London Journal of Tourism, Sport and Creative Industries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUEST EDITORIAL: CURRENT THEMES IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Celeste Bunton and Nelson Graburn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOURISTIC ENCOUNTER, IDENTITY RECOGNITION AND PRESENTATION</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinfu Zhang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIGENISM, TOURISM AND CULTURAL REVIVAL AMONG THE PATAXÓ PEOPLE IN BRAZIL</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodrigo de Azeredo Grünewald</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“THE MAYA SPIRIT”: TOURISM AND MULTICULTURALISM IN POST PEACE ACCORDS GUATEMALA</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Devine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEEPING TOURIST PERFORMANCES INDIGENOUS IN BALI AND BHUTAN</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Thirumaran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MĀORI CULTURAL TOURISM OR JUST BEING OURSELVES? VALIDATING CULTURAL INHERITANCE</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keri-Anne Wikitera and Hamish Bremner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHENTICATING DISCOURSES AND THE MARKETING OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Stocker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEWS</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Little</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDITORIAL POLICIES:</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ISSN Number: 1755-1897
“The Maya Spirit”: Tourism and Multiculturalism in Post Peace Accords Guatemala

Jennifer Devine
UC Berkeley

Abstract

The Guatemalan peace process (1985-1996) marked a watershed moment of multicultural reform in the country, initiating a contentious and unfinished project of redefining the civil war torn country as a multicultural nation. Since the peace process, state officials have successfully channeled multicultural discourses to promote Mayan culture as Guatemala's competitive advantage in the global tourism industry. This article examines how an international Guatemalan tourism boycott and U.S. State Department travel warning coalesced with peace process multicultural reforms to politicize the mandate of the state-run Guatemalan Tourism Commission (INGUAT). Through an analysis of shifts in INGUAT’s promotional campaigns since the 1970s, I explore how state officials have strategically employed tourism development as a means to improve Guatemala’s international image and redefine the post-war body politic as “multicultural,” bringing representations of Indigenous Mayan culture and identity to the fore of INGUAT’s promotional practices to achieve this aim. These marketing efforts provide critical insight into the cultural politics of tourism development by focusing on how state-led marketing strategies work to redefine Guatemalan national identity its relationship to the Maya.

Keywords: tourism, multiculturalism, Guatemala, national identity, the Maya

In 1996, the Guatemalan state, the military, and the National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed the final peace treaty ending a 36-year civil war characterized by acts of genocide against the Indigenous Maya. An estimated 200,000 people perished in the violence and over a million more were displaced (CEH, 1999). The Guatemalan peace process (1985-1996) produced eleven ratified Peace Accords, including the Comprehensive Accord on Human Rights (1994) and the Accord on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous People (1995), proposing to redefine the Guatemalan body politic as a “multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual” nation (Jonas, 2000; Pasara, 2001). Multicultural reforms have begun to address several areas of structural inequality and racism: initiating bilingual educational programs, establishing the Academy of Mayan Languages, and legally recognizing the cultural autonomy of the Maya who comprise approximately 60% of the country’s total population (Jonas, 2000; Nelson, 1999). Despite these hard won gains, multicultural reform remains incomplete, fragmented, and contradictory (Hale, 2006). In a 1999 popular referendum marred by a high abstention rate (18.5% voter turnout), voters rejected a package of 50 constitutional amendments (only 13 outlined by the Peace Accords) that included constitutionally solidifying Guatemala’s “multicultural” national identity (Warren, 2002).

---

7 There are three groups of Indigenous communities in Guatemala: approximately six million Maya speaking 21 different languages, fewer than 20,000 afro-descendent Garifuna, and approximately 4,000 Xinca (Nelson 1999).
Guatemala is one of several Latin American governments to implement widespread multicultural reforms since the early 1980s. The peace process coalesced with the United Nations Decade of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1994-2004), the World Bank’s mid 1990s shift to "ethno-development," and DR-CAFTA ratification to create a legal and ideological infrastructure ripe for the strategic development of Guatemala’s tourism industry. In this climate, state officials have harnessed the discourses of multiculturalism to promote Mayan culture as Guatemala’s competitive advantage in the global tourism industry. The strategy has been immensely successful. In 2007, tourism contributed over $3.8 billion in revenue to the Guatemalan economy, comprised 7.2% of gross domestic product, and earned more foreign currency than any other industry (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2007).

Private sector promoters, travel writers, and Guatemalan state officials’ use of Mayan images in tourism promotion dates back to the 1930s (Little, 2008). Towards the end of the peace process, however, the state-run Guatemalan Tourism Commission (INGUAT) significantly changed its representation of the Maya in tourism promotion materials, bringing images of Mayan women and narratives of “living” Mayan culture to the fore of INGUAT’s marketing campaigns. This dramatic shift in INGUAT’s marketing practices does not simply reflect changes in advertising trends, but provides insight into how the state’s tourism promotional strategies work to redefine Guatemala’s post Peace Accords multicultural national identity, and its relationship to the Maya.

To support this claim, I analyze visual and discursive content of state tourism advertising materials, marketing campaigns, and publications since the 1970s. My engagement with these images and texts draws upon the philosophy of internal relations that posits that objects, like marketing materials, are not simply things, but encompass and illuminate the totality of social relations that produce them (Ollman, 1998 [1971]). In doing so, I attend to the broader, contemporary political dynamics that enable these representations to speak to popular, yet contested understandings of multiculturalism and Guatemala’s post Peace Accords national identity. I first examine how state officials framed strategic promotion of Mayan cultural tourism as a political means to improve Guatemala’s negative international image and strengthen post-war national identity following an international Guatemalan tourism boycott and U.S. State Department travel warning. I then analyze how this emergent political project altered INGUAT’s marketing campaigns, critically examining how these representational practices employ images of Mayan women to embody “living” Mayan culture and Guatemala’s “multicultural” national identity. Finally, I explore how INGUAT re-mapped the Guatemalan nation and its body politic through this process, unpacking how these cartographic practices infuse the tourism landscape with racialized meaning.

Guatemalan tourism research to date has largely privileged questions of the commodification of Mayan culture (Medina, 2003), authenticity and performance in tourism (Little, 2004; 2008), the production of Mayan cultural landscapes (Brown, 1999), and state-society relations during the peace negotiation (Burtner, 2004). Yet, there exists very little scholarly research that unpacks the political stakes of post-war tourism development. At the international level, O’Gorman, McLellan, and Baum (2007) argue the Iranian state has worked to subsume incipient Indigenous tourism development efforts within the

---


9 Signatories of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) include the United States, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic.
state’s political project of promoting a homogenous, religious national identification through tourism. Rebecca Stein (2008) examines the role Ashkenazi Israeli tourism to Arab-Israeli communities has played in renegotiating national identity and redefining Middle Eastern landscapes during the Oslo process. This paper contributes to these crucially important, but sparse investigations of how tourism as a set of symbolic and material practices is intimately constitutive of projects of nation-building and governance. More specifically, I approach these contentious dynamics in the post-war Guatemalan context to foreground how struggles over the meanings of multiculturalism, national identity, and indigeneity shape, and are shaped by, the politics of cultural tourism development.

**Tourism during the Civil War**

State involvement in the tourist industry dates back to 1932 when the military government of General Jorge Ubico founded the National Committee of Tourism, renamed the Guatemalan Tourism Commission (INGUAT) in 1967. Today, INGUAT’s impressive, 12 story headquarters in Guatemala City houses over 300 employees charged with designing and implementing sophisticated marketing campaigns, coordinating industry development with state ministries, and hosting prestigious international dignitaries. In addition to these efforts, INGUAT is responsible for producing several cultural events in over 80 (of 332) municipalities throughout the country, such as folkloric dances, marimba performances, festivals, and presentations of Mayan textiles. INGUAT’s role in preserving national cultural patrimony is reflected in promotional materials that succinctly state, “INGUAT is culture,” and in the many institutional sub-divisions dedicated to the conservation and performance of Mayan Indigenous culture and archaeological heritage (INGUAT n.d. a). Funded by a 10% hotel tourism tax and airport departure fee, INGUAT’s contemporary marketing campaigns, research and archival efforts, and folklore activities mark a stark contrast from the organization’s activities thirty years ago. Since its inception and during the civil war, INGUAT’s limited tourism promotion practices primarily employed idyllic, scenic images reflecting the diversity of the country’s dramatic natural landscapes through professional photographs and paintings, rather than images reflecting Guatemala’s cultural diversity (see Figures 1-3).

**Figure 1: “Land of Romance”**

![Figure 1: “Land of Romance”](source:Burtner 2004, Date: between 1932-1944.)

**Figure 2: “Land of Eternal Spring”**

![Figure 2: “Land of Eternal Spring”](source:Burtner 2004, Date: between 1932-1944.)
Peace process multicultural discourses of plurality and equality marked a definitive shift away from previously hegemonic government policies of assimilation underpinned by the nationalist ideology of *ladinoization* (Hale, 2002). Guatemalan racial discourses differ from neighboring countries in the popular employment of *ladino* rather than *mestizo* to signify mixed Spanish and Indigenous heritage and identity. While similar, *ladino* and *mestizo* are not equivocal, nor are the aspired political aims of *ladinoization* and *mestizaje*. In Nicaragua and Mexico, *mestizo* signifies a more self-consciously cultural hybrid Spanish-Indigenous identity, while in Guatemala *ladino* came to signify a Hispanic or European cultural identity born through biological miscegenation (Grandin, 2000; Smith, 1990). Rather than celebrating diversity, *ladinoization* purports that while *ladinos* have a mixed heritage of Indigenous and Spanish blood, the Maya should conform to the dominant Western *ladino* cultural norm through a process of unidirectional assimilation (Adams & Bastos, 2003; Grandin, 2000).10

Collectively, INGUAT’s wartime materials qualified images of Indigenous people as producers of a single, shared national material culture, like “colorful market days” (Figure 5) and “native handicrafts” (Figure 4), rather than one of many distinct cultural subjectivities and patrimonies of a multicultural body politic. Liberal *ladino* nationalism espoused by Guatemala’s political and economic elite for over a century located the culture of the “ancient Maya” as dead and buried in the past, not be confused with contemporary “*indios*” (Indians). This distinction between the “ancient Maya” and contemporary *indios* enabled promoters to frame pre-Hispanic ruins and artifacts as part of a shared *ladino* cultural heritage and national identity, resonating with contemporaneous discourses of assimilation. For example, an INGUAT pamphlet from the 1978-1980 “Guatemala: Where Color Was Born” marketing campaign illustratively references the subtle and happy blend of Spanish and Mayan heritage in Guatemala, “Spanish colonial architecture forms a startling contrast to the indigenous building of the *ancient* Mayan Indians, and *all blend subtly and happily together* to create a vacation land superb in atmosphere and delightful in fun” (INGUAT 1978a, emphasis added).

---

10 For a thorough discussion of the complex etymologies of *mestizaje* and *ladinoization* in the Guatemalan context, as well as their related yet distinct meanings, see (Nelson 1999), Grandin (2000), Hale (1996, 2006), Smith (1990).
In 1979, the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) led a consumer boycott of Guatemalan tourism with the aim of waging an economic embargo and public relations campaign against the Guatemalan state. The effects of boycott went from detrimental to devastating when the U.S. State Department issued a warning against travel to Guatemala in 1981. During these few years, wartime violence escalated under the military state’s infamous scorched earth campaign that strategically policed and killed entire Indigenous Mayan communities presumed to be adding insurgent guerrillas. During this time, the number of international tourists visiting Guatemala dropped more than 60%, from over half a million in 1979 to under 200,000 in 1984 (INGUAT, 1995: 6). The boycott and travel warning not only negatively impacted Guatemala’s economy, but also drastically damaged the country’s international image by rendering visible the horrific, everyday acts of the civil war violence to popular audiences like potential tourists.

In response to the negative economic and political effects of the tourism boycott and U.S. State Department travel warning, officials redefined INGUAT’s mandate to combat the negative image of the Guatemalan state as a flagrant abuser of human rights and identified tourism as a national priority (Burtner & Castañeda, n.d.). INGUAT’s incipient political role resulted in an outlay of $1.5 million in 1982...
on public relations aimed at redefining Guatemala’s national image as safe, relatively peaceful, and full of happy and friendly people (ibid). After the return to civilian government in 1985, these promotional tactics consolidated into a “Colorful and Friendly” marketing campaign (see Figures 6-7). The “Colorful and Friendly” campaign (1988-1990) aimed to convince would-be tourists and their governments that contrary to the boycott’s message and the Regan administration’s warning, Guatemala is a safe and peaceful country populated by happy, smiling Guatemalans ready to welcome tourists. These carefully crafted images resonate with critiques of development and Orientalist discourses that represent Indigenous peoples and the bodies politic of “developing” countries as fun, carefree, childlike and feminized, and in doing so, reproduce power-laden racial hierarchies underpinning colonial and post-colonial “development” interventions (Escobar, 1995; Kabeer, 1994; Mohanty, 1991; Said, 1979).

Figure 6: “Colorful & Friendly” Campaign Logo

Source: INGUAT Archive, Guatemala City.

The campaign aimed to target untapped European and Asian markets, and in contrast to previous campaigns, differentiate the types of tourism attractions Guatemala offers by region: nature, colonial history, ancient Mayan ruins, and tradition (see Figure 7). As I discuss in the next section, this thematic desegregation and racial representation of Guatemala City as ladina sowed the seeds for a future 1995 remapping of Guatemalan’s racial geography and focus on Mayan “living” culture in future campaigns.

Figure 7: “Colorful and Friendly” Campaign Marketing Materials

Source: Burtner 2004, Date: late 1980s.

(Multi)Cultural Tourism & the Peace Accords

At the beginning of the UN brokered peace process (1985-1996), discourses of cultural plurality began to take hold in government public communications. At the onset of the peace process, the democratically elected, civilian Christian Democrat government equated the safeguarding of Indigenous culture with the protection of the nation’s history and identity, locating tourism development in the realm of cultural rather than economic development. The administration’s 1985 National Plan explains, “Although the
outcome of tourism promotion policy is economic, we consider it to be part of the cultural realm” because tourism “is really about the presentation of our natural and cultural identity in the eyes of our visitors” (Christian Democrat Party: 79, Burtner, 2004: 178). An INGUAT strategic planning document published the same year elaborates: “Government authorities are very conscious of the importance of tourism, not only its economic importance, but as an indispensable element to reaffirm our national identity...and project a truthful and positive image of our country (1985: 2).”

The state’s nascent understanding of the political importance of tourism matured during the peace process into more complex technologies of nation-building aimed at refashioning a “multicultural” national identity. In presentations to public audiences and industry stakeholders in the early 1990s, INGUAT representatives defined the cultural goals of tourism to include: “strengthening national identity,” “respecting cultural diversity,” and “valorizing traditions and their diverse forms of expression” (INGUAT, n.d. a). A mid 1990s INGUAT publication sub-titled “Tourism, a common point from which to share our vision of the nation” discusses the various ways that tourism will support the sustainability of the peace and augment post-war nationalism, allowing Guatemalans to “say with pride: I FORM PART OF THIS NATION” (INGUAT, n.d. b, emphasis original).

Amidst multicultural reforms and tourism’s politicization, a general consensus emerged among investigators, the state, and the private sector that Mayan culture is Guatemala’s market niche in the global tourism industry. A 1993-1996 INGUAT report argues that tourism is the only sector in which Guatemala enjoys a high level of comparative advantage, suggesting tourist destinations like Chichicastenango are distinguished from Disney’s Epcot Center as being “real” expressions of culture, and thus able to meet the desires of tourists to have “authentic” cultural encounters (INGUAT, n.d. b). State-contracted researchers echoed the prioritization of cultural tourism, concluding “tourists consider the opportunity to have contact with “living” or contemporary cultures as very attractive and the primary motive of tourists visiting Guatemala” (Arreaga, 1997).

In pursuit of this niche market, INGUAT began to explicitly emphasize and promote Mayan cultural tourism, qualitatively and quantitatively changing INGUAT’s discursive and symbolic use of Mayan images in advertising campaigns (see Table 1). As I have argued, INGUAT employed images of Mayan women in wartime campaigns, but to a lesser extent and in qualitatively different terms. Prior to the 1990s, representations of Mayan culture were frequently limited to contemporary material culture or the historical achievements of a purportedly “ancient” civilization. During the most violent period of the war (late 1970s to mid 1980s), INGUAT’s slogans employed the metaphor of “color” to describe Mayan women’s tunics (huipiles), handicrafts, and other examples of Indigenous material culture. While an implicit reading of “color” resonates with racial and cultural difference, in the late 1980s INGUAT was not explicitly promoting contemporary or “living” Mayan culture as in subsequent campaigns.
Table 1: Overview of INGUAT’s Marketing Campaigns (1970s to present)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Marketing Campaigns &amp; Slogans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>“Care for What is Ours”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>“Colorful &amp; Friendly”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>“Tradition &amp; Color”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>“Heart of the Mayan World”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>“Magic, Smiles &amp; Color” &amp; “Magic, Color, Tradition”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>“Mayan Spirit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>“Soul of the Earth”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INGUAT’s nascent foregrounding of “tradition” in the 1990-1992 “Tradition and Color” campaign occurred alongside the development of the region wide, public-private Mundo Maya (Mayan World) tourism development project. The Mundo Maya organization developed an integrated network of sites ranging from pre-Columbian ruins to contemporary Mayan communities across Mexico and Central America (Little, 2008: 90). The organization worked with the Guatemalan government to expand, renovate, and rename the Mundo Maya airport in town of Flores, Petén. In response to the success of the “Tradition and Color” campaign and the Mundo Maya project, in 1992 INGUAT redefined and promoted Guatemala as the “Heart of the Mayan World”. INGUAT’s deployment of images of Mayan women in Indigenous clothes (traje) to represent national identity and the body politic distinguishes this and subsequent campaigns from its antecedents. As Figures 8-11 illustrate, INGUAT’s post Peace Accords representations of Mayan culture and identity in promotion materials are predominately embodied and gendered as female and clothed in Mayan traje.

Figure 8 left: “Heart of the Mayan World” Campaign

Figure 9 right: “Living Cultures” Campaign Brochure

Source: INGUAT Archive.
Rather than reflecting the diversity of Mayan subject positions in tourism promotion materials, critics argue these representations construct and reproduce an essentialized, feminized, and folkloric representation of Mayan culture. Feminist theorists of nationalism have convincingly argued that feminized representations of the body politic are related to women’s role in the symbolic reproduction of the nation, whereby women are perceived as bearers of culture who pass on national values, morality, and tradition in their roles as mothers, caretakers, and storytellers (Yuval Davis, 1997; Yuval Davis & Anthias, 1989). In the Guatemalan context, Diane Nelson (1999) uses the term “mujer Maya” (Mayan woman) to refer to this stereotypical portrayal of Mayan identity in the tourist industry, a trope INGUAT has increasingly employed since the early 1990s. In an historical analysis of the origins of mujer Maya representations, Walter Little argues that tourists’ desire to consume a romanticized, feminized, Indigenous other, and Mayan and ladino businesspersons’ responses to that desire, have produced and popularized the prevalent mujer Maya representation in contemporary tourism (2008). Far from apolitical, these images have productive effects, as the “specific ways in which we see (and represent) the world determines how we act upon that world” (Poole, 1997: 7). These representations shape foreign visitors and political dignitaries’ understandings of appropriate (and non-appropriate) practices of Mayan culture, and tourists economically reward “authentic” Mayans who fulfill these representations.

Furthermore, these representations and their accompanying narrative texts further inform popular notions of Guatemalan national identity and its relation to the Maya. Since the early 1990s, state officials have strategically employed tourism development as a means to redefine the wounded nation (Nelson, 1999) as “multicultural,” renegotiate the place of the Maya in the post-war political landscape, and pursue economic development simultaneously. The concerted marketing of contemporary “living” Mayan culture as Guatemala’s competitive advantage in the global tourism industry distinguishes these
peacetime campaigns, a change state officials explicitly linked with tourism’s identified political possibilities for post-war nation-building. For example, INGUAT officials aspired the 2001 “Maya Spirit” campaign and logo would suggest “multicolorism, multiculturalism, and natural wealth,” portraying Guatemala as a “multicultural and natural kaleidoscope” (INGUAT, 2001). A recent INGUAT promotional booklet further describes this aim in relation to Guatemala’s “Living Cultures”: “If there is a single feature that makes Guatemala unique, it is the living indigenous cultures...Guatemala is certainly the most diverse country in Latin America and arguably one of the most diverse in the world. Guatemala is multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic and multilingual” (INGUAT, n.d. c). No longer confined to an ancient past or material culture, the contemporary Mayan woman came to represent the multicultural nation to the world and lure would-be tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. And the tourists came; between 1995 and 2005 the number of international tourists more than doubled from 600 thousand to 1.3 million (INGUAT, 2006).

Redefining a post-war multicultural national identity and its relationship to Mayan culture in tourism promotional campaigns necessitated a territorial remapping of Guatemala’s racial geography. In 1995, INGUAT officials collaborated with a Spanish marketing firm to help develop a new advertising strategy that expanded on the regional delineation of tourism activities. In the aim of spatially disaggregating Guatemala’s tourism activities, INGUAT officials divided up the country into seven territorially demarcated regions saturated with racial meaning. These regions include: the “Living Indigenous Highlands,” “Adventure in the Maya World,” “Guatemala Modern & Colonial,” “A Different Caribbean,” “the Pacific Coast,” and a “Guatemala to Discover” (see Figure 12).

![Figure 12: INGUAT’s Tourism Regions, Interactive Online Map (circa 1995-2005)](source: Redrawn from electronic map on INGUAT’s website (www.visitguatemala.com), Date: circa 1995-2004, Cartogarpher Francesca Costa, 2009.)

INGUAT’s newly redefined multicultural geography creates a space for the “living” contemporary Maya, which stands in territorial contrast to the “modern and colonial” region encompassing Guatemala City. INGUAT’s remapping of the nation renders “modern” and “colonial” as isomorphic and definitive of Guatemala City, in opposition to its “natural” and “Indigenous” provincial surroundings. While this map laudably recognizes the body politic’s diversity, bounding the Western Highlands as the space of the “living Indigenous” relegates Mayans populating other regions to the past, and renders invisible the millions of Indigenous people living in Guatemala City altogether. Likewise, the “Different Caribbean” locates the spaces (and non-spaces) of the minority Afro-descendant Garífuna on the eastern coast in INGUAT’s post Peace Accords, multicultural national imaginary. At the same time, the map reproduces the state’s
authoritative role in representing the nation through its circulation to the millions of tourists who have visited Guatemalan in the post Peace Accords era. This cartographic example illuminates how mundane practices of tourism development work to racialize space and enable contemporary practices of territoriality and nation-building.

Figure 13: Brochure Covers: “Modern & Colonial” & “Highlands: Living Culture”

Figure 14: “Spirit of the Earth” Logo

INGUAT’s current “Spirit of the Earth” campaign launched in 2004 continues to use INGUAT’s tourism map of the seven regions (see Figures 13-14), although a few of the regions’ names have been slightly changed. A local community organization from the southwest region dubbed “A Guatemala to Discover” reacted negatively to the label, critiquing the name’s colonial overtones by stating the region had already been discovered. In response, INGUAT changed the region’s name to “Orient: Gods and Landscapes.” This grassroots organization is one of several Indigenous and community rights groups that frequently contest the use of Indigenous images in tourism. As a Mayan cultural rights activist explained to a BBC reporter covering George Bush’s INGUAT hosted visit to Guatemala in 2007, “We reject the portrayal of our people as a tourist attraction” (BBC, 2007). These challenges from civil society demonstrate that INGUAT’s practices are not immune from criticism. Rather, INGUAT is part of a much larger, multi-sited political terrain in which many actors attempt to reproduce, contest, and redefine post Peace Accords race relations and national identity.

INGUAT and other state institutions’ dynamic portrayals of national identity and Mayan culture in tourism reflect neither a seamless omnipotent vision, nor simply objective, apolitical representations. In

Sources for Figures 13-14: INGUAT Archive and Library, Guatemalan City.
attempts to shed light onto the long-term shifts in INGUAT’s mandate, promotional campaigns, and nascent practices of multicultural nation-building, I have not attended to the multiple opinions, viewpoints, and dynamics of decision-making that occur within INGUAT and other state agencies. These power-laden practices are crucially important, yet I am only been able to focus on the products of these interactions here, thus obscuring the internal debates taking place within the organization, as well as the divergent, conflicting political motives and normative goals of INGUAT officials. However, part of the power of state-led tourism marketing campaigns are the very ways they erase these divisions within and between the state institutions that produce them, naturalizing and depoliticizing representations of national identity and culture through their circulation. As such, this exploratory paper is a first step in a much longer research trajectory that seeks to ethnographically explore how Mayan and non-Indigenous grassroots tourism development initiatives support, appropriate, and frequently contest the state’s strategic promotion of cultural tourism to achieve their own political and economic aims.

In this article, I have explored how the symbolic and material impacts of the (1979-1985) tourism boycott and 1981 U.S. State Department travel warning subsequently coalesced with multicultural reform, prompting a reworking of INGUAT’s mandate to focus on improving international diplomatic and public relations. In analyzing state publications and marketing campaigns, I unpacked how the 1985 civilian government framed tourism as a strategy to improve Guatemala’s international image, promote diversity, and redefine Guatemala’s national identity as “multicultural”. INGUAT’s institutional refashioning dramatically increased the organization’s political salience and changed its promotional practices, as state official and private sector experts identified cultural tourism as Guatemala’s competitive advantage in the global tourism industry. “Living,” contemporary Mayan culture embodied in folkloric representations of Mayan women became a focus of post Peace Accords marketing efforts, like the “Heart of the Maya World” and the “Maya Spirit” campaigns. This shift to marketing “living” Mayan cultures engendered INGUAT’s remapping of Guatemala’s national racial geography, producing the map of the seven regions established in 1995 that continues to “Orient” (Said, 1979) tourists to Guatemala’s landscape, national identity, and Mayan culture today. These dynamic promotional practices provide critical insight into how industry stakeholders, like state officials, employ cultural tourism development as a political means to redefine Guatemala’s international image, multicultural national identity, and the place of the Maya in the post Peace Accords body politic.

References


About the Author