

II. Papers

World's Fairs and Latin American Archaeology: Costa Rica at the 1892 Madrid Exposition

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"Perhaps the largest and most complete archeological collection exhibited in Madrid was that of Costa Rica."

(Hough 1895:345)

Anthropology at World's Fairs

The growth of anthropology in Europe and the Americas in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with the heyday of world's fairs, international exhibitions, *exposiciones internacionales*, and *expositions universelles* (Allwood 1977:7–12, Findling and Pelle 1990:xv–xix, and Rydell 1992:1–10 discuss terminology). Indeed, certain world's fairs served to popularize "anthropology," acquainting the public with this unfamiliar term and apprising scholarly audiences of the concepts and principles of this emerging discipline. Mason's (1890) article notifying his colleagues in North America about the wide range of anthropological topics embraced by the *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris* is an early example of this link.

In 1893 in Chicago, "Anthropology was one of the main sciences exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition" (Rydell, Findling, and Pelle 2000:38). Frederic Ward Putnam, head of Department M (with Franz Boas as his assistant), in spite of opposition prevailed in his effort to name the exhibition facility the "Anthropological Building." He promoted the term anthropology even though Department M originally was organized as the Department of Ethnology (Putnam 1893). In a similar vein, the auxiliary meeting for scholarly papers, a weeklong event presided over by Daniel G. Brinton, was officially titled the Congress of Anthropology (Holmes 1893). An especially insightful article, well worth reviewing, is Dexter's (1966) discussion of the difficulties plaguing Putnam in his effort to popularize anthropology at the Columbian Exposition.

What is not widely known, however, is that Spain in 1892 already was exhibiting some of the same archaeological materials Chicago would be displaying the next year. This occurred at the *Exposición Histórico-Americana* in Madrid, a poorly known international exposition deserving more intensive study because of its exhibition of archaeological and to a lesser degree ethnographic collections from the Americas. Fortunately, a number of important publications about the Madrid exposition are preserved by the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (1992:144–145) and available in microfilm.

Latin American Archaeology and the *Exposición Histórico-Americana*

In 1892, for its “Commemoración del Cuatro Centenario del Descubrimiento de América,” Spain arranged two historical expositions at Madrid, the *Exposición Histórico-Americana* and *Exposición Histórico-Europea*. “It is intended that the Historic-American Exposition shall illustrate the civilization of the New Continent in the Pre-Columbian, Columbian, and Post-Columbian Periods, while in the Historic-European Exposition will be shown the civilization of Europe, and particularly the Iberian Peninsula, at the time when the new world was discovered and colonized” (Madrid Commission 1892:3).

Spain invited nations from throughout the Western Hemisphere to participate in its *Exposición Histórico-Americana*, and the response was particularly favorable from the former Spanish colonies of the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America. Latin American nations contributing anthropological materials, particularly collections of prehistoric artifacts, included Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, and Cuba (then still a colony). The United States of America was the sole English-speaking country from the Western Hemisphere, and its decision to participate clearly was intimately linked to the upcoming exposition in Chicago. European nations contributing prehistoric and historic artifacts from the Americas, held by their museums or private collectors, included Spain, Portugal, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, with Great Britain and France being conspicuously absent. European countries were better represented at the second venue, the *Exposición Histórico-Europea*.

One benefit of the involvement of the United States was the resultant *Report of the United States Commission to the Columbian Historical Exposition at Madrid 1892–1893*, containing chapters by Luce on the history of US participation, Brinton on the collections he observed from each nation, and Hough on exhibited ceramics from Central and South America, among other worthwhile chapters. Luce (1895:9–10) states that the *Exposición Histórico-Americana* occupied the first floor of a new facility, *El Palacio de la Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales*, opening 30 October 1892, about two weeks later than the scheduled date of 12 October, and closing 31 January 1893 after being extended one month.

In conjunction with its celebration of the Columbian fourth centenary, Spain hosted the Ninth Session of the International Congress of Americanists from 7–11 October at Huelva. The proceedings volume (*International Congress of Americanists 1894*) discloses a sizeable contingent from the Americas participated, including persons whose names reappear in association with the archaeological exhibits at the *Exposición Histórico-Americana*. Americanists from various European nations attended as well.

Costa Rica at the *Exposición*

Luce (1895) and Quesada Camacho (1993:49) include a plan of the overall layout of the exposition and the space devoted to each nation. Costa Rica occupied two rooms to the right of the main entrance. Extrapolating from the plan, approximate dimensions were a 30-ft (10 m) width for each room and a 100-ft (30 m) length for the two rooms together, giving a total area of about 3000 ft² (≈300 m²). Of the Latin American nations, only Mexico occupied a larger area.

Costa Rica’s exhibition was highly acclaimed. Walter Hough (1893a:273–274) informed his North American colleagues of the well-displayed artifacts he had seen in forty cases (and noted that the collection would be shown in Chicago) and he spoke highly of the collection in his official report in 1895 (quoted at the beginning of this article). Charles H. Read, an

Assistant Keeper in the British Museum, who had been dispatched to Madrid to examine the contents of all of the exhibits, wrote very highly of what he observed from Costa Rica:

The concluding section is that of the Republic of Costa Rica, which is able to display a large quantity of excellent materials, well arranged, and explained by an admirable catalogue. Great praise is due to the working members of this Commission for the great pains taken to classify the collections from the different districts, each of which is prominently labelled with its title and other information. Of all the Spanish American States, this and the Republic of Colombia are by far the best in point of arrangement. (Read 1893:13)

Daniel G. Brinton's favorable assessment likewise is noteworthy because he too reviewed the exhibits of all of the nations.

The Republic of Costa Rica presented a rich collection of specimens, many of them recent acquisitions and all of them admirably arranged under the intelligent administration of Señor Manuel M. de Peralta, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of his Government, and Mr. Anastasio Alfaro, director of the National Museum of Costa Rica, who had superintended many of the excavations of the objects (Brinton 1895:37).

Alfaro received high praise for his arrangement of the collections at Madrid and his earlier archaeological fieldwork to secure artifacts for exhibition. "Alfaro ... deserves great credit for the way the Costa Rican specimens are in hand and for the illustration in every possible manner by maps, paintings, photographs, etc., [of] the derivation of the specimens following the most approved museum methods" (Hough 1895:346). Brinton applauds Alfaro's efforts even more strongly:

Over 1,000 relics which were obtained in 1891 in exploring the native cemetery of Guayabo, situated on the slope of the volcano, form a conspicuous part of the collection from Costa Rica, and one highly illustrative of the industry of its earlier inhabitants... . There are displayed by means of photographs and oil paintings representations of individuals of the native tribes, their present habitations, and the ancient sepulcher opened and explored by Mr. Anastasio Alfaro, whose intelligent activity has thrown so much light on the pre-columbian history of this part of Central America. (Brinton 1895:39)

Costa Rica deserved these laudatory comments. The government had appointed Alfaro to organize the way in which the nation would be represented at international expositions in Paris (1889), Madrid (1892), and Chicago (1893), and it convened national expositions in San José, between 1885 and 1887, to refine the manner in which the exhibitions would be presented (Garrón de Doryan 1974:23–26; Watters and Fonseca Zamora 2002b:268–269). It assuredly was not happenstance that the National Museum of Costa Rica was created in the midst of these activities, in 1887, with Anastasio Alfaro chosen as its head (Kandler 1987:20–29).

Information regarding individuals and institutions contributing artifacts to Costa Rica's exhibition is surprisingly plentiful since three different catalogs were created. The first, "Catálogo...Costa Rica" (1892) apparently was prepared for (or by) the Spanish Commission, because it is one of fourteen volumes contained in the "Catálogo especial," each volume being a catalog of the objects exhibited by one nation. The second book, "Catálogo...Arellano" (1892), seemingly privately printed, lists the Costa Rican artifacts loaned by Julio de Arellano, Spain's Resident Minister in Central America (he loaned objects from Guatemala as well). Alfaro (1892) provides a prologue to this work. The third work is *Etnología Centro-Americana* written by the diplomat and historian Manuel de Peralta and Alfaro (1893). The publication

date suggests the book appeared in the last month of the Madrid exposition or even after it had closed. While Peralta wrote about the Amerindians of Costa Rica and the history of the National Museum, Alfaro followed with descriptions of exhibited artifacts. From the three catalogs, we can identify sites and regions represented and compile the identities of the collectors and donors (e.g., Bishop Thiel, Minister Arellano, Juan Matarrita, and the significant Troyo legacy in the National Museum, among others).

Brinton was impressed with Peralta's anthropological scholarship. He wrote:

Peculiar interest attaches to the archaeology and ethnography of Costa Rica on account of its situation on the only highway of migration between South and North America. The relations of its native population at the time of Conquest have offered problems of much obscurity, which can not be said to have been completely solved up to this present time. An admiral résumé of our existing knowledge of this subject was prepared by Señor de Peralta... (Brinton 1895:39)

Brinton (1895:40–43) went on to extract major sections of Peralta's discussion of the Amerindian populations and reproduced them verbatim (more than three pages) in his chapter. Peralta also was the major Costa Rican representative at the Ninth Session of the International Congress of Americanists at Huelva, and he remained closely involved with that organization for years afterward.

Hough (1895:345–349) devoted five pages, eight figures, and two photographic plates to the pottery of Costa Rica within his larger study of the ceramics he observed in Madrid from Central and South America. He was especially taken with the "salamander vase" (shown in two photographs) which had been selected by Peralta and Alfaro (1893) as the frontispiece for their volume. Madrid provided an opportunity to examine artifacts from a number of different countries. Hough (1893b) found that his ability to conduct comparative research had been crucial to understanding the geographic distribution of 31 "bark-beaters" (three from Costa Rica) and inferring their probable function.

The Costa Rican exhibition was dismantled in Madrid, shipped to Chicago, and partly reinstalled in the Anthropological Building at the World's Columbian Exposition. Although Putnam said "Costa Rica displays a large portion of the valuable archaeological material which formed part of the recent Madrid Exposition" (1893:429), some 3,000 of the 7,000 artifacts exhibited in Spain could not be accommodated in Chicago and had to be shipped back to Costa Rica (Stone 1956:13). Nonetheless, the exhibition was highly acclaimed and warranted a laudatory report by Starr (1893), in which Alfaro, Peralta, and Arellano are individually commended.

Costa Rica's skillful planning and thoughtful organization in deciding how best to present the nation to international audiences were being repaid by excellent publicity and high acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. Individuals and institutions were awarded numerous medals and honors, because of the country's participation (Garrón de Doryan 1974:32, 34; Quesada Camacho 1993:71; Stone 1956:12). Costa Rican historians also have commented on the success that the country experienced at the Exposición (Gólcher B. 1991; Quesada Camacho 1993:70–72, 2002:163–164). Gólcher specifically says:

From the articles published by foreigners, we deduce that Costa Rica was assured an international place, specifically its success was for the great work done by Manuel María [de] Peralta and Anastasio Alfaro. The most famous newspapers of Spain confirm that the Costa Rican collection was among the most significant.... It was unanimous that because of its originality and art, Costa Rica's installations were one of the most beautiful and

educational of the whole Exposition. (Gólcher B. 1991:28)

The rules that Spain established for participating nations, "... [with] the goal that all sections proceed in a uniform manner" (in Quesada Camacho 1993:67), had a strong impact on the way Costa Rica presented its archaeological exhibit and this, at the same time, had important repercussions for the beginning of Costa Rican archaeology. In 1892, Costa Ricans were starting to study their archaeological legacy. The catalog by Peralta and Alfaro (1893), for the first time, related ethnohistory with archaeology. This was a necessary step for the appearance of the first model of Costa Rican archaeology – the "Descriptive Synchronic Model" – that was developed around 1925 and remained dominant until 1960 (cf. Fonseca Zamora 1984:19–20, 1989, 1992:15–16; Lines 1934; Peralta and Alfaro 1893).

Research Directions

We have focused on Costa Rica at the *Exposición Histórico-Americana* because its exhibitions received especially favorable reviews and its involvement is particularly well documented. However, documentation exists at some level for each participating Latin American nation, so a great deal more information relevant to archaeology remains to be gleaned from these records. For example, we noted the "Catálogo...Costa Rica" (1892) was one publication in the "Catálogo especial," a fourteen-volume set perhaps compiled by Spain's Commission. The "Catálogo especial" contains similar catalogs (though not necessarily as detailed) for all Latin American (and European) countries contributing artifacts to the *Exposición Histórico-Americana*. Thus, the "Catálogo...Suecia" (1892:7) confirms that Swedish naturalist Carl Bovallius exhibited ethnographic objects from the Talamanca Indians of Costa Rica as well as Nicaraguan ethnographic and archaeological materials, from collections he made in 1882 and 1883 (Brunius 1992). These catalogs often disclose the identities of antiquarians loaning objects from their private collections, scholarly associations and public institutions contributing artifacts, and the persons responsible for each nation's arrangement of exhibitions in Madrid. Read's (1893) and Brinton's (1895) laudatory comments about Costa Rica's exhibits were noted before, but one point bears reiterating – both individuals had viewed and evaluated all of the anthropological displays, yet each reserved his highest acclaim for Costa Rica's achievement.

The *Exposición Histórico-Americana* is not widely known or well researched. Yet, it deserves greater study because Spain was able to attract an array of impressive anthropological exhibits. To cite but two examples from North America, Fewkes (1895) has an extensive chapter on the display he mounted about the Hemenway expedition to the American Southwest, and Culin (1895) listed all artifacts and publications exhibited by the Department of Archaeology and Palaeontology of the University of Pennsylvania. However, the commemoration was somewhat negatively affected by a delayed opening of the exposition and by political issues that were of concern to certain European nations (Quesada Camacho 1993:50–52).

In this article, we link elements of the *Exposición Histórico-Americana* to the World's Columbian Exposition, arguably the first venue in the United States to feature the discipline of anthropology so prominently. Other expositions were equally significant for anthropology, some perhaps even more so. Foremost among these was the Louisiana Purchase International Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904, with W J McGee (he omitted periods after his initials) heading its Department of Anthropology, soon after he resigned from the Bureau of American Ethnology (Troutman and Parezo 1998). "The Louisiana Purchase International Exposition boasted the most extensive anthropological exhibit of any world's fair" (Rydell, Findling, and Pelle 2000:54). There are, however, many other fairs and expositions, some of world's fair

stature but others more modest in scope, that potentially bear on the history of anthropology and archaeology. Although world's fairs, especially those held in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most often are thought of as having been associated with Europe and North America, expositions actually were held in many countries across the globe (see Findling and Pelle 1990, for synopses of 95 fairs and their Appendix D for many more fairs not discussed, including the 1892 Madrid exposition).

Investigating linkages between world's fairs and anthropology, archaeology, or even antiquarianism has the potential to provide new insight about the history of these fields of study. It can enhance or expand upon existing knowledge of specific events, individuals, or trends (Watters and Fonseca Zamora 2002a, 2004). Yet, one must remember that world's fairs were organized primarily for economic reasons, to promote business and advance the commercial aspects of each participating nation. Anthropology most often became involved when the participating country recognized it was advantageous to exhibit its archaeological (and ethnographic and historic) artifacts, in order to show the richness of its past. Nonetheless, world's fairs provided the opportunity for many visitors to see archaeological materials from other countries for the first time, and they gave scholars the opportunity to readily compare collections of artifacts from different geographic regions (Rydell 1984, 1992). Knowledge of anthropology was being promoted at international expositions at the same time anthropologists were striving to determine the scope and define the parameters of their emerging discipline. In the early twentieth century, most of the major players on both sides of the Atlantic, who were debating the future direction of the discipline of anthropology, had participated in world's fairs at some level (Watters and Fonseca Zamora 2004). Many of them also were involved with the International Congress of Americanists, yet one more link to international expositions and the growth of anthropology that certainly merits study.

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Bookmarks to the Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Discovery of the "Lake-Dwellings"

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Two years ago, the *BHA* (13/2: 22–23) announced the jubilee to be celebrated in 2004 for the 150th anniversary of the discovery of the Neolithic and Bronze Age "lake-dwellings". This was an appropriate time to stress the significant role this field of inquiry has played in the methodological and epistemological development of prehistoric archaeology, from the second half of the 19th century up to present-day.

As planned, this celebration has led to many scientific and public events (conferences, publications, exhibitions, etc.)¹. As many of these tackled the history of research, it is useful to gather some bibliographical notes on the recent publications for the readers of the *BHA*. As I was involved with several of the publications mentioned below, I won't indulge a subjective

¹ The list of the main public events is still available on the homepage of the Lake-Dwelling Exhibition of the Swiss National Museum: <http://www.diepfahlbauer.ch/> ("Kalender Pfahlbaujubiläum" button).