

Venture Grant Application
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Museums: Identity and Nationalism in Andalucía, Spain

The role of museums within society varies across cultures and across time. One constant is that museums' decisions concerning which histories, perspectives, and cultures are presented and the way in which they are presented can both reflect and create a society's identity. I am applying for a venture grant that will allow me to examine museums' role in creating identity and nationalism within the context of Andalucía, Spain. My primary question is: How do Andalucía's museums' selection and presentation of histories and cultures reflect and create the region's identity and sense of nationalism? How does this creation of identity and nationalism vary between provinces and between rural and urban areas?

Background

Andalucía is a region in southern Spain that is composed of eight provinces: Almería, Cádiz, Córdoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaén, Málaga, and Seville. Seville is the largest province and contains the city of Seville, which is the region's capital. Andalucía's history is defined by the multiplicity of empires and people-groups which have ruled it, including the Romans, Vandals, Visigoths, Muslims, and Christians. One of the most visible elements that defines the region is its position as the last Moorish stronghold of Spain. It is this dynamic history that first captured my attention and the way in which this culture-clash is presented within museums will be a primary focal point of my investigation. The research performed on the museums in Andalucía and more specifically the province of Granada will serve as a case study analyzing the relationship between museums, nationalism and identity. This research has the potential to be applied on a larger scale in order to determine the nature of these relationships as they apply to Spain as a whole.

In the past, museums have been used for a variety of purposes, but one of their most consistent role in society is to promote a sense of nationalism through the creation of imagined communities. Benedict Anderson expands upon this notion of nations as imagined communities, noting that they are "imagined" because their inhabitants will never meet all of the other individuals which compose their society (Anderson 6). He posits that nations are "communities" because, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7). Museums play an important role in creating and reinforcing ideals within an imagined communities. Much of Anderson's discussion focuses on the ways in which colonial powers have utilized the census, the map, and museums in order to "shape the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion-- the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (Anderson 163-164). I will not be directly examining a colonized community, but these elements will manifest themselves to some extent within museums in Andalucía. This notion of imagined communities is a central theme of my research and I hope to uncover the ways in which the imagined communities of Andalucía and its provinces have been formed through museums.

Museums can affect the creation of the identity of an imagined community through the selection and presentation of histories. Michel-Rolph Trouillot's concept of "mentions" explores this idea. He notes that both the mere mentioning and the silencing of particular versions and aspects of history are active processes that both succeed in marginalizing and suppressing those narratives (Trouillot 48). When examining representations of history, it is also important to take the concepts of dissonant and additive approaches into account. A dissonant approach to history "is one that seeks contradictions, either to established historical narratives or between materiality and other evidence," while an additive approach merely supplements existing historiographies (Schmidt and Walt 405). The relationship between these approaches and the suppression of history will play an important role in shaping the way in which I analyze which histories are presented within the museums of Andalucía, and if these histories are presented in a way that silences other narratives.

Research Design

I will be analyzing how different histories are represented within museums, along with the mechanism employed in those representations. The bulk of my preliminary research will be completed by analyzing the online resources provided by Andalucía's numerous museums. I will first work to compile a comprehensive list of museums in order to analyze the number of institutions that devote their resources to particular genres, topics, and eras. This will provide an introduction to the consideration of the region's values and identity before beginning more in-depth research. Next, I will examine the mission statements, online exhibits, and subject matter of selected museums through their website in order to determine the museums' goals and resources. The museums analyzed in this portion of my research will be limited to those with a focus on local, regional or national history, archaeology, or anthropology. This research will first allow me to identify the histories, cultures and eras that tend to be emphasized, which will provide insight into the values and identity of Andalucía. It will then shed light on the goals, resources, and inner-workings of the institutions which affect their promotions of particular versions of nationalism and of regional identities and histories.

Online resources provided a limited amount of information, particularly in terms of determining the specific ways in which information and artifacts are presented. Additionally, many of the museums throughout the region, especially those in rural areas, do not have comprehensive websites that contain the information necessary for my analysis. Therefore, the next stage of the research will be an observation portion, which will require funding as I examine at least one museum in each province of Andalucía. Observing the museums for myself is vital in order to obtain first-hand knowledge of how particular narratives are presented. The concepts and histories that museums present are more than the objects and the information themselves-- they are composed of a multi-sensory experience that cannot be fully understood without viewing them within the structural context of the institutions that house them. When observing the museums, I will take factors such as location, subject matter, exhibit design, language, discourse, and community or educational programming into account. These factors will be revealing when it comes to intended audience (e.g.- tourists vs. locals) and privileged histories. Assuming IRB approval, I will conduct a series of expert interviews with professionals working at a number of the museums that I will be observing. These interviews

will primarily serve to expand my understanding of how the museum sees its own role, who its intended audience is, and what kinds of exhibits tend to achieve the most success. Interview questions are listed in the following section. My observations along with the expert interviews will allow me to inductively draw conclusions and identify emerging patterns related to museums' role in shaping imagined communities.

I will focus much of my attention and will observe the greatest number of museums in the province of Granada due to its position as the last Moorish stronghold of Spain. It will therefore provide irreplaceable insight into the role of the region's dynamic history within the museum setting. The museums that I will observe were chosen primarily on the basis of their subject matter. I will focus my attention on history, archaeology, and anthropology museums, as a large part of my research will emphasize the selection and presentation of histories and cultures within museums. I will share the results of this study through the completion and presentation of my senior thesis.

Expert Interview Questions

- What is the museum's mission?
- Who is your primary audience?
- What do you see as the museum's role within this community?
- What are some of the ways that you actively engage with the community?
- How long is each particular exhibit displayed?
- What have been some of your most successful exhibits? What factors contributed to their success?
- What have been some of your least successful exhibits? What factors contributed to their lack of reception?

Relevant Academic Experience

I am an Anthropology major with minors in Spanish and Museum Studies. My experience within each of these fields has given me a strong background that informs my approach to this interdisciplinary research. The concepts of nationalism and the creation of imagined communities through museums came to light in AN242: Space and Place. This experience has created a familiarity with the relationship between museums and nationalism that has provided a basis for my approach to my research question. The Introduction to Museum Studies course provided me with insight into the field of museums and gave me the tools necessary to analyze museums' role in society, the ways in which they affect that society, and the ways in which they present their content. Arab culture has heavily influenced the culture and identity of Andalucía, so taking AR320 was an excellent introduction into this aspect of the culture. The course examined how Arabic culture has been represented in film and literature and this method of analysis can be carried over to my examination of their representations within museums. My knowledge of the Spanish language and the further knowledge that I will gain while studying abroad in Granada next semester will provide the linguistic skills required for my exploration of Spanish museums.

Relevant courses and experience:

Anthropology

- AN102 Cultural Anthropology
- AN215 Research Design: Method and Theory
- AN308 Topics in Anthropology: Space and Place
- AR320 Topics in Arabic Literature and Culture: Urban Experience of Modernity in Arabic Literature and Film

Spanish

- Four years of Spanish in High School
- Received a 5 on the AP Spanish Language test
- Initial placement into SP306
- SP306 Cultural Context & Critical Analysis
- SP338 Latina/o Literature in the U.S.

Museum Studies

- AH200 Topics in Art History: Introduction to Museum Curatorial Studies
- Internship with the Windsor Museum, June 2011-August 2011

Itinerary

I will be studying abroad with IES Abroad in Granada, Spain from January 24, 2012 until May 27, 2012. I will not know the semester's schedule until my arrival in January, so the specific dates which are listed are tentative. However, the duration of each excursion will remain constant despite the possibility of a change of dates. Bus and train schedules are not yet available for many of the later dates, but this is my projected itinerary for each province:

Seville

- February 10: Depart Granada at 8:00 am, arrive in Seville at 11:00 am
Observe El Museo Arqueológico Provincial and El Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares
- February 11: Visit El Museo de la Inquisición
Depart Seville at 8:05 am, arrive in Santiponce at 8:30 am
Observe El Museo Arqueológico de Itálica
Depart Santiponce at 1:00 pm, return to Granada at 5:15 pm

Almería

- February 25: Depart Granada at 10:23 am, arrive in Almería at 12:47 pm
Observe El Museo de Almería and La Sala de Historia Antigua
Depart Almería at 2:57 pm, return to Granada at 5:33 pm

Cádiz

- March 9: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Cádiz early afternoon (5 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo de Cádiz and El Museo Histórico Municipal
- March 10: Depart Cádiz in the morning, arrive in Puerto de Santa Maria late morning

Observe El Museo Municipal
Depart Puerto de Santa Maria in the afternoon, return to Granada in the evening

Córdoba

- March 31: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Córdoba late morning (3 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo Arqueológico and El Torre de la Calahorra
Depart Córdoba early afternoon, arrive in Cañete de las Torres 1 hour later
Observe Museo Histórico Local
Depart Cañete de las Torres, return to Granada in the evening

Huelva

- April 13: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Huelva early afternoon (4 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo de Huelva and El Monasterio de la Rábida
Depart Huelva in the evening, return to Granada late night

Jaén

- April 27: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Jaén (1.25 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares and El Museo de Jaén
Depart Jaén late afternoon, return to Granada early evening

Malaga

- May 4: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Malaga late morning (2 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo Mesón de la Victoria and El Antiguo Museo Municipal
- May 5: Depart Malaga in the morning, arrive in Antequera (50 min bus ride)
Observe El Museo Municipal and El Museo Arqueológico Municipal
Depart Antequera late afternoon, return to Granada evening (1.25 hour bus ride)

Granada

Dates for museums within the city: Too variable to estimate-- will be living in the city and will visit each museum as I am able.

Observe El Museo de la Alhambra, El Museo Arqueológico Provincial, and El Museo Nacional de Arte Hispano-Musulmán

Trips to other cities in the province:

- February 3: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Capileira (1.5 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares
Depart Capileira early afternoon, return to Granada late afternoon
- May 12: Depart Granada in the morning, arrive in Almuñecar (1.75 hour bus ride)
Observe El Museo Arqueológico
Depart Almuñecar early afternoon, return to Granada late afternoon

Budget

Total travel costs (bus and taxi within Andalucía): \$525.00

Total food costs: \$220.00

Total museum admission costs: \$55.00
Total lodging costs: \$100.00
TOTAL REQUESTED FUNDS: \$900.00

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