

- 18 Bancroft, Hubert Howe, *Wild Tribes*. San Francisco: The A. L. Bancroft Company, I (1883), 700.  
19 *Ibid.*, 637.  
20 Bassuri, Carlos, *La Poblacion Indigena de Mexico*. Mexico: Secretaria de Educacion Publica, II (1940), 322.  
21 *Ibid.*, I (1940), 342.
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## THE MEXICAN EAGLE

Raold Gerard

"Where you will find an eagle, sitting on a cactus on a stone in the water, tearing with his beak and fangs a snake asunder, there you shall settle." This was the message given to the wandering Aztecs and coming to Lake Texcoco, finding there the oracle fulfilled, they founded Tenochtitlan, which now is Mexico City.

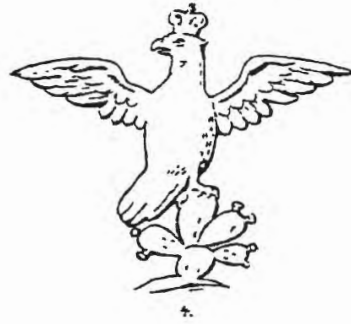
In these few pages you will find a number of eagles, destroying a snake, as the national emblem of the Republic of Mexico.

During the Spanish period, 1521 to 1821 the coat of arms of the Habsburg dynasty was used in "New Spain," together with the double-headed eagle and the Burgundian Cross.

Towards the end of the 18th century, however, when French revolutionary ideas crept surreptitiously to the new world, new emblems had to be found for Mexico; so what was more natural than to revert to the ancient Aztec lore.

Thus the eagle of the Codez Monteleone (No. 1) came in use on Morelo's flags and on the early regimental colors of the young republic (No. 2 and 3). When Iturbide became Emperor in 1823, coins were struck with the crowned eagle (No. 4 and 5) and this, yet snakeless, eagle remained in use until about 1830-1833.

Simultaneously the eagle with the snake, in full accordance with the ancient Aztec saga was being used. The Codex Duran among others shows such an eagle with the snake, on a cactus on a stone in the water (No. 6) and on coins and flags in Chapultepec castle in Mexico City, these eagles can be studied in endless variations. No. 7, 8, 9 show such eagles looking to the right (dexter); this from about 1824-1837 and No. 10-17 show these eagles with a snake flying to the right, but looking to the left (sinister), this version dating from approximately 1832-1862 and later.



Some eagles move to the left (sinister) and look to the right (No. 18-21), which is heraldically inexact, as the movement counts and the whole bird moves to sinister; they date from about 1862-1894.

By contrast the meteoric period of Emperor Maximilian, 1864-1867, from an heraldic point of view is perfect and shows unmistakably Napoleonic influence and French elegance (No. 22-25). Of course these eagles bear the imperial Mexican crown with the pineapple instead of the orbit, a whim of Empress Carlota. The flags were made in France of the finest Lyon dragon-green, silver-white and wine-red taffetas (persian-taftah), beautifully embroidered by nuns in French convents.

With the shooting of Maximilian of Habsburg in Queretaro in 1867, the Mexican Republic reverted to the crownless eagle with the snake, and the flag which President Benito Juarez kept during his exile on the Mexican border at Paso del Norte presumably bore an eagle like No. 26. The numbers 27-29 are of the same order, the eagles flying to the right and looking back, as if to invite the army to follow them (about 1867-1900).

The eagles No. 30 to 33 have their wings less spread out and fall in the period from about 1898-1905, whereas No. 34-37 show again a tendency of the spread-out wings, dating from about 1900-1914.

In 1916, by decree of September 20th came into being the Mexican eagle with the snake, in profile looking to the right (dexter), the eagle sitting on a cactus, on a stone in the water conform to the old legend (No. 38 and 39). Design by Don Antonio Gomez, based on No. 7 and 8 of 1823. Here the eagle does not hold the snake just behind the head, so that the snake easily could have struck the poor eagle in the neck and killed him.

Then in 1923 Don Jorge Enciso, Director of Antiquities, colonizer, created the drawing No. 40, happily reverting to Aztec conception, also giving the snake no opportunity to kill the eagle.

After this now official eagle, No. 41 shows this eagle as used today on all military colors, in this case of the 1st Mexican Infantry Battalion. The three eagles (No. 38-40) have also been used on coins, in 1917 on the \$20 — gold coin, on the 1921 \$2 — silver coin, on the 5 and 10 centavos, pieces struck from 1936 to 1942 and in 1947 on the \$1 and \$5 — silver coins.

Passing along these various designs, one realizes that there has not been a definite rule in the development of the national Mexican emblem until 1916.

During the French Revolution the heraldic emblems of kings and nobles were systematically abolished, vandalism which also spread to the new world, and a rich artistic patrimony was destroyed. The laws governing heraldic science were thus lost or forgotten and since then much confusion and ignorance ensued.

However, excellent books on this subject exist and heraldic societies willingly help solve knotty problems.

Today's national emblem of the Mexican Republic is symbolically, emblematically and heraldically faultless.



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## LIST OF MEXICAN EAGLES

### Early Eagles without snake:

1. Eagle of Codex Monteleone.
2. Color (flag) Rgt. Guadalajara, 1815-1830.
3. Bat. Color "Tres Villas," 1833.
4. Crowned eagle of Emperor Iturbide, 1822-1823.
5. Same, 1823-1824.

### Eagles with snake:

6. Eagle of Codex Duran.
7. Coin of 1823.
8. Coin of 1824.
9. Heading of Document, 1837.
10. Color Bat. Ligero de Puebla.
11. Military flag, 1833-1848.
12. Coins of 1832, 1848 and 1857.
13. Military flag, 1832-1857.
14. Military Color, 1832-1857.
15. Military Color, 1832-1857.
16. Coin, 1832-1857.
17. Coin, 1866.
18. Coin, 1862.
19. Military color 1848-1862.
20. Color 14th Inf. Bat. 1846-62.
21. Guyon 1st Brig. Horse Artillery.

### Crowned Eagles of Emperor Maximilian:

22. Coin Mexican Empire, 1864-1867.
23. Imp. Inf. Bat. Color, 1864-1867.
24. Imp. Bat. Color, 1864-1867.
25. Imp. eagle (not military).

### Eagles of the Mexican Republic:

26. Color (flag) Bat. Los Poderes, 1840-1870.
27. Bat. Color, 1840-1890.
28. Color of Rifle Bat., 1862-1879. (Cazadores)
29. Color Bat. Activo de San Blas, 1847-1894.
30. Color Bat. Libres de Chihuahua, 1862-1890.
31. Coin 1898-1905.
32. Color 1st Bat. de Linea, 1898-1905.
33. Coin, 1869-1894.
34. Color of Bat. Artilleria de Mina, 1890-1910.
35. Coin, 1910-1914.
36. Bat. Color (not used) 1910.
37. Coin, 1910-1914.
38. Heading of document, 1916-1921.
39. Coin, 1916.
40. Official eagle, 1923, today.
41. Bat. Color as from 1923, today.

All the coins mentioned here belong to the collection of Dr. A. F. Pradeau, La Crescenta, California. The flags are in the Historical National Museum of the Castillo de Chapultepec. The dates given are approximate.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY MEXICO

Robert C. Cahall

Twentieth Century Mexico? Yes, but not without the strings which tie it to the ancient past. The numismatic arts of this present great nation are in most cases merely the embellished symbols and designs of its founders. These coins while of recent mintage and a variety of alloys not known to exist when the first law for coinage of Mexican specie was passed on May 11, 1535 are living mementos of a glorious past.

As a historical note, the first conventionally shaped Mexican coins were pieces of two, three and four reales, struck at the Mexico City Mint by Sr. Alonso del Ricon, Assayer. They were mostly of silver as the copper was of poor quality and brittle, and could not withstand the blows of the coining hammer. Probably the reason for this poor grade of copper is that it was mined and refined by the Indians of Mechoacan, using the most primitive methods, and then sent to the Mint for transformation into coins.