Towards the Development of Grassroots Cultural Activities:
Mexican Cultural Policy and the Case of Community Museums

Maki Komatsu
University of Tokyo,
Department of Arts and Sciences

Please do not cite. Comments welcome: manhime@hotmail.com

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Introduction

Grassroots cultural activities, or the celebration of cultural heritage of the indigenous, the rural, and the popular sector, became one of the central topics of cultural policy since the 1970’s. This change in cultural policy reflects the claims of cultural critics that called for a cultural revitalization from the end of the 1960’s. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla asserts that the indigenous, the rural mestizo, and the low-income urban sectors constitute the México Profundo, the ‘real’ Mexico, or the real Mexican identity (Bonfil Batalla 1998: xvi).

This paper seeks to understand how the grassroots cultural activities in rural Mexico have been implemented and developed. It looks at the historical process of policy implementation and the case study of community museums. Community museum is a public space maintained by the communities to exhibit their own culture. It started primarily as a mean to preserve the archeological patrimony in their territories in the case of Mexico. This project was supported by governmental and non-governmental initiatives and developed into exhibits of contemporary communal culture. This endeavor was aimed to fortify their communal identity.

In order to understand the specific social background of cultural practice that has taken place, one must understand the cultural institutions and policies that evolve around the practice (Bennet 1995). This paper first examines the national cultural reforms that led to the promotion of cultural activities of rural communities.

Rafael Tovar y de Teresa gives a historical analysis of cultural policy and the cultural programs of the institutions as a “pursuit of the modernization process” (Tovar y de Teresa 1994:7). Julio Cesar Olivé elucidates the role of National Institute of Anthropology and History (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, INAH) mainly focusing on the historical analysis of institutional change (Olivé 2000). Luis Geraldo Morales Moreno describes the Mexican cultural policy that reflects the political ideology (Morales M. 1994). The three works are historical analysis of the policy formation mainly based on official documents and discourses by important figures of the era. These analyses do not take into account the complex process of policy implementation that is materialized through interactions between various actors in the local level. It particularly undermines the role of non-governmental sectors.

The importance of non-governmental sector in cultural activities is emphasized in the work of Joyce Zemans et al. The work compares policy implementation procedures of Japan and the United States. It examines the role of non-governmental organizations and the funding procedures of cultural programs (Zemans et. al. 1999). I will argue that the support groups emerged as service providers in areas where the public institutions do not. Few previous studies differentiate between the communities and the intermediary organizations (Yúdice 1998; Morales, M. Camarena O, C. Camarena O 1987). However, looking at the intermediary organizations and the communities as different actors enables a profound analysis of the actual implementation process of cultural policy and insight into sustainable cultural activities. The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 traces the federal reforms on cultural institutions and law and its effect on the cultural policy. Section 3 looks at the relationship between the intermediary organizations and the community through a case study of community museums in Oaxaca, Mexico. Section 4 gives concluding remarks.

Federal Reform for Grassroots Cultural Activities

The Miguel de la Madrid Presidential administration demonstrates a new cultural policy as follows:

Culture has been considered as something reserved for certain privileged groups and not as a combination of values, expressions, and traditions as a result of individual creativity and collective experience until recent times. … What was most grave is that the diverse manifestations of the creativity of the marginalized groups has been considered with minimum value (Poder Ejecutivo Federal 1984: 22).

The National Program of this year claims that it will “strive for the democratic participation of individuals of the groups and the communities in the learning, the creation, and the appreciation of our culture” (Poder Ejecutivo Federal 1984: 89). The national cultural policy clearly asserts the direction towards valuing the indigenous and communal cultural heritage.

This policy reflects the criticism of a group of Mexican anthropologists starting from the end of the 1960’s against indigenismo movement - a nationalistic movement to glorify the indigenous past and aimed for the social integration of the present day indigenous population (Knight 1990; Ochiai 1998). The philosophy was the official stance of the post-revolutionary government. The movement was criticized as being led by non-indigenous intellectuals and with no participation from the indigenous people. The critics instead, supported efforts of self- determination of the indigenous people.

There are at least two factors that caused the creation of new programs for grassroots cultural development: (1) decentralization reform of cultural institutions, and the foundation of funds that provide direct financial support toward the communities (2) a judicial reform in the cultural patrimony law which led to the creation of community museums (museos comunitarios).
1 Decentralization

Governmental institutions that design cultural policies in Mexico have been historically centralized both functionally and geographically. In the case of National Institute of Anthropology and History (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, INAH), Major decision-making process including the signing of treaties and the budget-related issues were undergone in the INAH headquarters located in the Federal District of Mexico. Criticism on this centralism and calls for decentralization became prevalent during Luis Echeverría’s Presidential term (1971-1976) from within INAH. In 1975, the editorial in INAH’s official journal *Anthropología* asserted “there is nothing worse than centralism that interferes with INAH’s execution of its responsibility and function” (INAH 1975:1). It further argues that INAH should reform its bureaucratic structure and delegate authority to the regional branches.

INAH proceeded with the inter-structural reform creating 6 regional offices to develop a stronger connection with the regional society from 1972 (Olivé 2000: 307). *Anthropología* review, notes in 1986 INAH formed the regional museum department and distribute the museum collection in the capital INAH 1986:3. Therefore, INAH has fortified their regional offices to reflect the voices of the regional society.

The government also formed specific organizations to foment grassroots cultural activities. In 1980, the General Direction of Popular Culture (Dirección General de Culturas Populares, DGCP) was founded. One of the characteristics of DGCP was that the local offices had greater autonomy compared to other cultural institutions such as INAH.

The National Council of Culture and Arts, Consejo Nacional de Cultura y las Artes, CONACULTA was founded in 1988 as a decentralized institution of the Secretary of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP). The main reason for its construction is to create a new cultural policy that, above all, reaches for the need of the society (CONACULTA 2000:25). These institutional reforms led the formation of funding programs to provide direct financial support towards cultural activities.

(1) Funding Programs

Decentralization led to the foundation of cultural funds that support activities proposed by the individuals and communities. For instance, National Foundation of Culture and Arts (Fondo Nacional de Culturas Artísticas, FONCA) was founded in 1989 within CONACULTA. The Foundation grants financial resources to private artists and organizations engaged in cultural activities according to their petition. DGCP also created the Support Program for Municipal and Community Culture (Proyecto de Apoyo para la Culturas Municipales y Comunitarias, PACMyC) in 1989 to provide financial and technical support towards grassroots cultural programs. The subjects dealt were music, dance, theater, conservation of communal memory, publication, traditional festivals, handcrafts, community museums, etc. Nacional Indigenista Institute (Instituto Nacional Indigenista, INI) founded the National Fund for Indigenous Culture in 1990. This Fund grants financial support towards the development of cultural activities among indigenous communities. Activities include the traditional ceremony, radio programs, conservation of sacred and historical sites, oral history, ethnic communal culture, etc.

The emergence of funding programs led the cultural institutions to take on a new role after decentralization. Funds were previously only private enterprises. Now, the public institutions started to play the role of direct fund providers on the basis of petition from the community.

Despite the several differences between the types of programs they support, the funds hold similar characteristics. First of all, the project selection process in undergone by a local constituency. For instance, PACMyC entrusts its selection process to an independent commission called the Commission of Cooperation for the Popular Creation (Comisiones de Apoyo a la Creación Popular, CACREP) in each state. CACREP consists of 2 to 3 representatives from the state government, CONACULTA, private initiatives, institutions that promote popular culture, civil activists, and independent artists.

Secondly, the most criteria of the funds assure the participation of the whole community in the cultural activity. The proposal requires authorization from the communal authorities implying that the activities must be the will of the community.

Finally, the funds are mainly aimed support the projection phase of the activities. Financial assistance is rarely given numerous times to a single community. Moreover, the fund will not provide any financial compensation for those in the community who dedicated their time and effort to make the communal activity possible. Therefore, the decentralization

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1 The six regions are, (1) Morelos-Guerrero, (2) Northeast, (3) Oaxaca, (4) West, (5) Puebla-Tlaxcala, (6) Southeast.
2 The Direction of Regional Museum (Dirección de Museos Regionales) was founded in 1954, yet it was merely perfunctory (Olivé 2000: 258).
3 The name of the Direction changed to General Direction of Popular and Indigenous Culture (Dirección General de Culturas Populares e Indígena, DGCP) in 2001.
reform led to the democratization of the funding system.

2 The Approbation of Cultural Patrimony Law of 1972

The second reform that enhanced the communal participation of cultural activities was the approbation of Federal Law of Monuments and Archeological, Artistic, and Historic Zones. Cultural Patrimony Law (Ley Federal de Monumentos y Zonas Arqueológicos, Artísticos e Históricos) in 1972. This cultural patrimony law not only authorized the community to preserve archeological patrimony of their ancestors in the form of museums. This law also assured the communities’ rights to receive technical support on preserving archeological patrimony. It also provided a judicial basis to the founding of museums that exhibits and preserves the contemporary communal patrimony. Many communities have historically struggled for the preservation of archeological objects within their territory. This has been a polemic issue since the sense of ownership over cultural patrimony is closely related to the autonomous control over territory (Erickson 1996:40; Morales L. 1999: 11).

The approbation of the existing Cultural Patrimony Law was one of the important elements that enabled communities to legally participate in protecting the archeological objects. This law significantly changed the concept of custody of cultural patrimony.

The law recognized civil organizations, neighborhood groups, and peasant organizations as units of protectors of cultural patrimony (Congreso de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos 1972: Artículo 1). This signifies that the communities can declare themselves as legal custodians of cultural patrimony encountered in their communities. In short, this law facilitated the recognition of communities as actors of exhibiting their cultural artifacts.

The law also declares that these legal organizations are able to “create and maintain regional museums” (Congreso de México 1972: Artículo 8). The law demands INAH to provide technical assistance for the “construction, inventory, maintenance, and the collection of entrance fee” (Congreso de México Artículo 8, ). This law became the basis of the community museums movement, and the foundation of the Programa Nacional de Museos Comunitarios (National Program of Community Museums).

(1) Community Museums

The community museum movement is one of the various cultural activities that emerged from grassroots effort to preserve and exhibit archeological objects and other cultural patrimony in the community.

Communal grassroots efforts for preserving the archeological patrimony in their territory was historically ignored or repressed. Such was the case during the excavation of Monte Albán when archeological objects were sent to the National Museum in Mexico City against the public appeal of many Oaxacans in 1931-1943.

Efforts to preserve archeological artifacts produced a positive sub-product. The plans for preserving the archeological objects developed into the plan to construct museums that exhibit present day cultural patrimony of the indigenous people. The community museums display themes such as the traditional customs, main handicrafts, and history of the communities. The community museum movement also developed into an attempt to change the disregard of the contemporary culture of the indigenous communities seen in previous cultural policies of Mexico.

The transnational ecomuseum movement further facilitated the development of museums in the communities. The movement attempts to establish museums closely related to the communities. The idea of ecomuseums was supported as a

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4 This law is a modification of the Federal Law of Cultural Patrimony of the Nation of 1970.
5 This law also nationalized all archeological patrimony, defined by law as patrimony created before the 19th century, and put under the supervision of INAH. Thus, it is also argued that the law has prohibited the official owning of the cultural patrimony of the community (Erickson 1996). However, contemplating on the fact that there was no legal way to mobilize officially to protect the cultural artifacts previously, this law was a step towards grassroots effort to maintain their cultural patrimony to remain in the community.
6 The museums are also called ecomuseums, integral museums, or site museums. However, community museums became the most widely used term in Mexico.
7 Ochiai notes the drastic contrast between the National Museum of Anthropology’s ground floor that exhibits the glorified ancient past of the indigenous civilization, and the second floor that exhibits the present day culture of the rural communities which is given minor attention (Ochiai 1998).
8 The ecomuseum (ecomuseo) movement was first proposed by Georges Henri Riviere and Hughes de Varine in the 1960’s. Ecomuseums’ object was to contribute to the development of the local society by preserving, developing, and exhibiting the natural and cultural patrimony of the region at the place of origin and become the center of communal activities, Davis 1999). The concept of ecomuseum was introduced in Latin America in a round table conference in Santiago, Chile organized by UNESCO in 1972. This round table conference agreed to promote museums sensitive to the necessity of the society, and integrated within the community.
federal cultural project that enhances the construction of public spaces with freedom to express their own culture. INAH started the National Program of Community Museums (National Program) in 1983. This later became a joint project with DGCP in 19949. The first generation of museums was constructed in Chihuahua, Hidalgo, Guanajuato, Guerrero, and Tlaxcala beginning in 1983. There were 269 museums nation-wide, and 60 are now under construction in 200110.

However, the National Program has financial and organizational restrictions to manage such numerous museums. This limits the National Programs’ activity to concentrate on the construction of museums. The budget of the National Program is limited11. Full time employees in the National Program are around 11 people who are constantly replaced every six years according to the change in the Presidency. This limits the National Program to work solely on the construction phase of every museum.

3 Results of Implementation and Intermediary Organizations

The cultural programs implemented after the federal reform revealed their shortcomings on the local level. The governmental programs provide support for the projection of community museums yet lacked support for maintaining the community museums. For instance, many of the first community museums constructed from 1983 were forced to shut down due to various problems after the construction12.

The necessities for further assistance that became evident in the implementation level caused the emergence of intermediary organizations13. These organizations are local based non-governmental group of specialists that provide the communities with direct and continual financial and technical support. The intermediary organizations mostly do not provide financial support themselves. Rather, they coordinate funds, that is, petition the grants from national and international funds as “representatives” of the communities. Although most organizations include the community as members, those that actually provide technical support are rarely natives of the communities.

These organizations further organized a national level civil organization, National Union of Community Museums in 1994. 18 states were members of this National Union of Community Museums in 2001.

4 Remarks on Federal Reform

We have so far followed the federal reform on cultural policy from the 1970’s to the beginning of the 1990’s. The decentralization reform of the cultural institutions delegated the decision making process to the local level. This reform led to the foundation of cultural funding programs that enabled grassroots communal activities to be directly financed. The approbation of the new cultural patrimony law legally authorized the community as actors for protecting their archeological patrimony. The reform not only caused the delegation of the custody of archeological patrimony, but also promoted community museums, a public space that exhibits the cultural patrimony of the present day community.

However, these cultural programs caused difficulties in the implementation level. The programs granted technical and

9 There were two museum projects before the current community museums. The House Museum (Museo de la Casa) Project which temporary exhibited objects from the National Museum of Anthropology in the humble neighborhoods, and the School Museum Project (Museo escolar) which gave pupils to create an exhibition within the school. The foundation of these programs was indirectly related to the Cultural Patrimony Law of 1972. This law caused hysteria among the owners of objects stemming from the misunderstanding of the law. In order to alleviate the rumors that the “police are coming after them to take their artifacts away,” INAH was opted to encourage the people to co-operate voluntarily in safeguarding and conserving the cultural heritage (Larrauri 1975: 61).
10 Information based on interview by Maki Komatsu to Ricardo Sánchez on November 21st, 2000 in Mexico City.
11 Interview by Maki Komatsu to Ana Graciela Bedolla Giles on December 18th, 2000 in Mexico City. Calculated from 6,000,000 Mexican pesos for a 6-year budget.
12 Interview by Maki Komatsu to Angélica Avila in July, 2000 in Mexico City.
13 Archeologist Yoshio Onuki, asserts the necessity for local-based supporters for sustaining community museums. His argument is based on his actual experience of constructing a museum in an indigenous community near the Kuntur Wasi excavation site in northern Peru. He asserts the necessity for specialists that offer constant financial and technical assistance (Onuki 2000: 272). Financial assistance not only signifies support for maintaining the museum. It includes providing the community with minimal cash income for maintaining the museum. Onuki insists on the necessity to teach the communities how to administer the museum “from deciding on service hours, cleaning the museum to displaying the gifts (Onuki 2000: 272). Onuki’s experience suggests that governmental program lacks the local-based specialists that offer consecutive financial and technical support. The government grants financial support only once during the initial phase of the communal activities. Technical support service offered by the National Program of Community Museums is also limited to the construction phase of the museum. The program also does not support the development of any financial income for the community. The technical assistance to maintain the museum became an increasing necessity for the communities that hopes to continue on with their museum activity.
financial support towards of the cultural preservation. What the programs did not provide was direct and continual support for financially and technically maintaining the museums. This led to the emergence of intermediary organizations. In the case of community museums, local level specialists created intermediary organizations to support the communities. In the next section, I will look at the case of community museums in Oaxaca, particularly focusing on the interaction between the communities and the intermediary organization.

Case Study: Community Museums in Oaxaca

Now we will see the particular case of community museums in Oaxaca, Mexico. I will first give the background information on the State of Oaxaca. It is a state with the largest number of indigenous population in Mexico (INEGI 1998: 11). According to the 1995 census, 36.6% of the population over 5 years old (1027,847 people) speaks an indigenous language (INEGI 1998: 18). Oaxaca is known for the autonomy of indigenous communities (Fox and Aranda 1996:19). In the cultural area, the communities have especially fought for the custody of cultural patrimony when a great protest movement emerged among the local civilians against Alfonso Caso's Monte Albán research team as seen in the previous section. Oaxaca is one of the most financially challenged states in Mexico. For instance, the minimum wage for Oaxaca was 22.5 pesos\(^1\) when the national average was 24.30 pesos (INEGI 1998: 53). Moreover, 53.0% of the working population earn lower than the minimum wage (INEGI 1998: 53). This situation makes the communities difficult to manage a museum that is financially independent. These circumstances make the maintaining and preserving local and communal culture a particularly important issue in Oaxaca.

1 The Union of Community Museums of Oaxaca

The community museum movement in Oaxaca is supported by an intermediary organization called the Union of Community Museums (Unión de Museos Comunitarios, the Union)\(^2\). The advisor of the intermediary organization, have started his career as researchers in the Oaxacan branch of INAH after obtaining a bachelor’s degree in social anthropology from the National School of Anthropology and History (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, ENAH). After working with indigenous/ Spanish bilingual teachers in the peasants' movement, the advisor started teaching in the Oaxacan branch of the School of Anthropology and History from 1981. There in 1985, the advisor started providing technical support along with the students of the School to the people in Santa Ana del Valle (Santa Ana) to construct their museum. Various communities soon petitioned help to create the museums. After helping the construction of three museums, the advisor has become concerned with maintaining the community museums open and running\(^3\).

The advisor decided to provide constant technical support through inter-communal workshops and meetings. In 1991, the advisor founded the civil organization, the Union of Community Museums of Oaxaca (Unión de Museos Comunitarios A.C. Union). The Union, according to their homepage is a “support network and a springboard for regional projects which benefit all participating communities” (Union 2002). The Union is one of the most active civil organizations that promote community museums in Oaxaca. There are around 6 full-time employees. The Union is currently working with 18 communities with museums and 7 communities where a museum is under construction.

The advisor has maintained distance from the National Program of Community Museums\(^4\). The majority of the staffs are students he taught, and foreign investigators who are not affiliated with INAH. The Union is also a financially independent organization.

The advisor strongly believes that the community museums must be managed through a committee based on the 
\textit{cargo}\(^5\) system. The advisor has actively worked to spread this methodology of constructing and maintaining the community museums they claim authorship of. Santa Ana is the first museum they helped to construct. They claim that Santa Ana, to be the “first community museum.” The advisor has actively written articles on various academic journals such as 
\textit{Diario del Campo}, and published books on the how to construct and maintain the community museums. The members have also given speeches and assisted in various conferences including the Smithsonian Conference on Indigenous Representation held in Washington D.C. in 1995 to spread their methodology. They have organized various national and international meetings.

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\(^{14}\) Based on field study undergone by Maki Komatsu between July 2000- July 2001 in Oaxaca, Mexico.

\(^{15}\) 1 Mexican peso is approximately 0.1USD. in March 25th, 2003.

\(^{16}\) The Union of Community Museums of Oaxaca is a member of the National Union of Community Museums since its foundation.

\(^{17}\) Interview by Maki Komatsu to C on October 10\(^{th}\), 2000 in Oaxaca City.

\(^{18}\) The advisor openly criticizes the National Program of Community Museums as treating the communities as merely their assistants in protecting the cultural patrimony (Morales 1999: 12).

\(^{19}\) There are various definitions and functions on the \textit{cargo} system. Here, I will define it as a general term for civil, and religious service given by the inhabitants of Latinamerican indigenous communities (Zenno 1994: 203).
where they have promoted the importance of their community museums. In these conferences, the advisor has held workshops to teach the definition of community museums. The advisor works to promote their “authentic” way of creating a community museum. In the case of the Union, the ambitions of “scaling-up” have positively matched to the needs of the communities.

2 Role of the Union
The services that the Union provides to the communities are continual financial and technical support. The relationship between the Union and the community differ in every case. I will look at the three communities in the Central Valley region with community museums, and their relationship with the Union.

(1) Financial Support
The Union makes an effort to provide constant financial assistance for the communities. In order to do so, the Union petitions not only to state funds such as PACMYC and National Fund for Indigenous Culture but also to foreign-based private funds such as Inter-American Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation in the United States. The petition requires paperwork up to 200 pages and high-level writing skills. This poses a great challenge to the people in the communities where the average school enrollment in the State is 5.4 years (INEGI 1998: 31). The Union is in charge of the petition writing and distributing the funds by holding inter-communal contests.

In 1996, the Union started the Cooperative to promote tourism in the membership communities. This was aimed to help the communities to gain a new source of income through the museum activities. It coordinated ecological and “ethnological” tours for the visitors of the communities. Tourism was promoted by the Union in order to develop an alternative source of income besides the selling of handcraft and migration. A guide receives around 60-100 pesos for an excursion.

The Union provides financial support for the communities with lesser access to financial aid. We will understand this point by comparing representative cases of Santa Ana and Teotitlán del Valle (Teotitlán).

Santa Ana is a municipality that is located 34 km from Oaxaca City and belongs to the District of Tlacolula de Matamoros. It has the population of 2220 (INEGI 1991a). It is a Zapoteco indigenous community with 94.7% of the population over five years old speaking Zapoteco (INEGI 1991b). Only 21.8% of the population is dedicated to agriculture (INEGI 1991c). The majority of the households mainly produce tapetes, or decorative woolen textiles. They work as sub-contractive workers for a neighboring community (Cohen 1999: 45). The households produce tapetes for the neighboring community of Teotitlán that enjoys a worldwide reputation as the home of tapete craftsman.

The museum project was realized after archeological artifacts were discovered in the municipal plaza during its remodeling in 1985. The Municipal President of the time petitioned the then Director of the Oaxaca branch of INAH to conserve the excavated artifacts in the community, instead of handing it over to INAH. This petition gave fruit to the museum construction. The community assembly voted for the museum construction and nominated four to five committee members as a cargo duty, a mandatory community service for several years. The committee called for donations of archeological and historical artifacts within the community. It also held a contest on the community’s history to collect historical data on the community. Thus, the Shan-Dany museum was founded in 1986.

The museum displays archeological findings and the community’s history during the Revolution based on oral history collected from the elderly. It also introduces the traditional feather dance, and the production method of tapete tapestry.

The community received support from the National Fund for the Indigenous Culture in 1996 to create an exhibition through the Union. The community tours are accessible to the visitors through the Union. Members of the community, trained by the Union as guides receive 75 - 100 pesos for a tour depending on the number of people. Some people of Santa Ana hold hopes that the museum will come to provide a viable income and perhaps help their children by bringing tourist (Erickson 1996: 42). The community maintains a relatively amicable relationship with the Union for the continual support it has received. Santa Ana has hosted various National and International meetings that the Union organizes.

On the other hand, Teotitlán rejected the Union’s support. For this community, Union was not necessarily the only source of support. Teotitlán is a municipality within the District of Tlacolula. The population is 5083 (INEGI 1991a) with 85.9% of the population over 5 years speaking their native language Zapoteco (INEGI 1991b). The percentage of population that dedicate themselves to agriculture is only 2.3% (INEGI 1991c). This community is known worldwide as producers of tapete blankets.

The Balaa Xtee Guech Gulal museum was founded in 1994 in cooperation with INAH and the Union. The museum exhibits themes such as archeological findings in the community, history and the fabrication process of manufacturing

20 Interview by Maki Komatsu to Román Bautista July 8th, 2002 in Santa Ana del Valle.
21 The ex-President has visited Mexico City as a tapete seller and had seen museums before.

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tapetes, customs and tradition in the community, and so on.

This community was originally part of the Union but retreated its membership due to financial problems. After retreating from the Union, the museum remains open and well administered in 2002. The community is able to maintain the museum through special support such as 30,000 pesos for the insecticide treatment of the museum from INAH in 1999. This aid was facilitated by a Senator of the Green Ecological Party of Mexico (Partido Verde Ecologista de México). She is originally from the community.

The Union provides continual financial support for communities with no other way of gaining financial help. The case of Teotitlán shows that the Union does not provide necessary service for the communities that hold other sources of financial assistance to maintain the museum. There are sources of income other than the tourist business run by the Union in Teotitlán. In the case of Santa Ana, one can see that the Union plays an important role as providers of constant financial assistance in maintaining the museum and an alternative source of income through the museums. Thus, the Union provides financial support for those communities with no other viable source of support.

(2) Technical Support

The Union provides technical support through bimonthly two-day inter-communal meetings. The committee of each community participates as delegates. The delegates report past events in their communities and discuss about upcoming events and any other concern to maintain the community museums. In 2000, the Union created took on a new role in teaching practical skills for the welfare of the communities. The Training Center (Centro de Capacitación) holds workshops such as cooking courses for tourists, and conflict management. San José el Mogote (San José) ’s reopening of their community museum best portrays the necessity of constant technical help in maintaining the community museums.

San José el Mogote is a locality with the population of 1772 (INEGI 1991a). It is approximately 10 km from Oaxaca City and belongs to the municipality of Guadalupe Etla, Etla. 93.7% of the population over 5 years old does not speak an indigenous language, which make it a mestizo community (INEGI 1991b). The population dedicated to agriculture is 35.2% (INEGI 1991c).

The community has created a small scale museum which exhibited artifacts excavated by the University of Michigan archeology team in 1966. The amicable relationship between the community and the excavation team led to the construction of a community museum in 1976. However, this museum soon closed down after the team retreated. The archeological objects were left in the community warehouse under less ideal condition for the artifacts.

The advisor visited the community in 1986 offering the people technical and material support to re-open the museum. The community responded with the offer to donate the ex-hacienda as a construction site of the museum. The Museo Comunitario de San José el Mogote exhibits the archeological and pre-revolutionary history of the community. It also describes the historical inter-communal land disputes. The community receives technical support from the Union. After the construction, 4 to 5 members of the committee were appointed for their three-year cargo duty. The committee actively participates in the workshops organized by the Union. The community learned practical skills in maintaining the museums such as teamwork to divide tasks between the members of the committee, and technical skills to preserve the artifacts in ideal condition. The committee members take turn in cleaning the museum building to giving guided tours to the visitors. The archeological artifacts in the museum are now preserved in glass cases where ideal temperature and humidity are maintained. The committee is prepared to explain the exhibition in detail. The case of San José demonstrates that the Union plays an important role in providing continual technical support that keeps the museum functioning.

3 Results of the Case of the Oaxaca

The case of the community museum movement in Oaxaca demonstrates the implementation results of the cultural reform. The community museums are supported by the local-based intermediary organization, the Union that seeks to promote their ideals. The cases of Santa Ana and Teotitlán demonstrate that the Union helps communities that seek continual financial aid for maintaining the museum and a minor cash compensation for the people in the community. The case of San José el Mogote shows that the Union helps the museum function through constant technical assistance. Therefore, in the case of community museums of Oaxaca, the intermediary organization provides financial and technical assistance to constantly maintain the museum to function. The case of Oaxaca demonstrates that for a sustainable grassroots cultural activity, local support is needed. Also, the needs and interest of both the support organization and the communities must match for grassroots cultural practices to develop.

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22 Interview by Maki Komatsu to the leader of the excavation team on December, 2001 through e-mail.
23 Interview by Maki Komatsu to Juan Roque Mendez Matadomos on October 11 and 13, 2001 in San José el Mogote).
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