultures, values, and media.<sup>11</sup> While cultures change over time, even while maintaining traditions, so do museums. In Copán the only museum that existed until the 1990s was an archaeological museum in Copán Ruinas, the small modern town just down the road from the ancient city. It was not until August of 1996 that the Sculpture Museum in the Copán National Park opened to the public, a state-funded project started by William and Barbara Fash. The large museum gives the current inhabitants insight into the importance of ancient sculptures as well as trains its employees in conservation

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<sup>10</sup> Whitney A. Goodwin, "Archaeology and Indigeneity, Past and Present: A View from the Island of Roatán, Honduras" (Master's thesis, University of South Florida, 2011) 148.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

and reconstruction to continue the preservation of the country's history.<sup>12</sup> I discuss my personal experience in the museum in the second chapter. As the modern nation grows more conscious of its archaeology history, this museum and the growing education stemming from it serve that purpose.

Museums also consciously make choices as to what they display and how they display it in order to shape the visitor's experience. No matter the exhibition, they all draw on cultural assumptions and choose to highlight some elements and ignore others in order to construct truths.<sup>13</sup> No museum can truly be objective as visitors perceive and interpret exhibits differently, as well as the fact that the exhibits themselves are constructed with some agenda. When museums decide what to display they generally have the ability to choose from a treasure trove of objects and artifacts due to extensive years of collecting and accumulation. What is on display in the exhibit is often just a mere fraction of the resources to which the museum has access. Many museums, including the CRIA, Sculpture Museum, and Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University all store their unused objects in warehouses when they are not on display. I visited the Peabody Museum on 6 January 2014 and was surprised to find the stones from the Hieroglyphic Stairway on shelves in

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Fash and William Fash, "Copán's New Sculpture Museum," Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, 1996, <https://peabody.harvard.edu/node/554> (accessed 11 April 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Karp, Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1991) 1.

an immense warehouse where they store many of the unused objects when they are not on display. The stones were on display a few years ago, but currently the objects of Honduran cultural heritage are locked away as means of preservation while they are not visible to the public.

All museums, however, are tangible evidence of the spirit of a society and the objects within construct and preserve that society's collective memory.<sup>14</sup> There is an overlap between history and social memory, as some historians believe them to inhabit a similar mental territory.<sup>15</sup> Imagined communities as a projection of nationalism is an important facet of collective memory, discussed primarily by Benedict Anderson. He defines a nation as an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. "It is imagined," he explains, "because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."<sup>16</sup> Thus, members of the same nation all have a similar idea of nationality and what it means to be inherently a part of that nation, collecting an almost unanimous social memory through oral histories, traditions, and, most important to my work, objects of cultural

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<sup>14</sup> Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum*, 34.

<sup>15</sup> John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited, 2010) 23.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, United Kingdom: Verso, 1991) 6.

heritage. Museums are therefore the result of tangible, preserved collective social memory made available to an outsider.

The objects in a museum themselves are particularly interesting as they are typically what people go to see at a museum, not necessarily the institution itself. Objects, or collections of objects, are typically what draw people to museums, even if they do not embody the institution of memory. They are what makes the story of the museum or the exhibit tangible and exciting. Elaine Heumann Gurian disagrees, however, and sees the objects merely as props in a play whereas the sense of place, or the physicality of a place and the memories and stories that are told within are the true heart of the museum.<sup>17</sup> With this perspective, the curiosity to see Honduran national identity represented through cultural objects is what draws visitors to the country's museums. There is an interesting relationship between an object and the story as they both give historical context for the other. The objects are also a crucial part in what makes museums controversial; a museum can misrepresent or misconstrue accurate information and be controversial in that way, but when an object is in a museum but came from elsewhere, such as the pieces from Copán at Harvard, that is truly a topic of controversy, as discussed throughout the following chapters.

Since the collection or looting of artifacts and objects by those colonizing or conquering began occurring without accurate documentation, now the provenance and

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<sup>17</sup> Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum*, 34.

proper ownership of said objects has been obscured. Even if the true provenance can be determined but an organization or country, such as the Peabody Museum, now has the objects in its possession, their absence from the original country, like Honduras, can create a dissonance in the national identity. While museums were created to serve as institutions of memory and to collect and preserve history, they also play a large role in the context of the society to which they belong. Many museums act as institutions preserving national identity as their contents are typically objects tied to the national identity of that country or people. Honduran cultural history and that of national identity is complicated in itself, however, as there was no true official national identity until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the Honduran state began to encourage the creation of such an entity, as paraphrased from the author's translation.<sup>18</sup> Prior to this time, Hondurans lacked a true sense of national identity unique to the plurality of backgrounds and ethnicities inherent throughout the country. Dr. Euraque, one of the leading contemporary Honduran historians, has contributed greatly to the discourse on Honduran national identity and advancing the concept away from mayanization towards a more inclusive, diverse and nuanced understanding of Honduran national identity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dario A. Euraque, "Antropólogos, Arqueólogos, Imperialismo y la Mayanización de Honduras: 1890-1940." *Revista de Historia*, (San José, Costa Rica), 45: 73-103 (2002) 87.

<sup>19</sup> Frewen, "Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006," 26.



Dr. Euraque defines mayanization, in short, as the narrowing effect and collapse of Honduras's cultural and ethnical plurality into one category, the "Maya," through the nation's collective memory.<sup>20</sup> The Maya are not the only indigenous group of Honduras and their empire did not span the entire country, yet the term has become synonymous with Honduras's cultural heritage and national identity. For example, according to population data from 2012 in Frewen's work, there are nine different ethnic groups throughout the country. The contemporary indigenous Maya peoples have an estimated population of 10,600 while other groups are much greater in number, such as the Lenca with around 720,000 people.<sup>21</sup> Despite the fact that more Lenca exist in Honduras than Maya, the collapsing of Honduran national identity through mayanization is still an inherent problem. Dr. Euraque has traced the popularity of mayanization through tourism and commerce, attributing to the term's growth and reinforcement of national identity for national and international consumption of business marketing schemes, such as in the banana industry.<sup>22</sup> In recognizing the national identity of Honduras to be simply Mayan, the plurality of the cultural and historical backgrounds of the indigenous groups in Honduras is marginalized, consolidated, and forgotten.<sup>23</sup> By collapsing all these indigenous groups, as well as

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<sup>20</sup> Frewen, "Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006," 27.

<sup>21</sup> Frewen, "Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006" 61.

<sup>22</sup> Goodwin, "A View from the Island of Roatan, Honduras," 147.

<sup>23</sup> Frewen, "Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006" 27.

those of Afro-descendant and Hispanic backgrounds, Honduran national identity is also collapsed and therefore lost as the ethnic diversity becomes marginalized.

Legislation in 1929 and 1934, particularly the immigration laws, only furthered the vision of Honduras as a homogeneous country as it restricted and prohibited certain peoples entrance and stay in Honduras. The legislation eliminated entire categories of certain people and reaffirmed for the Honduran population that this flattened version was their identity in a society and economy increasingly dominated by foreigners due in part to international trade and Honduras's resources. The racial and ethnic parameters were only reinforced more firmly throughout twentieth-century Honduran history.<sup>24</sup> After the 1930s, however, a new official discourse emerged as the population itself evolved and, as Dr. Euraque writes, the Honduran state began to educate the public about the indigenous past and its role in the historical evolution of the country, emphasizing, among other things, the importance of the monumental 'ruins' that remained throughout the country. "Therefore, the first approximation of 'mayanization' recognizes this process simply as an official emphasis on rescuing ruins as an ancestral legacy of 'nationality' constructing itself."<sup>25</sup> Although still evolving and moving away from mayanization, national identity in Honduras is becoming more

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<sup>24</sup> Dario A. Euraque, "The Banana Enclave, Nationalism and Mestizaje in Honduras, 1910s-1930s" in *At the Margins of the Nation-State: Identity and Struggle in the Making of the Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean, 1860-1960*, ed. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 152.

<sup>25</sup> Euraque, "Antropólogos, Arqueólogos, Imperialismo y la Mayanización de Honduras: 1890-1940," 87.

recognized especially as it is connected to the nation's cultural heritage as seen at Copán. The removal of cultural objects such as those from Copán by the Peabody Museum therefore acts in a similar way as using the term mayanization; it collapses Honduran national identity by removing items that physically represent the cultural heritage and history of the nation's past.

It is important to note, however, that only those who pay attention to their ethnic history and the strides being made in those fields will learn. Today, Honduras is the second poorest country in Latin America and more than half population lives at the national poverty line. The interest in archaeology and Honduras's cultural heritage falls mostly on the middle classes of the country as the lower classes, the majority of the country, are focused primarily on their day-to-day living and many are without resources to gain knowledge on the archaeological strides being made. Conversely, the upper classes are focused on American ways of living and progress and are similarly not very concerned with the ongoings of research.<sup>26</sup> For the country to truly be educated and aware of its cultural history as well as what discoveries in that field mean for their future, it will take a great deal of awareness and resources that currently are not feasible.

The following chapters focus on the history and still-developing consequences of the removal of pieces from Copán by the Peabody Museum's exhibitions from the end

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<sup>26</sup> Dr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, interview by Mollie Scheerer, Copán, Honduras, 17 January 2014.

of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Archaeological research has greatly contributed to the consolidation and omission of ethnic diversity in Honduras by mayanizing indigenous cultures. Most archaeological work has been done in and around the ruins of Copán even though, as previously stated, a rich and diverse spread of indigenous peoples populated the country and all have archaeological sites. Since Copán has been the area of concentration and was populated by the Maya, the most well known archaeological research, for the most part, neglects the ethnic diversity of the other groups and recognizes only the notion of a uniform indigenous Maya past.<sup>27</sup>

Although indigenous groups pass down their histories and ancestry, the mixing of indigenous groups results in people gaining more knowledge about their ancestral past through discoveries made in archaeological research. If this research is done with mayanization at the forefront, how will people learn about or identify with their true cultural heritage? Michael Ames stresses the necessity for museums today to be much more sensitive to national, ethnic, and local interests concerning collecting, and consider more carefully “the prospects of ‘repatriating’ parts of their collections to the ethnic or national communities from which they are taken (Inglis 1979).”<sup>28</sup>

The issue of repatriation is a topic very prevalent in museum collecting as well as for the country of Honduras in response to the collecting and looting that has

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<sup>27</sup> Frewen, “Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006” 30.

<sup>28</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*, 104.

occurred. Repatriation is a process through which cultural items are returned to their country of origin, its former owners or their lineal descendants. Many objects that were taken from their original place of origin have now become controversial as the true ownership of the item is blurred. This is especially the case between native people and museums, as seen with the Peabody Museum and those involved in the issue in Honduras. Arguments regarding ownership are understandable from either side which is what creates such a sensitive, convoluted subject. Often times the native people believe their cultural items or sacred objects should not be in the hands of museums while curators and scholars want to preserve the history and make it available for visitors to learn.<sup>29</sup> Although separate cases are different, many of the arguments similar to this one are long and complicated. Speaking for the curatorial side, Gurian believes the removal and repatriation of human remains from museum collections would show that cultural tradition and emotionalism triumph over scientific objectivity and the advancement of knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

Conversely, others disagree. In a conversation with Dr. Pastor Fasquelle, he told me that he has written multiple letters to the Peabody Museum asking for the pieces from Copán be returned to Honduras. As the museum still has the pieces in their warehouse, clearly his requests have not been considered. Over time, however, he has

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<sup>29</sup> Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum*, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

begun to think that perhaps Honduras does not deserve to have the stones be repatriated quite yet. Leading up to and following the 2009 coup d'état, the political climate has been unstable and he feels as though the artifacts might actually be in better hands at the Peabody Museum until Honduras can regain stability and protect its cultural heritage properly.<sup>31</sup> While many nations wish to have their rightful property repatriated, sometimes this is a similar case in which time needs to pass in order for the origin nation to take care of the objects in a proper manner.

Part of the reason for Dr. Pastor Fasquelle's uneasiness to bring items of cultural heritage back into Honduras is because of the corruption of the government after the 2009 coup. In personal conversations, both he and Barbara Fash mentioned that government officials, especially the military dictator, have allegedly given away artifacts as gifts, diminishing the Honduran share of Copán and other archaeological sites even further. As Minister of Culture, Dr. Pastor Fasquelle worked alongside Dr. Euraque to de-mayanize and de-Copánize the IHAH's agenda until 2009 as its previous vision since its establishment in 1952 had encompassed the ideology both men attempt to thwart. These radical efforts to shift the IHAH's agenda and diversify archaeological research to sites other than Copán were monumental in advancing a more comprehensive ethno-historical understanding Dr. Pastor Fasquelle and Dr. Euraque

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, interview by Mollie Scheerer, Copán, Honduras, 17 January 2014.

both promoted in their administrations.<sup>32</sup> Although a challenging effort, the IHAH made strides in overcoming the chronic mayanization between 2006 and 2009, only to fall victim to the coup which ended the new, progressive agenda.

Dr. Pastor Fasquelle and Dr. Euraque were both affected personally by the coup and now no longer hold their positions as Minister of Culture and Director of the IHAH, respectively. At the end of June in 2009 the violent coup d'état forcibly removed President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales from office after masked soldiers kidnapped him at gunpoint and flew him to Costa Rica, as well as dismissed and exiled officials throughout his administration, including Dr. Pastor Fasquelle and Dr. Euraque. Dr. Pastor Fasquelle was forced to flee to the United States, finding refuge from Honduras at Harvard University where he taught for two years. In order to ensure his safety, he left immediately and was not even able to bring his family.<sup>33</sup>

Dr. Euraque, on a four-year leave from his teaching post at Trinity College since 2006, was a leader of the cultural resistance of the coup and the new Minister of Culture's regime in order to protect the cultural heritage over which the IHAH has jurisdiction. He was dismissed as director of the IHAH by Myrna Castro, the newly appointed Minister of Culture, Arts, and Sports, because of their opposing views of what Euraque planned to do regarding Honduras' parks and museums. He believed in

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<sup>32</sup> Frewen, "Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006" 49.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, interview by Mollie Scheerer, Copán, Honduras, 19 January 2014.

promoting cultural citizenry and identity in a more inclusive form which meant investing in other cultural projects in the country instead of just Copán. Others, Castro included, saw this decision as neglecting Copán which they saw as the most important cultural site in the country as well as a key source of tourist revenue.<sup>34</sup> Euraque's firing spurred outrage among scholars and a petition supporting his illegal dismissal gained the signatures of over 350 archaeologists, historians, university faculty, administrators, and students from the United States, Europe, and Latin America. The petition urged the international community, the United States in particular, to use its leverage to restore constitutional rule in Honduras.<sup>35</sup>

His dangerous public protest in order to preserve the cultural patrimony of Honduras as it was being violated for military purposes gained widespread attention, especially from American, European and Latin American historians and archaeologists, hundreds of whom signed a petition for his reinstatement. Unfortunately, the coup had a greater effect on the political scene in Honduras and Euraque was forced to return to the United States. The months following the coup were tumultuous in Honduras as the new coup regime took over all official positions that had previously been democratically elected. Since 2009, tourism in Honduras has dropped tremendously in

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<sup>34</sup> Marion Lloyd, "Anthropologist is Fired in Honduran Cultural Debate, Roiling Researchers," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 October 2009.

<sup>35</sup> "Petition of Support for Professor Dario A. Euraque: Illegally Dismissed by Coup Government in Honduras," 25 August 2009, [http://www.hondurasresists.org/petition\\_euraque\\_en.pdf](http://www.hondurasresists.org/petition_euraque_en.pdf).



light of the political upheaval and sometimes dangerous atmosphere for foreigners. This lack of an important industry has affected the museums and institutions as part of their goal is to educate people outside of Honduras about the unique history and cultural heritage of the country. How can Honduras hope to obtain objects taken from sites such as Copán if no one outside of their own country is aware of the issues of cultural heritage repatriation?

An example of successful repatriation, the United States' Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 attempted to settle the debate about museums owning pieces of cultural heritage. This law stated

NAGPRA provides a systematic process for determining the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to certain Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony with which they are affiliated, and for the disposition of discoveries on Federal and tribal land.<sup>36</sup>

Some people feared the passing of NAGPRA would result in the decimation of museum collections as native communities took back all the artifacts that belonged to them but, fortunately, this did not happen. Instead, the native communities worked together with museums to form a professional bond and create a new balance between museums and the spiritual traditions of native people. Many got involved in museums, providing narratives, clarification, and logistical advice. The objects that were chosen to return to

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<sup>36</sup> National Park Service, *Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act*, 101st Congress, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 16 Nov. 1990) <http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/MANDATES/25USC3001etseq.htm> (accessed 7 February 2014).

their provenance or be reburied were done so carefully so as not to disrupt collections entirely and were returned with the respected reverence and formality.

In some cases, forensic samples or reproductions were saved and many objects allowed to be studied before their return so as to allow future studying of such artifacts.<sup>37</sup> For example, the expeditions to Copán at the turn of the nineteenth century made fiber glass replicas of many sculptures, objects, and stones from the Hieroglyphic Stairway to bring back to Cambridge to study as the Honduran legislation at the time restricted the removal of a certain amount of objects, discussed in the third chapter. Although the legislation of NAGPRA only applies to Native Americans of the United States and not North, Central, and South America, the cooperation and collaboration between the native people and museums served as a positive example of repatriation legislation for the rest of the world.

NAGPRA has given more rights to native peoples to determine what portion of their artifacts and history will be displayed in museums. Due to the congenial nature of the legislation, museum personnel believe these native people to be the legitimate spokespeople to determine the which objects can be displayed and when. Since 1990, they have become deeply involved not only in the display of objects but in the care, preservation, and even principles of the museums with which they are connected.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum*, 174.

Museums continue to grow and evolve in this manner and become more actively involved with the cultural communities whose objects and histories they house.

The claims made by native people (or their lineal descendants) for the return of certain cultural objects are the same as those made by formerly conquered people or those robbed of their history. NAGPRA is a very specific document that allows for the return of said objects to American Indians but it is not universal legislature. Listening to the native peoples, let alone repatriation itself, is an idea long taught but seldom practiced. Before NAGPRA, more often than not, institutions would listen to them as informants on their own culture instead of representatives of their own culture.<sup>39</sup> As more native people began to ask for objects to be repatriated and skeletal remains be reburied, more institutions began to recognize their legitimate claims in museum operations and how their histories and cultures are represented.<sup>40</sup> Many museums started to reconsider how they hold onto collections or objects if their provenance is elsewhere, although many, such as the Peabody Museum, ultimately did not follow through and repatriate artifacts.

Gurian believes museums are evolving from safe deposit boxes of the past to lending libraries of the future.<sup>41</sup> Neither one is better than the other but instead have different intentions and positive use. “Old” museums, those that house permanent

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<sup>39</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*, 12.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Gurian, *Civilizing the Museum*, 195.

collections and objects no matter where they came from originally, have a safe and dependable notion about them. The objects that belong to a museum in this category will always be there, preserved under glass for generations of curious visitors to learn about. The evolving “lending” museum, however, can change its collection as well as satisfy those who believe in the spiritual and traditional interests of the peoples to whom the cultural objects rightfully belong. The collections will fluctuate as objects come and go, moving from their original provenance to display for the public and back again. Both types of museums, however, share a common goal: to educate the public and preserve the history and culture of mankind through displaying material objects.

Over time, but especially in the last few decades, there has been a disparity and shift between the archaeological community and the collecting sphere, affecting how both terms are revered in the academic and archaeological communities. As cultural heritage protection has evolved, so have Honduras’ legislative efforts and its relations with the United States, discussed in chapter three. Boston University Anthropologist Christina Luke argues that the early field expeditions led by U.S. archaeologists, the subsequent shipment of their finds back to their home institutions, and the tremendous amount of looting that occurred sparked Honduran efforts to implement national patrimony legislation.<sup>42</sup> The ancient city of Copán is a prime example of a

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<sup>42</sup> Christina Luke, “Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists in Western Honduras: A History of the Trade in Pre-Columbian Materials,” *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 12 (2006): 25.

Central American site of both Honduran national identity symbolism and American archaeological interest through which the evolution of cultural patrimony legislation is evident, a topic for my third chapter.

## Chapter Two: The Hieroglyphic Stairway in Copán: History of the Excavations and the Effect on National Identity

Just over thirty miles from the Guatemala border, the remnants of the ancient city of Copán stand tranquilly in the Copán Valley in western Honduras. My first visit to the Archaeological Park in Copán was on a quiet January afternoon after the site had closed to visitors. Alone in the ancient city with my father, Dr. Pastor Fasquelle and his wife, we were disturbed only by the guacamaya, or scarlet macaws, that still remain in the park as they fly from stela to tree to temple, their loud calls filling the air. Standing in front of the Hieroglyphic Stairway, the main object of my interest, I could clearly understand why the ancient city is a symbol of Honduran national identity today. The history of the excavations beginning in the nineteenth century have contributed to the way in which Honduras has come to understand the archaeological site as representing their deep cultural heritage, as well as how those excavating between the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries attributed to mayanization.

Copán is a very large Maya site of approximately 100 square miles and at by the end of the Middle Classic period, the ancient city's peak, the population is estimated to be between 8,000 and 12,000. It was also at this time that Copán was emerging as one of the premier Maya regal-ritual cities.<sup>43</sup> The population of indigenous Maya people throughout the entire country of Honduras today is estimated to be around 10,600,

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<sup>43</sup> William Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings: The City of Copán and the Ancient Maya* (London, England: Thames and Hudson, 1991) 76.

about as many people as lived in Copán over one thousand years ago.<sup>44</sup> Thus, many of its buildings, structures, and sculptures are spread throughout the jungle. My focus, however, was the Hieroglyphic Stairway, one of the four components that make up the Principal Group in the Archaeological Park. The other three main areas of the city known as the Principal Group are the Great Plaza, the Ball Court, and the Acropolis as depicted in Figure 1 in the Appendix.

Upon entering the park and crossing the Great Plaza, I found myself standing in awe at the base of the Hieroglyphic Stairway. I pulled out a Lempira, the Honduran currency, and finally realized the gravity of the situation I so fortunately could experience. The back of the note shows the Stairway, the stela and altar at its base, its plaza, and the Ball Court of Copán. A closeup of another stela is to the right of the depiction of the ruins of Copán, its intricate, detailed carvings more visible to the observer. Hondurans take great pride in this archaeological site for it to be on the back of their most common form of currency since 1931, I realized. Subsequently, Copán clearly stood as a major source of Hondurans' sense of national identity as the note shows its importance to the country and its ancient past. The cultural treasures of the site are concrete examples of such identity and the loss of some to museums, collectors, archaeologists, looters, and others result in obscuring national identity.

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<sup>44</sup> Frewen, "Honduran National Identity, 1994-2006" 61.

The Great Plaza was a public area on the northern side of the Principal Group, today a vast expanse of grass filled with beautiful, intricate altars and stelae dotting the lawn carved with glyphs and patterns. 18 Rabbit, the thirteenth ruler of Copán, commissioned these monuments.<sup>45</sup> The plaza is enclosed by stone steps fading into the forest that surrounds the site as they were once part of structures on the perimeter. As the attempt to preserve has increased in the twentieth century, many of the altars and stelae have been removed from the Plaza itself and placed in the Sculpture Museum also located on the grounds to ensure their safety from the elements. The monuments that have been removed are replaced by fiberglass replicas, identical to their ancient counterparts although there is one way to tell the difference. The original stelae and altars remaining in the park are covered by small tin roofs, a method of preservation installed in 1984.

In the middle of the plaza is the Maya world's second largest Ball Court, a major center of ceremonial life. The ball game was a fierce and dangerous part of Maya ritualistic life, often ending with human sacrifice. Scholars are not sure who was sacrificed as a result of the game; there is some speculation it was the captain of one of the teams, although it has not been determined whether it was the victor or loser killed.<sup>46</sup> The court itself is impressive with two stone buildings facing one another,

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<sup>45</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Pastor Fasquelle, interview with Mollie Scheerer, Copán, Honduras, 15 January 2014.



their interior walls sloping gently towards the ground and running parallel to one another, creating a rectangular area of ground which serves as the court. The shorter sides of the court are open, the northern side open to stairs perhaps used for viewing the game. The court's aesthetic theme reflects the guacamaya that have always been present in and around the city; three ornamental goal posts in the shape of macaw heads dot the each side of the flanking structures. Atop the pyramid-like structures are large carved macaws swooping down over the court, the head the only part of the bird protruding from the wall. The king and other officials would have sat above the court's long eastern side underneath one of these creatures. Ball games were events that typically involved all members of the community, bringing together commoners with kings and other officials. They were also played between other tribes or kingdoms as a means of settling matters or territory or war. Many variations of the ritualistic ball game exist and scholars have not yet determined exactly how it was played at Copán, only furthering the mystery that surrounds the Maya.

The western side of the Great Plaza is the eastern wall of the Acropolis which is divided into two plazas, the west court and the east court. This side of Temple 11, the structure dividing the Great Plaza and the Acropolis, has many more temples and structures, each with their own complex and colorful history. The art of Copán is very different than that of other Mesoamerican peoples consisting mostly of stone carvings. This intricate stone work is often done in full round and adorned every important

building throughout the city, as well as the stelae, altars, and other sculptures.<sup>47</sup>

Although the east and west courts are not central to my work, an important factor to the site itself is the amount of natural damage to the site over time, including by earthquakes, landslides, erosion, and the Copán River. In his report on the Peabody Museum's explorations, George Byron Gordon discusses the difficulty of determining at what point in history the various disasters occurred and exactly what damage they did to the ancient city as there are few historical references noted by previous explorers.<sup>48</sup> The result of numerous disasters and damage done to the ancient city has challenged archaeologists, explorers, and scholars in their reconstruction and preservation of the ruins.

The Hieroglyphic Stairway fell victim to such devastation, although visitors to the park today would not necessarily realize it at first. The Copán River, running along the eastern side of the city, changed its course over time and had begun to erode and destroy part of the easternmost wall of the city, Structure 21. Several buildings were destroyed and it washed away thousands of tons of stone, leaving an archaeological cut vertically one hundred and eighty-five feet in height in the stone. In 1936 the Carnegie Institution diverted the river while on excavation at the site, saving the rest of the

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<sup>47</sup> Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *An Album of Maya Architecture* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 31.

<sup>48</sup> George Byron Gordon, *The Hieroglyphic Stairway Ruins of Copán: Report on Explorations by the Museum*, 1 no. 6 *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1902) 6-7.

structures and enabling archaeologists to analyze the product of the river's destruction.<sup>49</sup> The erosion revealed layers of structures upon which Structure 21 had been built. Archaeologists were thus able to explore the centuries of different construction phases through which Copán had gone in the centuries it stood in Copán Valley.

The Stairway, one of the most prominent monuments of the archaeological site and certainly the most prominent to my work, stands between the Ball Court and Acropolis, ascending the northern slope of Structure 26. The great Stairway stands sixty-three steps tall at an angle of forty-five degrees, ten meters wide and twenty-four meters high.<sup>50</sup> Five seated figures ascend the center of the steps, important to the role museum collecting has in connection to Copán. At the base of the Stairway is a wide altar. Separate from the Stairway is another altar and associated stela erected by the thirteenth ruler, 18 Rabbit.

The most remarkable feature of the Stairway, however, is the hieroglyphs on every block of the steps, over two thousand in all. This makes the hieroglyphic

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<sup>49</sup> Gustav Strømshvik, *Carnegie Institution of Washington Year Book* 34 (Baltimore, Maryland: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1936) 118-120 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>50</sup> J. Paul Getty Trust and Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia, "The Hieroglyphic Stairway of Copán, Honduras: Study Results and Conservation Proposals," *The Getty Conservation Institute* (Los Angeles, California: 2006) 35 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

inscriptions the longest known Maya text in existence in the New World.<sup>51</sup> Although very impressive in appearance, the Stairway has been covered with a canvas tarp since 1984 in order to preserve the stones, similar to the preservation attempts of the original stelae and altars in the park. All sculptures, stelae, altars, temples, and structures are carved from the same volcanic tuff, a soft rock that is easy to carve but also susceptible to erosion from wind, rain, and biological growth. Hence, many parts of the park, including temples such as those atop the Ball Court, reside in the Sculpture Museum where they can be more assuredly preserved.

The Hieroglyphic Stairway has undergone waves of excavation, research, and preservation beginning in the early nineteenth century, a time in which there was a major push for archaeological expeditions all over the globe. The first mention of the Stairway was in a letter to King Phillip II of Spain from Diego García Palacio from March 8, 1576. The letter was translated into English by Ephraim George Squier, an American newspaper editor and archaeologist, and published in 1860 in the 'Collection of Rare and Original Documents and Relations concerning the Discovery and Conquest of America, chiefly from the Spanish Archives,' as well as in the first of six volumes of *Biologia Centrali-Americana: Archaeology* by a British explorer, Alfred Maudslay from

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<sup>51</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings*, 51.

1889-1902.<sup>52</sup> Copies of the first, second, and sixth volumes currently reside in the CRIA. The inscription reads, in loose translation from Spanish courtesy of Dr. Pastor Fasquelle, “For the people of Honduras to record all they have done.”

In his letter, García de Palacio references the six stelae still remaining in the Great Plaza today commissioned by the thirteenth ruler, as well as first references the city as the name people recognize it by today, Copán. The derivation of the name does not, however, come from García de Palacio, but scholars such as Sylvanus Morley of the Carnegie Institution believe the etymology to be from the Nahuatl, a Uto-Aztecan people mostly from Central Mexico and El Salvador. While García de Palacio did not carry out any excavation work, his observations which he enclosed in his letter to Phillip II show a keen eye for detail even if he was unable to interpret what he found in Copán archaeologically. He reveals that he attempted to speak with the Indians still in the area about the people who had lived there or what they knew or heard from their ancestors but found there were no books or written word regarding their antiquities. Instead, they only told him that in ancient times a great lord from the Yucatan built the

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<sup>52</sup> Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, *Prehistoric Ruins of Copán, Honduras: A Preliminary Report of the Explorations by the Museum, 1891-1895* 1 no. 1 *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1896) 47.

edifices surrounding them, but later returned to his native country and left them deserted.<sup>53</sup>

While García de Palacio's account is enlightening as it is the first time Copán is mentioned in writing, he did not do any archaeological work and few Europeans knew about the existence of the letter, and subsequently Copán, until centuries later. The first archaeological expedition did not begin until 1834 under Colonel Juan Galindo on behalf of the Guatemalan government. An Irish adventurer who changed his name from John Gallagher, Galindo attract a great deal of attention to Copán and sparked the interest of expeditions to follow.<sup>54</sup> Although García de Palacio's letter to King Phillip II is the earliest mention of Copán, Galindo's letters to the editor of the "Liberty Gazette" of London and another printed in the second volume of "Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society" in 1835 were the first time the civilized world heard about the ancient city.<sup>55</sup>

John Lloyd Stephens, an American explorer and writer whom President Martin Van Buren commissioned as a Special Ambassador to Central America, made an infamous voyage to Copán in 1839. His travels not only attracted even more attention

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<sup>53</sup> Alfred P. Maudslay, *Biologia Centrali-Americana: Archaeology* (New York, NY: Milpatron Publication Corporation, 1889-1902), 1 no. 7 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>54</sup> W. B. Allig, "The Lost World of Copán," 34 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>55</sup> Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, *Prehistoric Ruins of Copán, Honduras*, 4.

to the ancient city but also awakened the general interest of the scientific world, creating future interest in Honduran archaeology. Stephens traveled to Copán with Frederick Catherwood, an architect who drafted some of the first sketches of Copán. In his *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán*, Stephens reveal he and Catherwood purchased Copán for a total of \$50 and intended to remove the monuments from the ancient city before they became known and valuable in order to protect it from the Europeans. Stephens writes about the ruins, “They belonged of right to us, and, though we did not know how soon we might be kicked out ourselves, I resolved that ours they should be.”<sup>56</sup> This mentality reveals why looting and the exploiting of cultural heritage has become an issue in the past few centuries as it stems back to the mid nineteenth century. Although Stephens purchased the land, the Honduran Government later overturned the purchase and passed the first legislation protecting the site in 1845.<sup>57</sup> This legislation marked the first of Honduras’s continued efforts to protect its national identity and cultural heritage.

After the discovery of the Stairway, the first true period of work in Copán occurred in 1885 when Alfred P. Maudslay began excavating. Maudslay was a British archaeologist and explorer, affirming Stephens’ worst fears about Europeans discovering Copán. Maudslay arrived on 10 January 1885, although the ship carrying

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<sup>56</sup> John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (London, England: W. Clowes and Sons, 1842) 118-123 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>57</sup> Luke, “Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists,” 29.

the surveying instruments and other equipment had broken its propeller and was delayed a month, a significant blow to Maudslay's timeframe with the rainy season approaching.<sup>58</sup> When he was finally able to begin work, he and his team began to assess the archaeological wealth of the area. They began preliminary excavations of Copán and generated the first detailed maps, plans, and sections of buildings, and took photographs and plaster moulds of the monuments and paper moulds of the inscriptions.<sup>59</sup> He also noticed the glyphs on the west side of Structure 26 and was the first to refer to the stairway of that structure as "hieroglyphic." A landslide had compromised the Stairway, however, and thusly more than half of the upper part of the stairway had slid down and covered the remaining lower steps with debris. On their way down, only fifteen of the displaced steps had retained their identity and relative positions and it was these fifteen that Maudslay and his team would excavate *in situ*.<sup>60</sup> The next expeditions in upcoming decades continued his excavation process of the Stairway, although Maudslay's team completed work on the original fifteen steps. Maudslay's revolutionary work at Copán inaugurated a new era in Maya archaeology.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ian Graham, *Alfred Maudslay and the Maya* (London, England: The British Museum Press, 2002) 131.

<sup>59</sup> Maudslay, *Biologia Centrali-Americana: Archaeology*, 78 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon, *The Hieroglyphic Stairway Ruins of Copán: Report on Explorations by the Museum*, 6.

<sup>61</sup> Graham, *Alfred Maudslay and the Maya*, 136.



His findings in Copán became the new standard for this field and were widespread after their publication in *Biologia Centralia-Americana*.

Maudslay's excavations did not proceed without difficulties, however, as politics of the region impacted the archaeological work just as it would in decades to follow. War broke out between Honduras and Guatemala opposing El Salvador and Nicaragua and almost all of Maudslay's hired Honduran workers were called to serve their country, severely rupturing the progress at Copán.<sup>62</sup> As soon as the war was over, Maudslay immediately continued his work and focused on sending mules and porters to Guatemala with cargoes of paper and plaster moulds to be shipped back to London.<sup>63</sup> After five months of working in Copán, Maudslay considered his work to be successful and complete and began to determine how to ensure the safety of the excavated sculptures remaining at the site.

Maudslay, hopeful to return to England not only with moulds but with original pieces of sculpture as well, telegraphed the President, Luis Bográn, to notify him of the work's completion and to convey this hope of the permission to remove certain pieces to place in the museum with his moulds. Bográn responded on June 3rd, the translation saying, "I rejoice at the successful completion of your work. You can take away what you like. I shall have pleasure in helping you in your explorations for the

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<sup>62</sup> Maudslay, *Biologia Centrali-Americana: Archaeology*, 168 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>63</sup> Graham, *Alfred Maudslay and the Maya*, 139.

benefit of science.” Maudslay chose to remove four pieces; a bust of a young girl carved in the round and three panels from Temple II.<sup>64</sup> Although legislation had been implemented in 1845 protecting Copán, Bográn did not adhere to it and allowed Maudslay simply to take away the objects of cultural heritage rightfully belonging to Honduras.

Maudslay may have begun excavating the Stairway, but the excavation was completed at the turn of the twentieth century when Harvard University’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology financed four expeditions between 1891 and 1901, discussed further in the following chapter. The Peabody Expeditions focused on excavating the Principal Group and continued Maudslay’s work of uncovering the Stairway. They, too, found the landslide coupled with erosion and time had caused it to shift and collapse. Several men led the expeditions at this time, including Maudslay himself, as well as John G. Owens and George Byron Gordon, both of whom contributed a great deal of work to Maya archaeology and the Stairway, especially. Gordon was the man responsible for bringing the season’s finds back to Cambridge, Massachusetts including the second Seated Figure from the Stairway sawn into pieces, and a number of blocks from the stairs sawn into four or five-inch pieces to make transportation easier.<sup>65</sup> The Peabody Expeditions were integral to the excavations at

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> George Byron Gordon, Letter to Charles Bowditch, 25 April 1893, Charles P. Bowditch Papers, #41-7, Central American Expedition Records, 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

Copán, but also played a large role in the evolving Honduran legislation that resulted from the work, to be discussed in the following chapter.

Herbert J. Spinden was the next explorer to visit Copán, arriving for the first time in 1910 while on a trip visiting the Yucatan for research for his paper, “On the Historical Development of Art at Copán.” An art historian, Spinden focused less on the archaeology and history of the site and more on the sculptural styles of used. He revered Copán as well as other Maya sites in southern Mexico for their use of stone, seeing it as their greatest development. The soft volcanic stone commonly used for the temples, altars, and stelae of Copán also impressed him.<sup>66</sup>

Spinden also became well-versed in Maya inscriptions, particularly dates, and soon came to be known as a pioneer in this field. He used stylistic analysis to chronologically date different features of Copán and other ancient Mesoamerican Maya cities. Combining his analysis of the style with deciphered inscriptions from archaeologists, he could determine the date of an inscription even with just a fragment or eroded piece of stone within a calendar round, or fifty-two years.<sup>67</sup> In his work *A Study of Maya Art: Its Subject Matter and Historical Development* contained in Volume VI of

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<sup>66</sup> Herbert Joseph Spinden, *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, (New York, NY: American Museum of Natural History, 1917) 19 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>67</sup> Ellen Elizabeth Bell, “Early Classical Ritual Deposits within the Copán Acropolis: The Material Foundations of Political Power at a Classic Period Maya Center,” (Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2007) 110 in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

the *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum*, one example of Spinden's method is seen as he focuses on Copán's unique volcanic stone masonry versus the use of limestone from Tikal in Guatemala. Through looking at the rectangular spaces and flatness or curvature in glyphs from stelae, as well as what the glyphs supposedly represent, he can date determine that Stela 3 from Tikal is about 76 years older than Stela 7 at Copán, the earliest discovered stela at the time.<sup>68</sup>

Spinden focuses mostly on details of the stelae of the Great Plaza but also looks at the Hieroglyphic Stairway. He writes that the most advanced glyph carvings are seen on the Stairway, the forms of which are carved in high relief. In comparison, he explains that the earlier glyphs in Copán are flat and rectangular with details carved in fine incised lines and over time they lose their sharp outline and rich detail to become much rounder and more simplified.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the Hieroglyphic Stairway is the most recent structure and certainly has the newest glyphs at Copán, as later archaeologists would confirm.

After Spinden, work in Copán was not continued until the 1930s when the Carnegie Institution reconstructed the Stairway to its original glory as it remains the

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<sup>68</sup> Herbert Joseph Spinden, *A Study of Maya Art: Its Subject Matter and Historical Development*, 1 no. 6 *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1902) 168.

<sup>69</sup> Herbert Joseph Spinden, *A Study of Maya Art: Its Subject Matter and Historical Development*, 6 *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1913) 160.

way visitors see it in the park today. Sylvanus Griswold Morley from the School of American Archaeology did make several visits in the 1910s to photograph the site in preparation for his publication, *The Inscriptions at Copán* in 1920. Within this work he provides dates for the inscriptions on the blocks of the Stairway, an important piece of research for future excavations.<sup>70</sup> He played an important role in the creation of the Department of Archaeology at the Carnegie Institution of Washington in 1914. One of his several works on the Maya is the 1915 *An Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphs* in which he discusses interpretations of the hieroglyphs on several altars and stelae in Copán, although he makes no mention of the Hieroglyphic Stairway.<sup>71</sup> Morley also convinced the institution and the Honduran Government to cooperate on the restoration and improvement of the site and in 1935 they began long-term research, surveying, and excavation on many Maya sites, Copán included.<sup>72</sup> The Carnegie's most significant accomplishment was diverting the course of the Copán River away from the eastern side of the Acropolis in 1936 and 1937. By building and reinforcing a stone dam, the river finally flowed in a new direction where it would no longer eat away and destroy the site's history.<sup>73</sup> Copán owes its excellent state of

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<sup>70</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings*, 139.

<sup>71</sup> Sylvanus G. Morley, *An Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphs* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1915) in Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas Library and Archives, Copán, Honduras.

<sup>72</sup> J. Paul Getty Trust and Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia, "The Hieroglyphic Stairway of Copán, Honduras," 14.

<sup>73</sup> Bell, "Early Classical Ritual Deposits within the Copán Acropolis," 112.

preservation to Morley's persistence, especially in regards to the Ball Court, the stelae in the Great Plaza, and the Hieroglyphic Stairway.

Although Morley sparked interest in excavating the Maya world in Honduras, the work in Copán was directed by Gustav Strømsvik. He was a Norwegian engineer and archaeologist and directed the Carnegie's entire conservation process there. Strømsvik and his team's work on the Stairway is especially important as the Carnegie reconstructed and began the preservation process still in practice today. To begin, the team cleared the vegetation that had grown on the mound that was the jumble of stones they knew to be the Stairway and the altar at the base was stabilized. Although knowledge of Maya glyphs was not complete at the time, Strømsvik insisted on reconstructing the Stairway as a whole from the beginning of the excavation because he did not want the stones to be damaged further. The blocks whose position in the Stairway were currently unknown remained excavated onsite but would soon be covered with vegetation, deteriorate more, and possibly be jeopardized by instruments later clearing the vegetation.

The subsequent reconstruction phase was difficult not only because of partial knowledge of the Maya script but also because the fifteen in situ steps which Maudslay had discovered had slid from a higher position and were not the bottom steps from which they could base the rest of the inscription.<sup>74</sup> The blocks were set as best the

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<sup>74</sup> J. Paul Getty Trust and Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia, "The Hieroglyphic Stairway of Copán, Honduras," 14.

Carnegie team could manage into the Stairway; they were able to decipher some glyphs, most of these being dates of the Maya Long Count calendar, and these were placed in their rightful positions. The other blocks were set in a more jumbled and haphazard manner simply to get them off the surface of the site. Fragments of the five Seated Figures were also placed on the Stairway.<sup>75</sup> The archaeologists also made sure to leave a gap in the center of the stairs where the second Seated Figure once fit as it was already at the Peabody Museum from their excavations under Gordon.<sup>76</sup>

The significance and history of the Hieroglyphic Stairway in ancient times are crucial to understanding its importance to Copán and the explorers who excavated it over centuries after its discovery. The thirteenth ruler of Copán, 18 Rabbit, commissioned the penultimate version of the Stairway. He also commissioned the stelae still remaining in the Great Plaza, on the eastern side of Structure 26 in 710 A.D. The fifteenth ruler, Smoke Shell, actually moved the Stairway to its current position facing west in 755 A.D. The five Seated Figures on the center of the stairway are the immediate predecessors of Smoke Shell depicted as great warriors, sacrificers and kings. A sixth stands in front of the temple above the Stairway. In tribute to Smoke Shell's ancestors, they ascend the stairs as witnesses to dynastic and ritual continuity.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings*, 140.

<sup>76</sup> Baudez, *Maya Sculpture of Copán*, 221.

<sup>77</sup> Claude-François Baudez, *Maya Sculpture of Copán: The Iconography* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994) 231 in Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.).

Although knowledge of Maya glyphs is not yet complete, scholars believe the inscription on every block making up the Stairway together details the two hundred-year dynastic history of Copán in great, albeit unusual, detail. Interestingly, the Stairway does not seem to honor Smoke Shell but his father instead; the commemoration date is not followed by Smoke Shell's name but rather the name of the twelfth ruler, Smoke Imix God K.<sup>78</sup>

William Fash, one of the founders of the Copán Association and a leading mayanist today, believes that Smoke Shell built the Stairway as a memorial to the great ruler before him as “a rallying cry to unite all his people” and to relegitimize Copán's presence in the Maya world after the humiliating capture and sacrifice of 18 Rabbit in Quiriguá, another Maya site located in Guatemala. Over time and through different interpretations, scholars have determined that the Hieroglyphic Stairway glyphs constitute one continuous inscription detailing important events of the history of Copán's rulers, such as births, ascensions to power, important rituals, parentage statements, and deaths.<sup>79</sup> The Stairway inscription has also allowed scholars to understand the transformation of Copán's politico-religious ideology through the depiction of the different periods of dynastic rule.<sup>80</sup> Without the inscriptions or the

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<sup>78</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings*, 144-145.

<sup>79</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors and Kings*, 144, 146.

<sup>80</sup> William Fash, *Religion and Human Agency in Ancient Maya History: Tales from the Hieroglyphic Stairway* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Archaeological Journal, 2002) 1 no. 12, 15.



ability to read them, we would not be able to understand the ancient Maya culture, although still very mysterious, as well as we do today.

Harvard was responsible for work done in Copán again from 1975 to 1977 as Gordon R. Willey, invited by the director of the IHAH, conducted a multi-disciplinary project in Copán Valley accompanied by several natural scientists and archaeologists studying and assessing settlement patterns in the site while mapping, surveying, and excavating in the hopes of extending conservation outside of the city of Copán.<sup>81</sup>

Gordon Willey is also a central figure in reversing mayanization, a process discussed in the third chapter. His surveying project in Copán became the Peabody Museum Copán Sustaining Area Project and examined Maya society by contextualizing the Principal Group and its sculpture, monuments, and inscriptions within the larger social whole of the Maya. This multi-disciplinary approach to field work and the analysis of material culture set an important precedent that has since been followed at Copán by other projects.

In 1977 the Harvard Project ended but the IHAH initiated the first of two major programs known as the Proyecto Arqueológico Copán (PAC) that consisted archaeological, environmental, and ethnographic investigations while also continuing to emphasize conservation and tourist development. A direct continuation of Willey's work, the PAC was directed by Claude François Baudez until 1979 when the second

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<sup>81</sup> Baudez, *Maya Sculpture of Copán*, 6.

phase was overseen by William T. Sanders from 1980 to 1984. In his book on his findings *Maya Sculpture of Copán*, Baudez details the work done under his direction, focusing on a settlement pattern study as Willey had, but this time looking more closely at the Main Group and the archaeological history of the Great Plaza.<sup>82</sup> The second phase wound down in 1984, the same year UNESCO recognized Copán as a World Heritage site. This honor in addition to the PAC's goal of emphasizing conservation and tourist development truly helped Copán's recognition in the contemporary archaeological world.

The most recent phase of work on Copán began with William Fash and his wife Barbara in 1985 when they created the Copán Mosaics Project. Dedicated to the archaeology of Copán since 1977, the Fashes goal of this project was to “conserve, document, re-articulate, analyze, reconstruct, and interpret the tens of thousands of fragments of tenoned mosaic facade sculptures which originally adorned dozens of Late Classic masonry structures in the Copán valley” as well as to continue the study of Copán's numerous inscriptions.<sup>83</sup> The Copán Mosaics Project became recognized by the government as worthy of sponsoring in order to promote the continuous promulgation of Honduran national identity contextualized in its cultural heritage. Barbara and William Fash's work on the ancient Maya in and around Copán has since

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

developed into multi-institutional and disciplinary research efforts. Their work at Copán has changed the site and the visitor's experience in a variety of ways, but they have also contributed to the field of archaeological research in their own way as well as bringing students to Copán to work. The Copán Mosaics Project has attracted attention from the historical and archaeological worlds on an international scale which is crucial to keeping the park and its visitation abundant.

The Copán Mosaics Project yielded the conception, design, and construction of an onsite Sculpture Museum built by the Honduran government, opening in 1996. As previously mentioned, some stelae, altars, temples, and sculptures from the original archaeological site have since been moved to the museum and replaced with replicas so as to maintain the site as it should be, simultaneously guaranteeing that the pieces of Honduras' cultural heritage are preserved. As the bounty of Copán is seemingly endless, teams of archaeologists, artists, and other talented people have tirelessly worked to continue deciphering texts, piecing together mosaic sculptures, and preserving documents, photographs, as well as the sculptures themselves.<sup>84</sup> Since its creation, the Sculpture Museum at Copán has become an integral part of local pride felt by Hondurans and the preservation of cultural heritage as it educates visitors with the magnificent original ancient artifacts.

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<sup>84</sup> Fash, *Religion and Human Agency in Ancient Maya History*, 7.

I received a thorough tour of this museum on the afternoon of 15 January 2014 from Barbara Fash herself as well as Dr. Pastor Fasquelle. The building is designed so visitors travel through it in the way the Maya viewed the world; through a mythical serpent, a portal from one world to the next. The entrance, therefore, is through the jaws of the serpent and into a dim tunnel that winds its way into the heart of the museum. The exit takes visitors to the back of the museum, “the other world,” where the luscious landscape greets them on the paths back to where they came.<sup>85</sup> Inside, the immense one-room, two-floor museum is bright. A replica of the intricately-carved Early Classic temple known as Rosalila erupts through an open in the center of the ceiling so the museum fills with natural light. Through years of excavation and research, this model of Rosalila is colored in bright red, green, yellow, and white tones as the originally used to be. Hundreds of original sculptures, altars, facades, and other parts of buildings line both floors, immersing visitors in the visually rich history of the ancient city.

As stated previously, the purpose of the museum sought not only to educate visitors about the cultural heritage and importance of ancient sculpture, but also to preserve the artifacts and train local workers in continuing the conservation and preservation processes. That afternoon, Barbara Fash showed us into brand new preservation rooms still under construction. Specially equipped to perform longer

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<sup>85</sup> Barbara Fash, interview with Mollie Scheerer, Copán, Honduras, 15 January 2014.

lasting chemical preservation processes, these rooms will benefit the archaeological site tremendously and ensure the artifacts in the museum will last for even longer. William and Barbara Fash's revolutionary work at Copán for decades has created lasting positive effects for the betterment of the archaeological site as well as for the cultural heritage; the national identity of Hondurans is better preserved as well as more available for their education and visitors' because of their innovations.

Another branch of the Copán Mosaics Project began in 1986 and is known as the Hieroglyphic Stairway Project. Using the research from previous institutions in Copán to assess the ultimate purpose and meaning of the Stairway and its temple, as well as begin lasting conservation and restoration efforts, the Fashes focused on the inscriptions, imagery, archaeological evidence, and previous knowledge about the Maya as a society to piece together their hypotheses.<sup>86</sup> In 1987 a new endeavor grew out of their projects; excavating under the altar at the base of the Hieroglyphic Stairway. David Stuart and William Fash oversaw the tunneling expeditions throughout the Main Group, some of which visitors can still walk today. Finds from the tunnels, especially from underneath the Stairway, include an offertory cache placed at the altar when the Stairway was commemorated and unlike some of their surface artifact counterparts, the objects safely reside in Honduran museums.<sup>87</sup> Despite the fact that Copán has been

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<sup>86</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings*, 142-151.

<sup>87</sup> Fash, *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings*, 149.

excavated for centuries, objects of cultural heritage are still being found today as the issue of Honduran national identity as defined by them lingers.

The same year the PAC II was completed, 1984 saw a development in Honduran legislation developed which would continue to evolve in the upcoming decades. The IHAH established the Law for the Protection of National Cultural Patrimony, passed by the National Congress that year. Recognizing that a large part of cultural heritage comes from archaeological research, the state (as spurred by the IHAH) began contemporary legislation to protect its cultural heritage from looters, collectors, and destruction by human or natural forces. The purpose of the law, as detailed in the first two Articles, is the defense, conservation, claim, rescue, restoration, protection, investigation, disclosure, enhancement and transfer to future generations of the property that make up the National Cultural Heritage. This includes movable assets, archaeological collections, documental funds, bibliographic funds, and cultural expressions of living indigenous people and anything associated.<sup>88</sup> The following chapter examines the cultural legislation of Honduras and the United States as it relates to the cultural heritage of Honduras, the cultural diplomacy between the two nations, and continued development of the Honduran national identity.

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<sup>88</sup> UNESCO, *Decree No. 220-97*, Honduran National Congress (Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 29 December 1997) [http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/honduras/honduras\\_leyproteccionpatrimonio\\_entof.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/honduras/honduras_leyproteccionpatrimonio_entof.pdf) (accessed 10 April 2014) Articles 1-2, .

### Chapter Three: Archaeological and Legislative Relations between Honduras and the United States: Cultural Diplomacy, Smart Power, and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

The deeply rooted archaeology of Honduras has long been a symbol of national identity, but over the 150 years it has been excavated it has evolved into an issue of international relations. The collecting that resulted from Peabody's Honduras expeditions shows the initial move toward the complicated relationship between the museum and Honduran government that is still present today. The Peabody Museum's efforts can be tied into Euraque's definition of mayanization in regards to how it emphasizes the official rescue of an ancestral legacy for the purpose of constructing a national identity while ignoring the lived realities of the contemporary indigenous peoples of Honduras.<sup>89</sup> The expeditions rescued some of the ancestral legacy of Honduras through excavating sites and collecting some of the artifacts although they did little to involve themselves in the culture around them. Despite the fact that they hired Hondurans as labor workers, their interactions with the people of the country existed mostly in the diplomatic relations that evolved in this era, perhaps only deepening the issues the Harvard team would run into in the next ten years.

Archaeologists are a key component in discovering and displaying cultural heritage and the attraction of American archaeologists to Copán is a unique and important part of the country's history as they both affected and were affected by

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<sup>89</sup> Euraque, "The Honduran Coup and Cultural Policy" 31.

Honduras' changing national patrimony legislation. The evolution of Honduran national patrimony legislation is a result of the excavation of sites such as the ancient city of Copán, begun by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the 1890s. As the site itself, as well as the sculptures and objects found there, is an integral part to Honduran and Central American cultural heritage, it is involved in an exchange with the social life, economy, and politics of the region.<sup>90</sup>

Smart power, a term coined by American political scientist Joseph Nye, is a combination of hard and soft power strategies in international relations, in this case, cultural diplomacy between the United States and Honduras. Hard power refers to the influence of other political entities via military and economic means and in terms of Honduran legislation is the restriction of importing at the American border. Soft power is a method using diplomacy, culture, and history to negotiate instead of the coercing tactics hard power employs. The combination of the two methods results in smart power, a strategy that in recent years has reformed the American diplomatic landscape by opening consulates, cultural centers, and museums to better understand cultural sensitivities, identities, and pluralities that make up nation states and to explore options for collaborative opportunities to reach across cultural and national

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<sup>90</sup> Christina Luke, "The Science behind United States Smart Power in Honduras: Archaeological Heritage Diplomacy," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 2 March 2012 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09592296.2012.651965#.U1WyedyDfwI> (accessed 27 February 2014)111.



boundaries.<sup>91</sup> Smart power is the way in which Honduras and the United States, for the most part, interact through archaeology today. In the 1890s, however, during excavations at Copán by the Peabody Museum, it was a truly different world in terms of legislation and international relations.

The Peabody Museum sent out four expeditions to explore the ancient city, the first in 1891 under the leadership of Harvard's own John Gundy Owens. Part of the Peabody's documentation of the expeditions to Copán are part of their archival material in the Central American Expedition Records between 1891 and 1901, a set of seven boxes which I was fortunate enough to examine on an archival research trip to the renowned museum. These boxes contain correspondence, administrative data, field notes, ephemera, reports, photographs, manuscripts, memoranda, and financial data which all encompass some of the earliest Peabody expeditions to Central America.

The Honduran government permitted the Museum to carry out their expeditions in Copán for ten years under a special decree issued in July of 1890 that would be in effect beginning 1 January 1892. All the ancient ruins within the border of the Republic of Honduras were placed in the care of the Peabody, giving the museum not only the charge of the antiquities in the country, but also the exclusive right of exploration and permission to remove one half of all objects found during the excavations, the other

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<sup>91</sup> Luke, "Archaeological Heritage Diplomacy," 111.

half to remain as Honduran cultural property.<sup>92</sup> Under the 1890 legislation, the representative from the museum in charge of the work in Copán would select the objects to be brought back to Cambridge and send them via mules to Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, where the division was to be made by a representative of the Peabody Museum and a representative of the Government of Honduras.<sup>93</sup> For those objects that could not be easily carried to Tegucigalpa by mules, they would be kept by the Director of the Excavations in Copán and carefully divided once a year for transportation.<sup>94</sup> One of the five seated statues of the Hieroglyphic Stairway was transported back to the Peabody in this manner. All men involved in the Peabody Expeditions recognized the incredibly advantageous opportunity that stood before them, courtesy of the Honduran government, both for the advancement of archaeology and for the ability to increase the Peabody's collection as, at the time, they had a very small collection of Central American antiquities.<sup>95</sup>

Unlike some explorers and archaeologists before them, such as John Lloyd Stephens in 1839 who believed the ruins of Copán belonged to him, the Peabody documented in an expedition report that they were concerned about the previous

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<sup>92</sup> Charles P. Bowditch and Francis C. Lowell, "Explorations in Honduras" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1891) 1.

<sup>93</sup> "Agreement between the Government of Honduras and the Peabody Museum," Box 1, Folder 1, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Bowditch and Lowell, "Explorations in Honduras," 2.

looting of the site: “We have frequently raised our voice against the barbarous plunder and destruction of antique remains and now hail with pleasure the beginning of work, that will reveal new interesting facts, relating to the early history of Central America, the classic antique ground of the Continent of America.”<sup>96</sup> At first, the Peabody negotiated cultural diplomacy and adhered to the legislation in place. Their initial recognition that plundering sites such as Copán was barbarous showed they respected the country of Honduras and were simply excavating for the sake of science, as well as to provide the people in the country with a deeper understanding of their national identity. The next ten years, however, would see a series of events that strained diplomatic relations and challenged the concession of all ruins of Honduras to the Peabody, affecting later work at Copán, as well.<sup>97</sup>

As a result of this unique and significant step for the museum’s research and exploration opportunities, the Committee for Central American Research began at Harvard in 1891. The leading members were Frederic Ward Putnam, curator and Director of the Honduras Expedition, Charles P. Bowditch, and Francis C. Lowell, the Treasurer of the Museum. In addition to the expeditions to Copán in the next few decades to follow, this Committee also organized and funded expeditions to many other locations in Central and Meso America. Putnam, as curator and director, was the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Luke, “Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists,” 29.

liaison between the museum and both the American and Honduran governments, as well as the correspondent from the Peabody to his men while they were in Copán.

The fall of 1891 yielded a great deal of correspondence from Putnam's hand in order to prepare the museum for their initial expedition. In a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, James G. Blaine, on 10 October 1891, Putnam wrote to inform the government of the unique right granted to the museum by Honduras in relation to how it could positively affect not only the museum's explorations but the United States' relations with Honduras. The opportunity, he said, was of decidedly international character and would hopefully result in a friendship and the securing of trade between Honduras, Guatemala, and the United States.<sup>98</sup> Putnam was hopeful, but as the expeditions would progress he would see the true nature of the diplomatic relations between the United States and Honduras.

Although Putnam had been in correspondence for about a year with the Honduran President, Luis Bográn, he wrote another letter on 11 November 1891 as the departure for the expedition approached. This document was written with two intentions; one, to ask permission of free entry of the expedition to Honduras via Yzabal, Guatemala.<sup>99</sup> The team would arrive directly in Yzabal from New Orleans and

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<sup>98</sup> F.W. Putnam, letter to James G. Blaine, 17 October 1891, Folder 1, Box 1, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>99</sup> F.W. Putnam, letter to President Luis Bográn, 11 November 1891, Folder 1, Box 1, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

this was the safest and most direct route to Copán. He stressed to Bográn that the expedition was extremely important for the progression and advancement of science.<sup>100</sup> While the President was not opposed to the work by the Peabody at Copán, the Honduran Congress was, making the Peabody Expeditions' access to the sites and their finds a very controversial issue in the Honduran political sphere.<sup>101</sup> However, at the time Congress had fairly limited legal power and acted merely as a cloak behind which the executive, in this case the President, performed the real work of the government, as William S. Stokes, author of the most important work written in English on the Honduran political system, says.<sup>102</sup> The Peabody's presence and interference with the cultural heritage of Copán upset the politics of the country, a position in which cultural diplomacy between the United States and Honduras becomes much more difficult to invoke.

Putnam also wrote to the President of Guatemala regarding the same request and was allowed by both governments to enter Honduras through this city in Guatemala.<sup>103</sup> The other component of his letter to the Honduran President was more of an invitation for the government of Honduras to participate in the World's

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 32.

<sup>102</sup> Dario A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) 45.

<sup>103</sup> F.W. Putnam, letter to Guatemalan President Alejandro M. Sinibaldi, 12 November 1891, Folder 1, Box 1, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Putnam was the Chief of the Department of Ethnology for the Exposition and, with a unique connection to Honduras and its antiquities, sought to increase the objects illustrating the remarkable and interesting antiquities of the country.<sup>104</sup> Putnam wanted to inform Bográn that a large portion of the antiquities collected by the Peabody would be exhibited at the Exposition and was inviting Honduras to do the same with their share of the findings. The Peabody's intentions of the expeditions were, in large part, to increase the collection of Central American antiquities for the United States as well as to exhibit these cultural objects on a grand scale to expand the field of American archaeology. This objective reveals the Peabody's desire to collect and bring back a good amount of cultural objects from Copán, even though they had previously argued against the "barbarous plunder and destruction of antique remains."<sup>105</sup> As Michael Ames, quoted in the first chapter, said, however, museumification is part of human nature, especially in Western cultures as exhibited by the Peabody Museum.

In order to carry out their expeditions for the next ten years, a legal document consisting of ten articles was created as an agreement between the Government of Honduras and the Peabody Museum. In this document, Honduras conceded the right of exploration and excavation of Copán's ruins, as well as elsewhere in the Republic, for

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<sup>104</sup> F.W. Putnam, letter to Honduran President Luis Bográn, 11 November 1891, Folder 1, Box 1, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>105</sup> Bowditch and Lowell, "Explorations in Honduras," 2.

ten years. The legislation ensured no other people or societies would be able to take part in the excavations within that time frame, nor would anyone other than the Peabody Museum be allowed to remove antiquities from the country. As mentioned previously, the Government of Honduras allowed the Peabody to keep half of the findings for their own archaeological use in the United States as long as Honduras kept the other half. There were more specific terms in this regard; all precious metals and stones disregarding jade or jadeite, as well as any object without a duplicate, belonged to the country of Honduras and could not be removed by the museum.

The Government also allowed the museum to take impressions of the objects remaining in the custody of Honduras and, in addition, provide the Government with replicas of the sculptures taken back to Cambridge. The agreement also enabled the Government of Honduras to have the rights to all publications issued by the museum relating to its explorations in Central America. The Peabody was permitted to import objects and items freely for work, such as resources and supplies from the United States. Employees of the Peabody Excavations, meaning local Hondurans, also benefitted from the work; they were exempt from military duty in time of peace.<sup>106</sup> In wartime, however, as seen with Maudslay's excavation a few decades prior, they were required to serve their country and abandon their hired work at archaeological sites until the war was over. This document was essentially the Peabody's ticket to remain in

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<sup>106</sup> "Agreement between the Government of Honduras and the Peabody Museum."

the country between 1892 and 1902, a period in which their four expeditions were quite successful in Copán.

After Maudslay's discovery of the Stairway in 1885, the first Harvard Expedition began clearing vegetation from the site in 1891 and under John Owens, excavation began in 1892. Between December 1892 and January 1893, the blocks that had fallen from the damaged section of steps were fully uncovered and were prepared for molds. Although the country of Honduras allowed the Peabody to carry out their work in Honduras, there was still guidance and supervision from the Government to ensure no damages or undermining occurred while the museum worked on their project. Foreign access to the past, particularly the Peabody's access to Copán, was clouded by the current political state, especially because the Honduran President and Congress disagreed on the concession.<sup>107</sup> A major reason for the disparity was the contrasting views of the United States and Honduras regarding Copán. The Hondurans saw the Peabody Museum's involvement with Copán, part of their cultural past, as the interference with and removal of their cultural heritage. The Peabody Museum, on the other hand, viewed their excavations in Copán as scientifically necessary as well as archaeological evidence of the ancient Maya unrelated to the contemporary inhabitants

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<sup>107</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 34.

<sup>108</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 35.



or the nation state of Honduras.<sup>108</sup> The Government therefore began to increase legislation and restrict access to the site, discussed further in the chapter.

The Minister of Affairs also sent instructions to the representative of the Honduran Government, Doctor don Trabanino Noguera, to facilitate the ongoing archaeological and ethnological work in Copán. The Minister desired that the Palace walls in Copán be especially cared for, making sure Doctor don Trabanino Noguera was careful to not let any deterioration or removal from the excavations occur. He also made it clear that no mutilation or deterioration from the hands of workmen, visitors, or agents of the Peabody was to befall any sculptures or objects found at the site. The Minister wrote that no sculptures or objects should be taken out of Honduras or become the property of any private party, although the edict issued by the Honduran Government said otherwise.

He was very careful to explain the necessity for any and all items found, no matter how common or ordinary, be meticulously catalogued with its dimensions, scientific description, archaeological and ethnological significance, and provenance. Photographs were critical to the excavations, and the Minister intended for all sculptures and objects of importance to be photographed and several copies made for the Government of Honduras, especially, again, the walls of the Palace which were also to be recorded for the dimensions of walls and an explanation of the most important

sculptures that adorn them. When plaster molds were required, extra caution was to be taken to ensure no damage came to the objects. The Minister was concerned not only with preserving the physical evidence of the Maya, but also with reconstructing the history through the objects and monuments present in Copán. Doctor don Trabanino Noguera's most important job as representative was to inform the Minister of the works done by the museum and the findings, as well as represent the Government in the division of objects that the Peabody planned to remove from the country. He wanted to ensure there was true equity on both sides, taking into account of the more or less important objects and not just sheer number. Communication between the representative and the Honduran Government was highly stressed as the Minister realized the gravity, as well as the opportunity, of the Peabody Expeditions in Copán.<sup>109</sup>

At the end of January in 1893, however, Owens became incapacitated by fever. Owens received a letter from T.J. Potts on the 6th of February expressing concern about his illness. The next day, one of the other archaeologists on the expedition, George Shorkley, sent a letter to Bowditch back in Cambridge; at this point, Owens's illness had escalated so much that he was too weak even to dictate a letter.<sup>110</sup> The next

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<sup>109</sup> Note of instructions from the Minister of Affairs to the representation of the Government, Doctor Don Trabanino Noguera, 4 March 1892, Folder 4, Box 5, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>110</sup> George Shorkley, letter to John G. Owens, 7 February 1893, Folder 2, Box 5, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

correspondence regarding the archaeologist was a letter from George Byron Gordon to Bowditch on 18 February 1893. “Mr. Owens died here at 10:30 to-night,” he wrote. He was not able to speak intelligibly for four days before he died and was only aware that he had become sick. Unfortunately, Owens was not able to even leave instructions, only that he wanted Gordon to lead the work on the ruins after his passing. He wrote that after much consulting with the other members of the team, they decided to bury Owens in the Plaza Grande at the ruins, his final resting place being surrounded by the work he was so passionate about.<sup>111</sup> He was only 28 years old. Two years later, Henry Collins Walsh wrote a poem eulogizing Owens’s death. In closing, he leaves a nice picture of the archaeologist, “O scholar, here thy weary head / May find untroubled rest / And in the city of the dead / Be thou the honored guest!”<sup>112</sup>

As was Owens’ desire, Gordon took over closing the current expedition despite his inexperience. It was then that the pieces of the Stairway, among other season’s finds, began to be transported back to the Peabody Museum as per Bowditch’s instructions to Gordon. In a letter from 25 February 1893, Bowditch explains the logistics of shutting down the expedition and ensuring that the season’s finds, negatives, moulds, surveying plans, and Owens’ belongings make it back to the

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<sup>111</sup> George Byron Gordon, letter to Charles Bowditch, 18 February 1893, Folder 2, Box 5, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>112</sup> Henry Collins Walsh, 11 March 1895, Folder 2, Box 5, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

museum safely. Bowditch also informs Gordon that if the Honduran Representative in charge of determining which pieces go back to Cambridge and which stay in Honduras refuses to permit any part of the specimens can be taken away, Gordon had the choice to utilize his authorization to go to Tegucigalpa and lay the matter before the Government.<sup>113</sup> Diplomacy was prevalent to the inner workings of the expedition and an issue that was not always diligently adhered to on the Peabody's part.

An important component of the agreement between the Peabody and Honduras was also the long-term storage of the excavation finds the source country would keep. In the concession of Copán to the museum, they agreed to find or construct a facility in which to keep the Honduran share safe and protected. A disparity arose, however, when Gordon began to wrap up the expedition. The Peabody believed that had provided sufficient storage facilities for Honduras, a perspective with which the Hondurans did not agree. In Bowditch's letter to Gordon, he revealed that, at least from his point of view, he was only concerned with appropriate storage for the pieces of the excavation of the most valuable or "those which are liable to be carried away," despite the agreement to allocate storage for the Hondurans' share as a whole.<sup>114</sup> This shift on the agreement between the two entities is just one of the examples of the diplomatic strain that evolved over the ten years the Peabody worked in Copán.

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<sup>113</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 31.

<sup>114</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 31-32.

Among the finds the Peabody considered of importance and what they would bring back to the museum were the pieces of the Hieroglyphic Stairway. The second seated figure and many blocks from the steps were sawn into smaller pieces so they could be carried to Tegucigalpa by mules and arrived at the museum after the first expedition.<sup>115</sup> No expeditions traveled to Copán after Owens's death between 1893 and 1894, partially due to the passing of the esteemed archaeologist, but also because of a politically unstable climate in Honduras at the time. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century political scene in Central America, especially Honduras, was certainly disorderly, although it is difficult to point to a specific reason as the country's history is complicated. The Honduran governments between the 1830s and 1870s were very unstable as civil wars and military movements and threats constantly loomed over the state which was, presently, a province of a Central American nation until it gained its independence as a republic in 1838. This oppression thwarted any efforts to consolidate a central state, a major goal of the current creole leaders. To highlight the chronic fluidity and instability of the political system, Honduras saw seventeen presidential elections between 1877 and 1948.<sup>116</sup>

In the 1870s Honduras began to gain more traction in international trade and foreign entities, including the United States, began to become involved in shipping

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<sup>115</sup> George Byron Gordon, Letter to Charles Bowditch, 25 April 1893, Charles P. Bowditch Papers, #41-7, Central American Expedition Records, 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>116</sup> Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic*, 45.

resources, especially bananas. The armed forces' lack of institutionalization in the 1870s is a key factor to the political scene, as is Honduras' relationships between the economic system, state formation and civil society that resulted from the Reforma period between 1877 and 1883.<sup>117</sup> Even into the twentieth century, the leadership of the country was constantly changing, as referenced by Gordon, which only deepened Honduras' unstable political sphere and complicated matters for the Harvard Expeditions and their initial agreement in 1891 with Copán.

Gordon took the lead in 1894 as a more experienced archaeologist and explorer. His field notes are especially revealing of his process as well as of the discoveries made by him and his team. Although official reports were filed by the team for both the Peabody Museum and Honduran Government, the personal notes made by those working in Copán, especially Gordon who directed almost all of the work, are crucial to understanding his methods. For example, his notes on the steps of the Hieroglyphic Stairway show his keen attention to detail as well as properly documenting the work done. He writes,

Each step removed is marked by a number, each block in any step carrying the same number and also a letter. The top step is numbered 0 and the next 1 and so on down. Beginning at the north end of each step the letters on the blocks run from A on if the first block found appeared to be the end block of the step; if some blocks seemed to be missing at

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<sup>117</sup> Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic*, 43.

the end I began with B or some other letter according to the number of blocks that seemed to be missing.<sup>118</sup>

This trip, however, was different from Owens' first expedition; Gordon directed his focus to diplomacy instead of archaeology in order to ensure access to Copán as the Peabody's involvement was under considerable debate by the Honduran Government. In a letter to Putnam, Gordon emphasized that the present administration was firmly opposed to the Copán concession and were attempting to prevent any more work to be done by the museum. Gordon, however, was not deterred; he explained that he planned to go directly to Copán and continue begin the second expedition no matter the steps the Honduran Government would take to eject him due to the fact that they claimed to have found loop-holes they could utilize to cancel the excavations. Gordon also explained to Putnam that he "should be very careful to leave no possible opportunity for an advantage and be sure that no detail is omitted in a legal process, because the government changes hands very often and although those in power at the time may be disposed to act fair, the next crowd may not, and they may have a very different policy."<sup>119</sup> Gordon's point that details of legislation can determine the success of an expedition of this scale is valid, hence his decision to focus on diplomacy to ensure the

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<sup>118</sup> George Byron Gordon, "Field Notes," April-May 1901, Folder 4, Box 4, Central American Expedition Records 1891-1901, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.).

<sup>119</sup> George Byron Gordon, letter to Charles Bowditch, 1 December 1894, Charles P. Bowditch Papers, 11-4, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.)

Peabody could remain in Copán and continue their important and pivotal archaeological work.

Gordon was, however, frustrated with the lack of diplomatic efforts on the Honduran side. Although he attempted to paste the Peabody's reputation with Honduras back together, employing legal language became a tool to gain control of the past instead of the earlier sentiments of diplomatic negotiation.<sup>120</sup> As Gordon's frustration with the Honduran Government and their unwillingness to cooperate mounted, he discovered more hostility than patience regarding the Peabody's other main objective of collecting the best finds and shipping them back to Cambridge. In the same letter to Putnam, Gordon detailed his increasing desire to resort to simply ignore any refusals by the Honduran Representative on the division of objects found. "We can take our share and let them look after theirs if they want to," he writes. "In order to be in a position to deal with the government of Honduras or its agents, I shall require general power of attorney, specifying...any regular duties as to administration, including judicial power to represent, prosecute, defend, compromise, or arbitrate all matters concerning the business of the Peabody Museum with the government of Honduras."<sup>121</sup> Gordon's strategy was to counter Honduran legislation with American

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<sup>120</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 33.

<sup>121</sup> George Byron Gordon, letter to Charles Bowditch, 1 December 1894, Charles P. Bowditch Papers, 11-4, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.)



legal action if necessary, only fueling the diplomatic hostility between the two countries.

The Honduran Government was not opposed to the Peabody's presence in Copán simply because of the looting and division of half of the cultural heritage from the ancient city. Their opposition reflects the much larger issue of the United States' presence, as well as other international powers, in Honduras at the end of the nineteenth century. Foreign companies established in Honduras at this time, especially in the silver and banana industries, affected Honduras' exports, commerce, and place in the global economy. Foreign investments, especially in the first few decades in the twentieth century, soared and investors took control of the most important mineral exporting companies. This period is often called the Banana Republic as direct foreign investments went mostly into the banana exporting industry controlled by United States capital as discussed in detail by Euraque in his book, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic*.<sup>122</sup> These industries and the foreign presence in Honduras directly affected the economy of Honduras as diplomacy and international relations were constantly under debate in Honduran politics. The banana industry is exemplary of foreign capitalists' control of Honduran economy, as was foreign domination of elite urban commerce. Additionally, the historic entanglement of Honduran militarists and foreign capitalists

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<sup>122</sup> Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic*, 5.

is indicative of the broader issue of Honduras' concessionary system.<sup>123</sup> This structural problem of revenues and loans from the previous leader being carried onto the next is why the legislation involving the Peabody Museum became so convoluted in the ten years Harvard was working in Copán.

A major change in Honduran legislation occurred in 1900, just before the third Peabody Expedition led again by Gordon. Under the new national cultural patrimony law, all remains, even those part of current or past excavations, were property of the Republic of Honduras.<sup>124</sup> Putnam wrote to Gordon on 9 June 1900 about the disappointment in not recovering the initial concession, but hopeful that there was somehow in which they would be able. He revealed that Gordon and his team were continuing their third expedition under a special permit from the Honduran President in lieu of the original concession, as well as the fact that even if they were not able to get the last choice pieces out of the country they would still have the molds.<sup>125</sup> This, as it would turn out, would be the outcome; with the new legislation, Honduras prevented the Peabody from taking any additional items from Copán and they had to resort to bringing back only the molds instead. The Peabody Museum Expeditions came to an end in 1902 after ten years and the termination of the concession.

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<sup>123</sup> Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic*, 31-48.

<sup>124</sup> Luke, "Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists," 36.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

The following decades would see many waves of excavation, preservation, and conservation work at Copán. As discussed previously, the Carnegie Institution succeeded work by Harvard University in the 1930s. After the IHAH's establishment in 1952 it became the Honduran government entity responsible for the site and its conservation as it remains today. Researchers and archaeologists from various institutions and countries still travel to Copán to aid the IHAH in the conservation efforts. Copán's induction into UNESCO and becoming a World Heritage site in 1984 also attracted a different, enduring attraction: preserving Honduran cultural heritage. While several conventions and conferences have been held at Copán regarding this issue as well as innovations made in the archaeological world. The initial major conventions on preserving cultural heritage and the future preservation of the site in response to the major increase in thefts and looting met in the early 1970s. The 1970 UNESCO Convention and 1972 World Heritage Convention dealt with many of the problems sites such as Copán endured. The conventions also set the stage for future cultural heritage studies as well as shaped the study and importance of cultural property law and cultural heritage policies.<sup>126</sup> The 1972 Convention dealt specifically with the protection of world cultural and natural heritage, including protecting sites such as Copán, by more concretely labeling what should be considered cultural heritage

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<sup>126</sup> Luke, *Archaeological Heritage Diplomacy*, 116.

and natural heritage. It also set stricter guidelines, policies, and punishments around this matter, as well as established a fund for the protection of these areas.<sup>127</sup>

Both conventions also gave more power to autonomous agencies, such as the IHAH, to protect their country's cultural heritage. The IHAH, especially in the early 2000s under Euraque, began to work with those at the archaeological site to involve more contemporary and local Maya people to create a stronger sense of national identity stemming from sites such as Copán. Ideas about Honduran national identity as were articulated by government officials in the twentieth century and even before, projected the idea to the tourism industry through the country's museums, parks, and educational system that everyone descended from the Maya.<sup>128</sup> This concept is what many have recently tried to reverse, especially Euraque and Dr. Pastor Fasquelle in order to change how the national identity is viewed, as well as to strengthen understanding and knowledge about the park in order to prevent further looting.

While looting increased in the 1960s and 1970s, so did positive foreign interest in archaeological sites like Copán, including among amateur mayanists. A Connecticut car salesman with a keen interest in Central America's vast archaeological opportunities began traveling down to the area with his wife in 1962, an example of

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<sup>127</sup> UNESCO, "Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage," (Paris, France, 17 Oct.-21 Nov. 1972) [http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi\\_basictxts\\_en.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi_basictxts_en.pdf) (accessed 4 April 2014).

<sup>128</sup> John Soluri, "An Interview with Darío Euraque," *Latin American Studies Association Forum* XLI no. I (Pittsburgh, PA: Latin American Studies Association, December 2010) 12.

how the Maya world can enchant individuals and change lives even when it is not their professional career. The work and travels of Richard D. Wagner, amateur mayanist, is addressed in the final chapter.

## Chapter Four: Richard Wagner, Amateur Mayanist: An Individual's Experiences with Mayanization in Central America

Richard Dunbar Wagner became interested in Central American archaeology, specifically of the Maya, in 1962 on a trip with his wife, Madeline (or Lina to family and friends) to Cancun, Mexico. The owner of a car dealership franchise in Simsbury, Connecticut, Wagner took about a month off every January when business was slower to enjoy warmer weather and, after this particular trip, to pursue his passion for archaeology throughout Central America. Wagner often participated in digs when visiting Central America, interacting with archaeologists as well as local peoples, truly learning about and immersing himself in the areas in which he was so interested.

While Wagner traveled around Mesoamerica, he always upheld the belief that artifacts belonging to that country should remain there; he was not a collector and did not believe in looting or removing an item of cultural heritage from its country. Between his traveling, interactions with the local peoples, immersion in the archaeology of Maya, and involvements with museums both in Central American and the United States, Wagner's work correlates with reversing mayanization, even if he did not realize at the time.

Although he passed away in 2009, I reached out to his family, his son Richard Wagner, Jr. and wife, to collect an oral history from them about his life and work with the Maya. Wagner also donated his private papers as well as a number of books and materials to Trinity College and I had the privilege to be the first member of the

community to use them. His dedication to the field of Maya archaeology is seen in his many travels and work both in Central America and in and around Simsbury as it is found in his papers and family's memories of him.

In my preliminary research, I looked to his obituary for an overall look at his life. Wagner, born in 1924 in New York City, later went on to attend Dartmouth College. His undergraduate academic career was interrupted by World War II, however, and he left to serve as a United States Army Captain flying B-24 bombers from India over the Himalayas to Burma. He became a prisoner of war twice in the Burmese jungles and escaped both times. He completed his Bachelor's of Art in Government and Law degree from Columbia University upon his return from the war. He and Lina moved to Simsbury in 1951 and Wagner's successful fifty-six year position as a Ford dealership franchise owner began three years later. He also involved himself in the community of Simsbury outside of his growing dealership business, including serving as the President of the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce, first director of Simsbury Bank, and second longest standing Justice of the Peace in the town.<sup>129</sup>

Wagner also participated as a member of the Rotary Club, Simsbury Free Library, Hartford Hospital, multiple local historical and archaeological societies, the Archaeological Institute of America, Institute of Maya Studies of the Miami Museum of Science, and museums such as the University of Pennsylvania and Peabody Museum,

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<sup>129</sup> "Richard Dunbar Wagner, Obituary," *The Hartford Courant*, 19-22 Dec. 2009.

sitting on the board at many of these institutions. Lina was also a member to many of the same places as she and her husband did almost all of their traveling together and shared similar interests. The Wagners also made generous donations to many of these places as documented in his private papers. As his interests grew, Wagner also frequently visited schools and other institutions to speak to students about Central American archaeology. Featured in local newspapers, Wagner became a well known and esteemed amateur mayanist and his involvement came to be widely recognized even by professionals and scholars in the field.

I met Lina and Rick Wagner on a warm, sunny day in early April. I had already gone through the materials at Trinity belonging to Richard, Sr. but talking with his son and wife about him and his work gave me much more of a personal look into his life, especially through Lina's anecdotes about their travels. They spent the most time in Guatemala, later even sponsoring student research in the jungles there. They also visited Copán in 1966 and photos from their trip are included in the Appendix. The first year, she and her husband went to Cancun for a vacation although through the 1980s they traveled to almost every country in Central America. "Not extensively," explained Lina, "but we touched bottom at least."<sup>130</sup> Cancun, their first trip, was just sand when they saw it in 1962 before it was built up and a tourist attraction as it is today. Even when they returned ten years later with a more experienced sense of the

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<sup>130</sup> Madeline Wagner, interview with Mollie Scheerer, Simsbury, CT, 3 April 2014.



archaeological prosperity in the area, they were amazed at the extent to which it had transformed because the government wanted it to be a resort. His son attributes his keen interest in Maya archeology to this early trip and said there was a time, most likely in the 1970s, that his father genuinely wanted to leave his car dealership altogether and focus on archaeology. Lina explained that his dream was to just be an archaeologist if he could have gotten rid of the business, as he genuinely thrived on the material and his Central American experiences.<sup>131</sup> Although he always maintained the business in Simsbury and could not fully devote his life to the Maya, Wagner did a great deal of work even while in the United States to feed his passion for the archaeology.

He and Lina visited Copán in January of 1966 for a conference, and although there is little record of their traveling that year in his papers, there are several boxes of slides containing photographs of their Honduran experience. Many of the photos show the archaeological park and I was able to find similarities and differences between their trip and my own. Some of their photographs of altars, stelae, and even the Hieroglyphic Stairway stuck out to me because I took photos of the same objects, sometimes even from the exact angle and location. Much of the archaeological park remains unchanged since 1966 as comparing my photos to the Wagners' in the Appendix will show, although many of the altars and stelae are now in the Sculpture Museum instead of

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

outside. Their photos of the Hieroglyphic Stairway show what it looked like before the preservation method of the canvas over it began in the 1980s. Although Lina does not remember too much of this trip in particular, she remembers the ancient city as a magnificent example of Maya archaeology and “something they seemed to be very proud of.”<sup>132</sup> Even after only four years of their January vacations to Central America, the Wagners recognized the importance of archaeological sites such as Copán to the national identity of the people to whom they belonged.

His papers include a plethora of correspondence, field notes, research notes, archaeological dig itineraries and inventories, travel plans, newspaper clippings, lecture and conference notes, and miscellaneous jottings. One figure Wagner revered was Ian Graham, a British Mayanist who explored ruins in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. This man also wrote a biography on none other than Alfred Maudslay, the British archaeologist best known for beginning the initial work on the Hieroglyphic Stairway in 1885. Graham is also credited as the founding director of the Peabody Museum’s Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, still one of the leading programs for recording ancient Maya glyphs.

Wagner visited the Peabody Museum at Harvard frequently while visiting his daughter, Georgette, in the area. He both met with and corresponded with Ian Graham and Gordon Willey, both of whom were deeply invested in Maya Archaeology. Gordon

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

Willey was one of the central figures in twentieth century mayanization, as well as William Fash's professor at Harvard. He also directed the 1975-1977 survey project in Copán Valley. Willey sent a letter to Wagner in April of 1967 enclosing a reprint of the first season of archaeological work in Peten, Guatemala, done a few years prior. Wagner had requested to see Willey's work after he had read his book and contacted the prestigious archaeologist. Willey also said the final draft on his work would take a few years to complete, but upon its publication he would be sure to send a copy to Wagner.<sup>133</sup>

In 1980, Wagner's interest and investment in the Peabody Museum continued as he donated a generous amount of \$750 to the institution, specifically the Maya Hieroglyphic Study. His donation, along with a \$1250 donation from a woman from Cambridge, Mrs. Katherine Benedict, were matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as a grant under the direction of Gordon Willey. The NEH is a program that promotes on-going educational exchanges, facilitates sustained commitments in-country at local, regional, and national levels, and maintains an American commitment to science-driven research.<sup>134</sup> This program also had a hand in scientific research in Honduras as well as throughout Central America by funding projects, usually for archaeological excavations, surveys, and preservation initiatives,

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<sup>133</sup> Gordon H. Willey, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 3 April 1967, Folder 2, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.).

<sup>134</sup> Luke, *Archaeological Heritage Diplomacy*, 111.

such as the work of William Fash and other scholars at Copán in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>135</sup>

Between Mr. Wagner and Mrs. Benedict's contributions plus the NEH grant to match them, the fund increased by \$4000 totaling to \$123,926.<sup>136</sup> Willey, Ian Graham, and the negotiator of the Endowment fund all wrote letters to Wagner thanking him for his generous donation. Graham also noted in his letter his appreciation for Wagner's contributing remarks on his book.<sup>137</sup> Even though Wagner was not a renowned archaeologist at an institution such as Harvard, he still participated in the greater archaeological discussion, a welcome source of correspondence due to his passion for the content, as well as his views on museum collecting.

A large majority of the correspondence is also with archaeologist Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth, the founder and director of the Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research (FLAAR). Hellmuth also graduated from Harvard University where he studied under aforementioned scholars such as Tatiana Proskouriakoff and Gordon Willey, the latter with whom Wagner also exchanged letters. Hellmuth participated in archaeological field research with the Peabody Museum at Harvard as well as the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University. Like Wagner,

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<sup>135</sup> Luke, *Archaeological Heritage Diplomacy*, 119.

<sup>136</sup> Constance G. Lancaster, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 15 December 1980, Folder 3, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.).

<sup>137</sup> Ian Graham, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 17 November 1980, Folder 3, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.).

Hellmuth focused a great deal of his work on Guatemala and subsequently provided a common ground for the two men to discuss in their correspondence.

The correspondence between Wagner and Hellmuth beginning in the mid-1970s shows the forging of a friendship through a shared passion for Maya archaeology as well as interacting with and learning from local peoples on trips to Mesoamerica. Wagner supported his friend's work by purchasing his books and sending feedback. Wagner also kept various articles featured in academic journals by Hellmuth, some of them marked up, showing Wagner's deep interest and involvement in his friend's work. The two kept each other up to date with their latest work, findings, and projects, and upcoming lectures, especially those regarding Guatemala. Wagner was an amateur mayanist, and although very knowledgeable in the field, he gave guest lectures more locally while Hellmuth studied a great deal in Germany and lectured around Europe in addition to elsewhere in the United States. He also spent longer periods of time in Guatemala whereas Wagner was only able to travel to the area for a month in January each year. The two enjoyed sharing experiences, however, and supported one another in their archaeological interests and endeavors.

At times Hellmuth also sent Wagner copies of his manuscripts for editing and feedback to be later sent to journals. In a 1985 letter to Wagner, Hellmuth explained that he wanted Wagner to sponsor one of the three volumes of the Photo Archive catalogs he was working on as well as a publication for a journal he was currently

working on. Hellmuth attributed this desire not only to the fact that they were good friends and had known each other for many years, but also because of Wagner's background in various aspects of ancient Maya civilization and because he had been to more Mesoamerican sites than most practicing archaeologists.<sup>138</sup>

Wagner collected numerous pamphlets about expeditions led by Hellmuth over the years, some of which included trips to Copán. A 1985 pamphlet advertised two weeks in March with archaeologist Nicholas Hellmuth studying Maya art and archaeology in Copán and Tikal, Guatemala. Although the Wagners really only traveled to Mesoamerica in January when their business permitted a month of vacation, this particular trip with a very esteemed archaeologist such as Hellmuth could not have been easy to decline. Just as I did thirty years later, Hellmuth's expedition arrived in San Pedro Sula the day before they traveled on the "newly completed paved highway directly to Copán, a project," he explains in the text, "financed by an international bank loan to implement the archaeological potential of Honduras."<sup>139</sup> The paved highway still exists in fairly good shape today and certainly has aided in attracting visitors to the Maya site and those similar nearby. Hellmuth's pamphlet describes the group's itinerary for the three days they would spend in Copán with many details about the ruins, stelae, newly excavated mounds and tombs, and hieroglyphs. He also excitedly

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<sup>138</sup> Nicholas M. Hellmuth, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 18 July 1985, Folder 2, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.) 1.

<sup>139</sup> Nicholas Hellmuth, "Copán, Tikal" (Culver City, CA: Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research) 1.

mentions the opportunity to tour the new visitors' center which still stands and serves as a small museum at the entrance to the park and speaking with people of the area as well as archaeologists currently at Copán to better understand the site.<sup>140</sup> Hellmuth's trips such as this one were a great opportunity for foreign interest in the cultural heritage Copán offers to those who recognize it and it seems a shame the Wagners were unable to join such an informative, exciting excursion to see the cultural treasures of Copán once more.

In a letter from 23 February 1976, Hellmuth sent a detailed letter to Wagner asking for his assistance in funding the reconstruction of the FLAAR's offices in Guatemala City as they were recently destroyed by a 7.5 magnitude earthquake. Hellmuth was working with eight student volunteers, six of whom got out of Guatemala on the first plane they could find. One of the remaining two was almost killed by falling steel bookcases when a second earthquake two days later. Just as institutions involved with Copán were also involved in the diplomacy between the United States and Honduras, Hellmuth explained that drafting a formal grant proposal to get the Guatemalan government's Ministry of Education to sponsor their rebuilding project would be the next step.

He also discussed obtaining a grant from the Organization for American States (OAS) looked possible as FLAAR lacked an institutional affiliation necessary for most

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

government grants.<sup>141</sup> An additional letter five days later brings to light issues of neglecting the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, an issue inherently present in Honduras, as well. Hellmuth explained that the Indians in the highland villages got hit the worst, but virtually every country in the world was flying in medicine and supplies. “Neglected for 3 centuries, the native Guatemalans are at last getting some help. Relief workers practically outnumber the Indians in some villages.”<sup>142</sup> Adding to the assistance from both the United States and Guatemalan governments, Wagner sent a generous check himself to aid FLAAR’s reconstruction and, in response, Hellmuth wrote again to thank him and saying the OAS was still very much interested in providing his foundation with a grant, as well.<sup>143</sup>

Relevant to issues of looting and Honduras, Wagner received a letter from the Archaeological Institute of America on 1 September 1971 from Elizabeth Whitehead, the General Secretary of the AIA. She wrote in part to inform members that a vital concern at the time was maintaining efforts to prevent the plundering of archaeological sites all over the world, a destruction which was, at the time, becoming increasingly present with the growing interest in objects of antiquity as well as their value. This

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<sup>141</sup> Nicholas M. Hellmuth, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 23 February 1976, Folder 3, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.) 2.

<sup>142</sup> Nicholas M. Hellmuth, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 28 February 1976, Folder 3, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.) 1.

<sup>143</sup> Nicholas M. Hellmuth, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 6 June 1976, Folder 3, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.) 1.



issue, as discussed previously in my thesis, began to cause a growing awareness of the irretrievable loss of valuable historic evidence and cultural heritage. Whitehead mentions the AIA's endorsement of a UNESCO Draft Convention concerning the plundering of archaeological sites and the illicit export and import of antiquities and many organizations followed suit. Interestingly, after the AIA's resolution, *Archaeology* magazine stopped accepting advertisements that appeared to be in conflict with the spirit of the UNESCO Convention of 1970, a stand she describes as "morally required," but financially painful.<sup>144</sup> Her letter shows the increasing awareness of the immorality of looting and subsequently losing objects of cultural heritage as major players in the field of archaeology began to change their ways and make changes to prevent it in the future.

Objects of cultural heritage are not always stolen from archaeological sites; Wagner received a notice from the Manchester Historic Association in New Hampshire that almost two hundred artifacts had been stolen in hopes that anyone with information on the invaluable Manchester Indian artifacts could help recover them. A large collection of Indian artifacts of more than 175 pieces from Manchester sites was a major loss to the association.<sup>145</sup> Although the letter is in the mix of Wagner's papers without a date or envelope so I could not determine whether or not the artifacts were

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<sup>144</sup> Elizabeth A. Whitehead, letter to Richard D. Wagner, 1 September 1971, Folder 1, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.) 1.

<sup>145</sup> Manchester Historic Society, letter to Richard D. Wagner, Folder 1, Box 1, Richard Wagner Papers, Trinity College History Department (Hartford, Conn.) 1.

ever returned, it does provide yet another example of the unjust thefts of cultural objects from archaeological sites or museums.

The looting of archaeological sites affected the Wagners' trips to Central America. He and Lina sponsored student research in Guatemala, although there is no evidence of the trips in his papers as the operations were kept very secretive in order to prevent looting, and for good reason; while there were several tragic events in many of the countries in the mid-1980s including civil wars throughout the region, one of Wagner's colleagues on an archaeological dig was killed by looters. Due to the uneasy political climates in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, Mesoamerica was rampant with chaos. Especially after the loss of someone they knew, the Wagners decided to stop making trips to the area. Looters take advantage of chaotic environments, such as what they experienced at the time of the man's death, and can be very dangerous, especially when armed. The Wagners no longer felt safe making their January journey to Central America, especially with their family and business back in Simsbury, and so they stopped altogether.<sup>146</sup> Although he and his wife did not continue traveling to Mesoamerica, Wagner continued his passion for the Maya in the United States until his death.

While there are parts of Wagner's collections that show a darker side to the world of archaeology such as the looting and loss of cultural objects, one of the

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<sup>146</sup> Madeline and Richard Wagner, Jr., interview with Mollie Scheerer, Simsbury, CT, 3 April 2014.

components that touched me the most was the plethora of thank you notes Wagner received from various clubs, societies, and schools for coming in and speaking about the Maya. Even after he and Lina stopped going down to Central America, he spoke to a variety of audiences around Connecticut about his now vast knowledge of the Maya. Particularly touching are the notes from the children's classes he visited. Many cards with hand-drawn pictures of the Maya counting system, weapons, pyramids, and vases show the enthusiasm and attention Wagner instilled in the elementary and middle school students. The number of individual signatures in the many cards show just how many young lives he touched.

While his papers reveal a good deal about his interest, Richard Wagner's deep love for archaeology and the Maya is most evident in his family's memories as well as his home in Simsbury. His library is filled with books on the Maya and archaeology from elsewhere in the world as he and Lina were extensive travelers and ventured to Europe in addition to Mesoamerica. Replicas of objects, maps, and trinkets from his travels also fill the shelves, some of them gifts, some of them souvenirs. His dedication to archaeology and the area is evident even after his passing, showing the lasting effect it can have on people. Despite having many objects of the Mayan culture in his home, his family insists he never took authentic objects from their home country as he was a firm believer in preservation of archaeological sites and the value of their cultural heritage. He fulfilled his fantasy of archaeological exploration for many years with his

wife by his side to become one of the most passionate, educated, and dedicated amateur mayanists after whom even the “true” archaeologists and scholars sought for his insights into the archaeological conversation, a compliment in its own.

## Conclusion

The place of objects of cultural heritage contained in institutions does not always have a negative impact on the culture to which it rightfully belongs, as seen in the IHAH, the Sculpture Museum at Copán, and UNESCO. Even the stones taken from the Hieroglyphic Stairway currently residing at the Peabody Museum serve to educate the general public about the history and cultural legacy of the Maya. The availability of information on ancient cultures and their artifacts also allows individuals who are not professionally trained or educated in the field of archaeology or history, such as Richard Wagner and myself, to learn about them, whether the research is done in Central America or in the United States. Most importantly, as scholars and archaeologists such as the Fashes and Euraque have become more aware of mayanization and the effects it has on a nation, steps have been taken to diminish its ramifications on national identity.

The Fashes established the Copán Mosaics Project in the 1980s and later the Sculpture Museum not only to preserve the original sculptures of the archaeological park but also to display and educate visitors and workers on the importance these artifacts have for Honduras. For the expeditions to Copán from the nineteenth century until around the 1970s, however, mayanization did not exist as a concept. The excitement of excavating archaeological sites, including Copán, took precedence over how the people whose history and culture was being exploited would be rendered or

compensated, hence the complicated history of cultural legislation at that time. Figures like Alfred Maudslay, George Byron Gordon of the Peabody Museum, and Sylvanus Morley of the Carnegie Institute saw the artifacts from the site as well as the site itself as having historic and intrinsic value for the sake of science. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they did not truly understand the value the artifacts held for national identity or cultural heritage of the people of Honduras. Thus, the Peabody Museum made and utilized the agreement with the Honduran Government which allowed them, as a foreign interest, to take half of the findings out of the country for their own use. The Carnegie Institute moved away from simply collecting as the Peabody Museum had done, and more toward preserving the site which would pick up speed over the next few decades, especially with the Fashes' involvement. Only when the idea of mayanization began to form via the Ministry of Tourism's consolidation of Honduran indigenous peoples in the 1970s did the necessity of preserving the nation's archaeological history while also recognizing the vast diversity of Honduras' ethnic history and contemporary peoples arise in competition.<sup>147</sup>

After his appointment of director in 2006, Euraque joined Dr. Pastor Fasquelle and Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, all dismissed from their positions in the 2009 coup, to create new cultural policy to reverse mayanization while simultaneously respecting the beauty and achievements of the great ancient culture. Their strategy to

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<sup>147</sup> Euraque, "The Honduran Coup and Cultural Policy," 31; John Soluri, "An Interview with Darío Euraque," 12.

reverse this stigma was to move away from the archaeologized, Maya-centric vision of Honduran culture prepackaged for tourist consumption and move toward emphasizing the living traditions of the nine ethnic groups recognized by the Honduran state.<sup>148</sup> Although the archaeology of Copán and other sites around the country is interesting, historical and should still continue to be preserved and revered, the mission of Euraque's IHAH together with the Ministry of Culture aimed to move away from *only* paying attention to the archaeology. The contemporary indigenous peoples, descendants of those who built the ancient sites, are equally as important and should be incorporated in recognizing the inclusive national identity of Honduras.

The progress made by the IHAH and those involved with reversing mayanization ended with the coup government's rise to power in 2009. The officials in power after the coup, such as the new Minister of Culture Myrna Castro, perceive the IHAH's attempts as "progressive" and "revolutionary."<sup>149</sup> Those who supported and still support reversing mayanization as Euraque implemented, however, will hopefully continue to do as much as they can to project an inclusive national Honduran identity encompassing all contemporary peoples.

Since Maudslay's arrival at Copán in 1885, great strides have been made in archaeology not only in science but in the way it is used after excavation. Although it is

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<sup>148</sup> Euraque, "The Honduran Coup and Cultural Policy," 31.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

still a controversial topic and one that will most likely not be settled in the near future, sites such as Copán will continue to be protected, recognized, and revered as symbols of national identity and cultural heritage for the past, present, and future with the help of institutions such as UNESCO. Copán's induction as a World Heritage site showed the people of Honduras there was a place of "outstanding universal value" in their country, even if they already knew of its importance, and it became a key source in their national pride. Although there are hundreds of other archaeological sites throughout the country of equal value and importance, UNESCO's involvement meant more international attention for the country and the site's conservation efforts, as well as the emphasis to involve local communities for which the pre-coup IHAH also strived to achieve. It could be said that UNESCO's recognition of Copán furthered mayanization because it only recognized a Maya site, but ultimately it has positive effects on promoting the cultural heritage of Honduras as a whole.

Dr. Pastor Fasquelle believes people have magical ideas about objects and that this concept is where all the issues surrounding museum collecting, objects of cultural heritage, the disruption of national identity, and looting stem from. As we drove back to San Pedro Sula from Copán at the end of my trip in Honduras, we stopped at a small house on the side of the road with a tin roof extending into the thick trees in the yard. "My wife always makes me stop here," he said. "The gentleman who lives here is a dear friend and makes her favorite cookies. We stopped one time, years ago, and since then



do it every time we visit Copán. We discuss politics and he has always read my books and articles so the conversation is never dull,” he laughed. Sure enough, we got out to find a man with thick mitts on putting tray after tray of cookies into an enormous stone oven. Teresa Campos, Dr. Pastor Fasquelle’s wife, explained to me that the cornmeal cookies with molasses in the center, unique to Honduras, were her absolute favorites. “He makes the cornmeal himself,” she told me. “He takes the kernels of corn down to the mill and grinds them so they are fresh when he makes the cookies. That’s his secret.”<sup>150</sup> Chickens bobbed around the operation, pecking at loose kernels and the delicious smell of sweet corn and molasses filled the air.

Upon first glance, I never would have even considered stopping at his home. We had already driven by so many houses that looked similar and this certainly did not look like a business. His baked goods were not advertised even though he was fairly successful, especially when he drove the treats into the city to sell. I realized that was what separated me as a foreigner, just as those who traveled to Copán to excavate the ruins; I had come all this way to do research on the ancient city, yet getting to know and interact with other local people around me was not as high a priority. Simply because his cookie business did not appear as it might in the United States did not mean it was any different or should be overlooked. I suddenly understood how easy it

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<sup>150</sup> Teresa Campos, interview with Mollie Scheerer, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 17 January 2014.

was to fall into mayanization and see Honduras only as a vague amalgamation of people.

When the batch finished cooking, we thanked the man for showing us his baking operation and paid him for the freshly baked cookies. We got into the truck so my father and I could return to our hotel in the city and the amazing smell filled the cab. “Come to think of it,” Dr. Pastor Fasquelle chuckled, “perhaps even these cookies should be part of our national identity.”<sup>151</sup> He was precisely right; although the ancient city of Copán is a large piece of Honduran national identity, it is not all encompassing. As I put the handful of Lempira back into my pocket, I caught a glance of the Hieroglyphic Stairway printed on the back of the bill. It was in that moment that I realized how important it is to see Honduras as the richly diverse country it is and appreciate every cultural detail as a unique piece of their national identity, from the archaeological ruins of Copán to the man outside of San Pedro Sula making cornmeal-molasses cookies.

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<sup>151</sup> Dr. Pastor Fasquelle, interview with Mollie Scheerer, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 17 January 2014.

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