

HISTORY- AND COMMUNITY-THINKING IN NAHULINGO, EL SALVADOR

By

MATTHEW CLAY WATSON

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2005

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Matthew Clay Watson

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was made possible through an Interdisciplinary Field Research Grant provided by the University of Florida Center for Latin American Studies. Dr. Michael Heckenberger, the chair of my graduate committee, and Drs. Allan Burns and Susan Gillespie have been invaluable resources for research design and writing. Gustavo Amaya, Douglas Murcia, and Dr. Alba Amaya Burns, employees and affiliates of the Salvadoran NGO Centro de Capacitación y Promoción de la Democracia, provided crucial resources and aid during my time in El Salvador. Additionally, Erich Fisher generously offered his time to produce the included map. I am grateful for the support and constructive comments of my family: Jamie, Dwight, and Evan Watson. Finally, I wish to thank the residents of Nahulingo who generously shared their homes and knowledge, especially Enrique Huevo Mártir, Don Benito de Jesús Martínez, and Francis Martínez. Needless to say, any errors or deficiencies included herein are my own.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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By

Matthew Clay Watson

August, 2005

Chair: Michael Heckenberger  
Major Department: Anthropology

This work examines public performances, narratives and memory, and a museum presentation of materiality as aspects of historical discourses in Nahulingo, El Salvador. Placing El Salvador and Nahulingo within a historical frame, I offer a limited reading of community ontologies, and conceptions of history and identity. I present these three social domains as places in which social actors transform history. I focus on specific aspects of local materiality and landscape, such as the Catholic saint *Santiago Caballero*, the local ceiba tree, and archaeological artifacts, which embody historical conceptions. Understanding the community as a site of negotiation, I suggest that such historical conceptions differ among individuals and social factions within Nahulingo. Simultaneously, I show how community members imagine and represent historical and contemporary others, defining their community in the process. The work provides a foundation for future research and production of knowledge in and about Nahulingo.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Two thousand four brought the hundredth year of Nahulingo, El Salvador's existence as an officially recognized town. At the turn of the first state-sponsored century, the lowland western Salvadoran community obtained the title of *villa*, replacing *pueblo*. This transition reflects a sense of development; as the population grows the complexity of local government and social organization increases. The Salvadoran government indexes local growth and change within a progressivist taxonomic order. The taxonomy provides a framework for understanding historical change and envisioning progress.

Such a relation between history and development surfaces in an editorial printed in the bulletin of the annual patron saint festival: the municipal mayor recalls the historical connection between Nahulingo and its sister city, Tacuzcalco. Pondering the nineteenth century disappearance of the neighboring community, the mayor applauds the use of the place-name "Tacuzcalco" for the local soccer stadium. Through attachment of the sign "Tacuzcalco," the stadium, located on the periphery of the Nahulingo "urban center" (not far from the river Ceniza, which once divided the two communities), becomes a material and spatial symbol of local history. Unlike Nahulingo, Tacuzcalco no longer exists, but its collective remembrance foments a sense of history and development.

By drawing attention to the use of a local place-name to designate a contemporary and future stadium, the mayor discursively defines Nahulingo (as a collective community) against an imagined historical other. For the mayor, at least, the stadium

constitutes a source of local pride which will indefinitely march into the progressive future. The sign “Tacuzcalco,” thus, invokes multiple references: the neighboring town of the past and the stadium of the present. Such expressive connections between events and structures, towns and stadiums, or history and development texture narratives of local history in Nahulingo, and provide a foundation for the questions that I begin to ask in this work. How do social memories or imaginings articulate the relation between the past and the present? How do multiple histories intersect or conflict? How are they negotiated? Most centrally, how are distinct pasts created in the relatively independent domains of public performance, oral narratives, and a local museum?

The celebration of Nahulingo’s “hundredth year” also implicated a certain discourse of exclusion. By celebrating the “official” or legal existence of the community within the domain of Salvadoran political organization, the community was partially and momentarily denied deeper, indigenous histories. During my ethnographic fieldwork in the town, a variety of flustered community members even rejected the claim that Nahulingo was one-hundred years old. Those who celebrated the local transition, of course, also recognized that Nahulingo residents can and do claim a more profound local history. These multiple, and sometimes contradictory histories, resemble what Mexican historian Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1987) has described as “*México profundo*,” an enduring attachment to land as indigenous heritage and resource, and “*México imaginario*,” a form of modernity imposed by the state.

In broad scope, I have begun to assess the production of meanings and histories in Nahulingo. In this text, I focus on issues of historical representation, as articulated through a range of media: festivals, oral narratives, and the local Nahulingo

Archaeological Ethnographic Museum. My fieldwork became an assessment of how different community members frame the past in these three contexts, producing different types of histories. Subsequently the different histories and identities articulated through performance and social relations demonstrate the salience of certain social factions. I did not begin my research with the assumption that the “community,” Nahulingo, represents an independent and meaningful unit or scale of analysis. The surfacing of multiple histories and social factions demonstrates how ethnographically conceiving Nahulingo in purely local scope, as an isolated community, has limited utility.

### **Community and History**

The Mesoamerican ethnographic unit of analysis and cultural distinctiveness transformed during the course of the twentieth century (Watanabe 1992, Watanabe and Fischer 2004a). In his work describing the Guatemala highlands, early Mesoamerican ethnologist Sol Tax (1937, 1941) utilized the Maya *municipio*, an area with a town center and outlying hamlets. Tax elaborated how local *municipios* varied within larger regional patterns. In a Marxist turn that followed the work of Tax and Robert Redfield, Eric Wolf (1957) classically renamed the communities described by Tax as “closed, corporate, peasant communities.” This shift marked a reconceptualization of the community from a precolonial survival of Maya social organization to an effect of colonialism and capitalist forms of labor and inequality. As John Watanabe (1992:5-11) has aptly discussed, both Tax and Wolf relied on an essentialist notion of Mayanness. Building on Tax’s emphasis of Maya communities as existential sovereignties, Watanabe (1990:132) offers a more nuanced conception of community:

Far from denoting some insular, homogeneous whole, however, I see community as a problematic social nexus within which people constantly negotiate the immediate

existential concerns and possibilities of their lives, conditioned by the wider economic, political, and natural ecology of which they are a part.

Defining the community in these terms as a site of negotiation rejects essentialist frameworks and emphasizes social transformations and identity politics.<sup>1</sup> Such a definition remains lucidly aware of both the local conditions detailed by Tax and Redfield and the global economic articulations emphasized by Wolf.

Conceiving the particular existential concerns and sites of negotiation that I begin to outline in this work necessitates an understanding of basic local history. My preliminary project serves as an extension of the recent concern with examining how local contexts and particular national histories alter communities' articulations into translocal and transnational structures, a topic elaborated in Watanabe and Fischer's (2004b) edited volume *Pluralizing Ethnography*. This volume brings together the work of Mayanists who have conducted ethnography in highland Guatemala, Chiapas, and Yucatan. Watanabe, in particular, emphasizes the utility of examining cultural differentiation across adjacent states (Watanabe 2004, Watanabe and Fischer 2004a:4). Given such concern with translocal meanings, markets, and difference, I hold that conducting ethnographic work in El Salvador represents a critical next step. From the precolonial to the postcolonial periods, communities in western El Salvador, in particular, have maintained active social and economic networks that extend deep into Guatemala

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<sup>1</sup>Building on Hanna Arendt's (1958) work, Nancy Fraser (1994:97) has differentiated the *community*, "a bounded and fairly homogenous group," from the *public*, an open-ended arena characterized by perspectival diversity and plurality (see Azoulay [1997] for an elaboration and use of this distinction). Fraser's concept of community mirrors early Mesoamerican essentialist models, while her notion of the public resonates strongly with Watanabe's (1990, 1992) "community." Watanabe and Fraser's respective concepts of "community" and "public" can be employed to extend Habermas' (1989) notion of the "public sphere," the informal negotiation of political identity (and, often, creation of collective opposition to the state) in public places.

and beyond. Like Guatemala, El Salvador has emerged out of a recent civil war and translocal indigenism has been incorporated into state policies and local realities.

Compared to the Maya centers of Mexico and Guatemala, ethnographers have generally avoided El Salvador. This fact, no doubt, corresponds to the violent suppression of indigenous voices through the twentieth century. Historian Aldo Lauria-Santiago and anthropologist Leigh Binford have recently noted this comparative neglect of El Salvador, emphasizing the imperativeness of ethnographic and historical research (Lauria-Santiago and Binford 2004a:2, 2004b:13). They discuss the absence of a visible indigenous population and the lack of a university degree program in anthropology through the 1990s as two possible causes of such neglect. Their edited volume *Landscapes of Struggle* begins to correct this neglect and provide an academic context for linking Salvadoran history and ethnography with similar discussions of other nation-states (Lauria-Santiago and Binford 2004c). Like Watanabe and Fischer (2004b), Lauria-Santiago and Binford (2004c) recognize the necessity of uniting historical and ethnographic perspectives, and moving beyond essentialist theoretical frameworks. With this in mind, my discussion of twentieth and twenty-first century events requires that I dig deeper into the annals of history, and hint at the conditions of possibility for contemporary local historical conception.

A Nahua or Pipil place name, “Nahulingo” carries significant associations with the Pipil-Nicarao migrations from central Mexico, which hypothetically took place sometime around A.D. 900. Archaeologist William Fowler (1989) has conducted the most extensive recent work pertaining to the settlement and development of the Pipil during the Classic and Postclassic periods. Archaeological data pertaining to the Pipil are

notably scarce. Fowler's historical inferences are based primarily on combinations of oral history, historical linguistics, and colonial documentation. For example, he quotes, at length, an early seventeenth century colonial document produced by Torquemada, which summarizes oral historical narratives collected in Nicaragua. This summary discusses a conflict between the Olmec and the Nahua, leading to the subjugation of the latter and their dispersal to the south, settling at places including Izalco<sup>2</sup>, a larger town neighboring Nahulingo (Torquemada 1969:331-333, as quoted in Fowler 1989:34-35). This colonial narrative account, which lacks a date of production, appears to be the most reliable and highly discussed evidence for migration. Fowler significantly modifies such discussion by positing the possibility of multiple migrations. He proposes the following sequence: a Late Classic migration between A.D. 650 and 850, based on glottochronological evidence; an Early Postclassic migration between A.D. 900 and 1100, based on glottochronological evidence corroborated by archaeological analyses of iconography, including ceramics found at Tacuzcalco; and a Late Postclassic migration based on glottochronological evidence and similarly corroborated by western Salvadoran Postclassic materials (Fowler 1989:39-49).

A prominently ignored historical period and area, knowledge of late precolonial western El Salvador has been constructed through analyses of contact-period and colonial documents. Based on a series of letters sent from the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado to Hernando Cortés, Fowler (1995:19) asserts that the communities of precolonial western El Salvador, known as the Izalco Pipils, comprised one of the most powerful regions of southeastern Mesoamerica. This claim has its basis primarily in the

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<sup>2</sup> The original document cites this place name as "Ecalcos." Fowler adds the bracketed correction "Izalco."

unprecedented strength of indigenous military resistance that Alvarado claimed to have faced first at the coastal city of Acajutla and second at Tacuzcalco. After nominal military victories at these two locales, Pipil troops abandoned their strategy of direct combat in defense of communities in favor of fleeing to the hills and engaging guerilla tactics. At the central Salvadoran Pipil community of Cuscatlan, these guerilla tactics led to Alvarado's ultimate retreat (Fowler 1989).

The sheer size and economic significance of the Izalco Pipil communities, especially Izalco, Caluco, Tacuzcalco, and Nahulingo, is evidenced by early colonial tribute records. Such records suggest that these four communities constituted the economic center of a productive system that distributed cacao throughout Mesoamerica (Bergmann 1969; Fowler 1989, 1995). Cacao was used in the precolonial era both as an unsweetened drink and as a monetary currency among the Pipil. Initially, the Spanish intervened little with the productive aspect of the Izalco Pipil economy, solely appropriating the agricultural output. Cacao became one of the core commodities of the nascent capitalist world market and the most profitable Guatemalan export.<sup>3</sup> Due to the demands of the colonial economy, the economic significance of cacao production in the Izalcos began to erode during the late sixteenth century. By the turn of the seventeenth century indigo prominently replaced cacao, and remained the staple of the Salvadoran economy into the nineteenth century (Fowler 1989, Kincaid 1987). This transition from the production of cacao to indigo resulted in the destruction of indigenous communities and forms of social organization. While the early colonial Spaniards permitted the cultivation of cacao to remain in the hands of indigenous communities, the production of

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<sup>3</sup> During the colonial epoch, the *audiencia* of Guatemala held political power over the territory of contemporary El Salvador.

indigo entailed the coercive appropriation of land and imposition of creole-owned estates, or *encomiendas*.

The nineteenth century brought a wave of political changes to Mesoamerica. From 1810 to 1825 a series of independence movements emerged, forming sovereign nation-states based on the federalist and centralist models of France and the United States. At the hands of creole elites who desired political autonomy, New Spain dissolved into a dozen independent states. While the states' constitutions found a base in democratic principles, elite creoles typically took authoritarian control with the support of strong militaries (Carmack, Gasco, and Gossen 1996). One might suppose that the newly constructed Latin American sovereignties emerging during the early nineteenth century corresponded to provincial identities. To the contrary, the creole elites' redistribution of sovereignty conflicted with the identities and territorial distribution of indigenous, mestizo, and black masses (Chasteen 2003).

This contradiction of sovereignty over territory, the remnants of oppressive *encomienda*-based economies, and the governmental apathy towards representing the masses prompted a flood of provincial, often nativistic, movements throughout the Americas. For example, the Pipil-speaking Nonualcans of central El Salvador conducted a series of three insurrections. The first insurrection occurred during the late colonial period in 1789 (Kincaid 1987). Community members in the Nonualcan village of Santiago (in what is now central El Salvador) rose up in opposition to the proposed conversion of seasonal wages in cash to wages in kind. In the wake of the particularly tumultuous independence movements in Guatemala and El Salvador at the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Nonualcans rose again, occupying the town of

Zacatecoluca, and driving out the Spanish officials. This movement came to a swift defeat at the hands of government officials. The third and most successful Nonualcan rebellion began in January, 1833, led by the peasant rebel Anastasio Aquino. Forces led by Aquino again occupied Zacatecoluca in addition to surrounding towns and estates. After defeating several expeditions of Salvadoran and Guatemalan troops, Aquino was captured and executed in April, 1833, putting an end to the revolt. Notably, the scope of Aquino's political ambitions was limited. The Salvadoran state of the 1830s was weak, and Aquino probably could have taken the capital city of San Salvador, especially if he had appealed to support from the largely indigenous communities in the west, such as Izalco and Nahulingo. But Aquino had more localized goals, aiming to establish sovereignty solely over the central Nonualcan communities, which bore a population of about 4000 (Kincaid 1987).

A. Douglas Kincaid (1987) presents the Nonualcan rebellions in a narrative casting the relatively autonomous peasant community as resistant and opposed to the dominant liberal state. He uses these rebellions as empirical evidence supporting Marxist models of resistance and domination (e.g. Wolf 1969). To contrast, Aldo Lauria-Santiago (2004) presents a reading of the 1898 rebellion in Izalco using a theoretical frame largely congruent with Watanabe's (1990, 1992) conception of the community as a factional site of negotiation. Lauria-Santiago (2004:18) introduces his argument as an alternative to the essentialist schema of Marxist Latin Americanists:

. . . I argue that conflicts over land tenure and the privatization process in El Salvador have long been misunderstood and misinterpreted, precisely because the generalized accounts of the privatization process have rarely considered the internal dynamics of Indian communities and their complex political relationships with external forces. . . . As reconstructed here, factional divisions within this growing and complex Indian community—factionalism that resulted from its decades-long

involvement with commercial agriculture and regional political alliances—to a great extent determined how this community experienced the partitioning of its lands.

Lauria-Santiago (2004) depicts late nineteenth century Izalco as a community that maintained a heterogeneous agricultural economy. The economy combined commercial cultivation of sugar and coffee for export with cultivation of subsistence crops and goods for local or regional markets. Late nineteenth century Izalco had a relatively unique political structure, spatially dividing the town into a municipal center and urban core, and two distinct indigenous communities. All three political units retained autonomy and control over land and resources. The communities themselves were internally divided by economic and ethnic differences. While there existed conflict over governmental control between indigenous peasants and ladino entrepreneurs, similar conflicts also occurred within the two indigenous communities, Asunción and Dolores.

Beginning in 1881 the Salvadoran government attempted to foster a class of entrepreneurial peasants and farmers by abolishing communal land holdings. The subsequent attempt to partition and distribute land fomented a series of conflicts between and within the three Izalco communities and the neighboring municipality of Nahuizalco. Throughout the nineteenth century, factions, which transected class and ethnic identities, also allied members of the communities with national military and political leaders. The climactic violent conflict of 1898 appears to have been sparked by political alliances that transcended (but were not unaffected by) local ethnic identities. Lauria-Santiago (2004) expresses that the privatization of land exacerbated the long-standing internal conflict arising out of political, ethnic, and economic difference. Ultimately the privatization of land undermined the communal integrity of Izalco's two official indigenous communities. Indigenous leaders remained, and played a significant role in creating

support for presidential candidates, but they lacked any sovereignty over territory. Such leaders, in Izalco and surrounding communities, would again come to the political fore in the 1930s (Lauria-Santiago 2004).

The western Salvadoran revolt and subsequent government massacre of 1932 represents the most highly discussed event of Salvadoran history (e.g. Anderson 1971, Ching and Tilley 1998, Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2004, Kincaid 1987, Marroquín 1970, McClintock 1985, Paige 1997, Pérez Brignoli 1995, Zamosc 1988). Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2004:192-3) identify four themes that have centered discussions of the movement and massacre: falling coffee prices' impact on the western Salvadoran economy; conflict erupting out of President Romero Bosque's (1927-31) institution of democratic local and presidential elections; the role of the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS); and the ethnic agendas that motivated the revolt and differentiated indigenous supporters from the PCS. The effects of the revolt and massacre of 1932 are of greater significance to my ethnographic project than the actual causes and processes.

Most scholarly accounts and popular perceptions of 1932 frame the event as a virtual total ethnocide, the cause of a rapid disappearance of indigenous identity in El Salvador. The historical argument has held that the indigenes who were not murdered by the military quickly rid themselves of markers of indigenous identity, especially clothing, and assimilated into the mestizo peasantry (e.g. McClintock 1985). Erik Ching and Virginia Tilley (1998) build on the pioneering historical work of Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Lauria 1990) and Patricia Alvarenga (1994), demonstrating how birth-records contradict the notion that 1932 brought the erasure of public indigenous self-identity. They subsequently defend the counter-intuitive claim that the military regime protected some

indigenes and peasants following the massacre, and even castigated ladinos who felt wronged by the rebels.

Despite the multiple alliances enacted by members of the military in post-1932 El Salvador, the emerging government apparatus combined oligarchic rule with a strong and omnipresent military to maintain many of the inequities plaguing the nation-state (Binford 1996). Leigh Binford (1996) argues that the military served to impose an anti-communist ideology on the masses throughout much of the twentieth century. The National Republican Alliance (ARENA) formed in 1981, a party aiming to conserve the political capital of the oligarchy. ARENA articulated its agenda in terms of upholding capitalism through a practice of nationalist anti-communism. Following Martín-Baró (1991), Binford (1996:29) explains that ARENA's conception of "communists" included all persons who undertook actions that threatened the oligarchic domination of the state. Communism, in the view of the inchoate ARENA party, was not a political ideology or an agenda, but a shifting mode of action, often equated with "terrorism." Such fear of "communism" embodied by the oligarchy was the product of both a lingering social memory of the 1932 insurrection and the post-World War II involvement of the United States government in Latin America. In the 1950s and 1960s, the United States government developed a "counterinsurgency" and "counterterror" doctrine, and provided military support and training to the Salvadoran oligarchy in the name of anti-communism (Binford 1996, McClintock 1985).

Social memories of the 1932 insurrection loomed large for both the oligarchy and the revolutionaries during the civil war that took place from 1981 to 1992. The consolidation of parties that became the Faribundo Martí National Liberation Front

(FMLN) named their new organization after the campesino rebel who incited the 1932 insurrection. In a corollary move, the extreme Right named one of their death squads the Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Brigade, after the military general who reigned over the 1932 counterinsurgency. This brigade played a principle role in the massacre at El Mozote in the eastern department of Morazán (Binford 1996). Despite the FMLN's invocation of the 1932 revolt, residents of the western Salvadoran departments were conspicuously uninvolved in the civil war. The government withheld and even destroyed historical evidence pertaining to the 1932 insurrection and government massacre, spinning that event through rumors and political propaganda that legitimized the government response (Binford 1996). Such propaganda and the absence of a historical record may have helped legitimize the political agenda of the conservative ARENA party, with the devastating effect of an extended and violent civil war. But, for western El Salvador, the horrors of another confrontation with a well-organized militia prevented widespread involvement in the 1980s revolutionary movement.

### **Nahulingo**

The municipality of Nahulingo is located in the western Salvadoran department of Sonsonate. In 1992 the census listed the municipality population as 9,476 with a projected population for the year 2000 of 12,846. The projected total population of the department Sonsonate was 450,118 with the greatest concentration (96,772) in the department capital (Dirección General de Estadística y Censo 1992). Nahulingo is located approximately at the geographic center of the department, nearly contiguous with the city Sonsonate (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Departmental map of El Salvador representing the location of Nahulingo.

The municipality of Nahulingo is ecologically situated in the lowland coastal plain of western El Salvador. Of the environmental features, abundant rivers remain the most notable and highly discussed aspect of local ecology. The borders of the town are defined by the Ceniza and Quequeisqueillo rivers, marking the western and eastern edges of the town respectively. There exists a source of potable water, called El Pescadito. A regional source of water, the municipality of Nahulingo has managed to maintain control of El Pescadito despite an attempt by the state to appropriate the source in the early 1990s. Furthermore, there exists a natural spring, the source of the Yankee (or Yanqui) river, about 1.8 kilometers to the northeast of Nahulingo. The source of the Yankee serves as a recreational and swimming center for much of the municipal community.

Sugar cane fields dominate the topography of the rural Nahulingo municipality. Sugar cane plays a significant role in the economic production of the rural areas, and

fields constitute a primary source of employment for the smaller peripheral towns. The urban center is characterized by a more heterogeneous economy. However there exist few available local jobs, forcing many Nahulingüenses to find employment in the neighboring town of Sonsonate or even in San Salvador. Travel to employment locales outside of the Nahulingo is enabled by the national bus system which maintains a relatively large terminal between Nahulingo and Sonsonate. El Manantial, a high-end hotel recently built within the municipality, has also recently provided a limited source of employment and an influx of capital. Affiliates of the local Casa de la Cultura aspire to lure hotel visitors to the town, marketing the local culture and museum, which I describe below.

The mayor, whose office is adjacent to the Nahulingo plaza, holds basic political jurisdiction over the municipality. During the summer of 2004, the mayor had particular support in the outlying hamlets and rural areas and a lesser degree of support within the town. This corresponds to the mayor's emphasis of development work in rural areas. Local political tension remains a particularly salient cause of social factions, mediating social interaction between members of the ARENA and FMLN parties. The mayor represents the agenda of the ARENA party. The transition from *pueblo* to *villa* status suggests a certain degree of higher-level government approval of the political agenda forwarded by the local government.

Another particularly important backdrop for discussion of local historical conception is the town's religious landscape. Historically dominated by Catholicism, the era after the end of the Salvadoran civil war has witnessed a rapid rise in Protestantism. This religious transformation has been prompted largely by an insurgence of Evangelical

missionaries from the United States. Protestant churches lack the strict hierarchical and patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church and, thus, have rapidly attracted a range of members, especially women. Numerous Protestant churches dot the streets of Nahulingo, contrasting with the single, central Catholic church which sets next to the park.

The Nahulingo park and adjacent basketball court (which serves, by night, as a soccer arena) constitute public places which facilitate and mediate social relations and communal performance. During my fieldwork I paid special attention to the architectural and “natural” features which inhabit the landscape and form recurrent themes in historical narratives: most prominently, the bell tower, the ceiba tree, and the adjacent Catholic church. Less spectacular features of the social landscape also have meaningful roles in the articulation of sociopolitical identity and social memory. For example, the fountain, the building faces, the temporary festival features and the recently erected Ten Commandments monument all significantly affected and reflected situated social practices and knowledges during my short stay in the community.

## CHAPTER 2 THEORY AND METHODS

### **Theory**

In this chapter, I describe the predominant theoretical programs and ideas that have influenced my formulation of research questions, fieldwork, and interpretation. I focus primarily on theoretical discussions of how history is created and negotiated through public performance, memory and narrative, and materiality. I then discuss literature that addresses how such constructed histories are used to articulate community and national identities. These are extensively discussed subjects, so I limit my overview to the works most pertinent to the project. I begin by discussing the innovations of Eric Hobsbawm (1983a) and Louis Althusser (1986[1971]) before transitioning to critiques of their work and a more general discussion of historical discourse.

In the 1980s, Eric Hobsbawm (1983a) introduced what appeared to be a relatively novel concept of history and tradition into academic discussions. His notion of *invented traditions* provided new ways to think of how social actors produce history. Drawing on studies of European history, Hobsbawm (1983a) cast invented traditions as formalized or ritualized behaviors instituted by individuals (usually possessing some degree of governmental authority) that create a sense of continuity with the past. According to Hobsbawm (1983a:9), since the industrial revolution invented traditions have served to establish cohesion within communities, legitimize political institutions and authority, and inculcate belief and value systems. Hobsbawm, thus, conceives some traditions as actively created, but generally only by those who hold significant political capital. By

definition, invented traditions are opposed to other apparently authentic traditions or customs, produced and maintained by the masses. Hobsbawm (1983b) goes on to present examples of how the nineteenth century European invention of tradition served as a mechanism for governments to create citizens and subjects. The radical political and economic changes that accompanied the rise of democracy and the industrial revolution demanded a stronger link between the masses and the state. Officials achieved this link in France, for example, by instituting a system of primary education (“...a secular equivalent of the church...”), inventing public ceremonies such as Bastille Day, and producing public monuments (Hobsbawm 1983b:271). Such institutions, celebrations, and features in public places combined to produce a sense of social identity and continuity with the past.

Hobsbawm’s argument about the production of state subjects resembles structural Marxist Louis Althusser’s (1986[1971]) thesis on the relations among ideology, subjectivity, and a process that he calls interpellation. As Althusser uses them in unique ways, these terms requires definition. Central to Althusser’s (1986[1971]:241) argument is his definition of ideology: “Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” Ideology is not constituted by ideas; in fact it is something that materializes in the apparatuses of the state, physical bodies such as schools, churches, and courtrooms. Through these apparatuses, ideology imposes a false consciousness on individuals, producing them as subjects of the state. This imposition of ideology on subjects occurs through the process of interpellation: “...*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects...*” (1986[1971]:245, original emphasis) Althusser gives a tangible example of this

interpellation: a police officer hailing individuals in the street: “Hey, you there!” (1986[1971]:245). In their virtually unavoidable response, the police officer’s statement produces the hailed individuals as subjects of the state.

I argue that the imaginary histories invoked by Hobsbawm’s invented traditions can be loosely understood as a type of Althusserian ideology. Public monuments and ceremonies, like the school (which Althusser regards as a central “ideological state apparatus”) hail individuals into understanding the state, the relations of production, *and histories* in specific ways. Comparing several European nation-states, Hobsbawm (1983b) identifies distinct apparatuses that are the materialization of specific imposed histories. Critical to both of these arguments is the notion that such histories or material conditions of ideology imposed by authorities do not represent some sort of underlying reality. This, of course, represents a typical Marxian critique, and dichotomization of the superstructure and the infrastructure. It serves my purposes to selectively retain parts of these arguments, in correspondence with the critiques that I describe below. Adopting a more poststructural approach, I understand both history and individuals as socially constituted and negotiated aspects of discourse.

Many critics, often of a poststructural mold, have recently challenged Hobsbawm’s dichotomy of real and imagined histories. For example, historical anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (1991:12) has stated that,

...if any history is invented, all history is invented. We should not view one kind of tradition as more invented than others, although its bearers may be more powerful and therefore more capable of enforcing its reproduction among disenfranchised classes—a different issue.

If all traditions are invented, then the way social actors imbue certain practices with a sense of authenticity or historicity becomes a matter of political negotiation. Nicholas

Dirks, for example, (1990) links the anthropological notion of “tradition” to the colonial imposition of a universalizing modernity, and a concomitant dichotomization of practices into modern and traditional. Thus, by understanding certain traditions as real, as opposed to invented, we fall into a colonialist trap that privileges imposed state structures, or apparatuses. But this does not mean that we need to reject all of Hobsbawm’s argument. In fact, the emphasis on invention articulates well with much of recent anthropological and critical scholarship. “Invention” does not imply that histories, traditions, or cultures are, in any sense, inauthentic or false. Rather, in a phenomenological spirit, it casts social actors as creatively making the world for themselves. In this sense the process of “invention” has been naturalized (Thomas 1997, Wagner 1975). Such critiques resonate strongly with or build on Foucault’s (1972:21) rejection of “tradition” as an historical concept that misleadingly emphasizes temporal continuity and the search for origins, rather than rupture and transformation.

Similarly the notion of Althusserian ideology as a sort of false consciousness constituted by the process of interpellation begs critique. Althusserian interpellation relies on a dichotomy of the state and the subject. According to Althusser (1986[1971]), the state and the subject are relationally constituted and the former prevents the latter from understanding inequities built into the relations of production. Science and technologies studies scholar John Law (2000, 2002) has presented an illustrative critique of ideology, while retaining and extending the concept of interpellation. Law explains how ideology relies on a distinction between consciousness (or “performance,” as Law states) and reality. In the same way that we can collapse all traditions into a category of invented traditions, we can understand ideology (or consciousness) and truth (or material

conditions of existence) as indistinguishable. But, as Law (2000:15) maintains, the notion of interpellation remains politically useful because it entails a commitment to embodiment and, as Law states, an insistence on obviousness. To say that interpellation is committed to embodiment is to present the body as something prior to subjugation by the state and, in a move that builds on Foucault (1977, 1978), as an effect of social, or sociomaterial, relations. Second, by retaining an insistence on obviousness Law claims that interpellation causes a body to become a subject without any process of rational decision-making. Upon being hailed, the individual immediately recognizes itself as a subject. These are reasonably useful qualifications of interpellation.

Mayanist Quetzil Castañeda (2004) has similarly incorporated a reformulated notion of interpellation into his work. He combines interpellation with Foucault's notion of "governmentality." In fact, Castañeda (2004:52) even reads, or "hypothesizes," (Maya) ethnicity as one mode of governmentality: ". . . ethnicity-governmentality is the strategy by which a public sphere of polity is created in between the state and the social." While this is a laudable attempt to redress the problem of essentialism, it still seems to rely on a singular opposition (even if it is a scalar opposition) between the state and the masses. Castañeda's "public sphere" does not appear to reference Habermas' (1989) site of public discussion and negotiation, but, instead, a quasi-political relation between the public and the state. His rereading of interpellation casts the masses as having a form of agency in which they can pose resistance to the state, possibly in the form of interpellation. I prefer Law's (2000) application of interpellation because it more articulately demonstrates how the concept can be used to describe relations among many

constituencies of persons and things. It eschews the unidirectional or bidirectional formulations of interpellation in favor of a broader relationist usage.

Law extends the concept beyond vocal interactions to include non-human social agents. We can be interpellated by stop signs, acts in a patron saint parade, or, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (2004:113) recent usage, photographs. These material aspects of the world have a type of agency, in that their sensory experience causes subjects to immediately understand their identities or subjectivities in new ways. Simultaneously the objects are made in the process of recognition; the knowing subject and the known object constitute each other. Ultimately, I find it useful to incorporate the concept, in Law's extended usage, for two reasons: it provides a way to understand one type of effect produced by relations between people and things; and it reflects a moment of immediately imposed recognition of identity, which complements and contrasts with the continuous process of active identity negotiation.

Similar conceptions of material objects as socially active have emerged among anthropologists concerned with social relations and materiality (Gell 1988, Strathern 1988). The recent appearance of life history or cultural biographical approaches to discussing objects within the fields of archaeology and material culture studies also demonstrates concern with how persons and objects constitute each other (e.g. Gosden and Marshall 1999, Holtorf 2002, Kopytoff 1986). These perspectives (esp. Holtorf 2002) draw actively from a wide range of literature, bringing together social archaeology, cultural anthropology, and science and technology studies. Much of this work can be read as an extension of Foucault's (1977, 1978) poststructuralist project examining the way bodies are made into subjects. The collective project of scholars such as Strathern

(1988), Law (2000, 2002), and Holtorf (2002) has been the examination of the production of objects through social relations, rather than solely subjects.

It is a common mistake to understand the practices complicit in this production of subjects as “discourse” or “discursive formations” in a Foucauldian sense. But this is a conflation of Foucault’s (1970, 1972) early structuralist concern with uncovering the logic of relations among signs or representations, or “discourses,” and Foucault’s (1977, 1978) later concern with power-knowledge and bio-power, or the production of subjects. In a somewhat anti-Foucauldian move to make explicit what *The Archaeology of Knowledge* had left intentionally vague, Sawyer (2002) has discussed the frequent reference to Foucault when “discourse” is used to mean the social practices by which subjects are produced. Sawyer (2002) goes on to argue that such contemporary usage of “discourse,” designating systems of signs that emerge through language and practice, producing types of subjectivity, developed out of a combination of structural Marxism, especially Althusser’s (1986[1971]) concept of ideology, and semiology, especially Lacan’s (1968) appropriately broadened application of the term. While Sawyer (2002) opposes the structural Marxism of Althusser and the loose structuralism of (early) Foucault, these two authors are often read as complementary sources (e.g. Castañeda 2004, Law 2000). My application of “discourse” falls in line with Sawyer’s (2002) usage.

In this work, I am specifically concerned with historical discourses, or with how individuals produce and negotiate historical knowledges. The experience of events, statements, and objects may interpellate individuals into conceiving the past in specific frameworks. These same people may actively contest such experiences and construct

histories for themselves. This work gives a preliminary account of how historical construction takes place through Nahulingo public events, oral narratives, and a museum. If the moment of interpellation hails people into a discourse or particular form of consciousness, how is this discourse initially constructed and how does it transform in the Nahulingo public sphere? Foucault gives excellent examples of discursive formations that characterize periods of European history, but I want to invoke a less particular and more generally applicable social process, which Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966:16-36) calls *bricolage*.

In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss incorporates the French term ‘bricolage’ to base a discussion of mythical thought. He poses the creation of myth as a form of bricolage, loosely defined as the process by which persons use earlier ends to play the part of later means, converting the signified into the signifying (Lévi-Strauss 1966:21). In other words, the *bricoleur* utilizes the remains of structures, the material and conceptual odds and ends at hand, and transforms the structures in the process. Understanding how the event of interpellation and the process of bricolage help frame questions about history- and community-thinking entails more deeply problematizing the notion of history and its relation to memory and materiality.

Ben-Amos and Weissberg (1999) describe the intellectual trajectory of the subjects *history* and *memory*. They begin in the explicitly “historical” nineteenth century when the emergence of a disciplinary history functioned to counter the sense of a lost social memory (Ben-Amos and Weissberg 1999:11). As it emerged in academic form, history became associated with the public domain, manifest objectively in written documents, while memory became relegated to the subjective, private domain. They

proceed by tracing the study of memory through the individualistic, psychological theories of philosopher Henri Bergson, to the emphasis on collective memory put forth by Maurice Halbwachs, a student of both Bergson and Emile Durkheim. Halbwachs' (1980[1950]) conceptions of history and memory resonate strongly with Foucault's discussion of continuities and discontinuities. Halbwachs links history with written text and collective memory with language and beliefs. Furthermore, Halbwachs associates memory with the invocation of similarities and continuities, while his notion of history relies on discontinuities and difference. Thus collective recollections change in correspondence to each society's politics of identity and belief systems. Roy Connerton (1989:5) has argued that social memory, as performed and most easily identified in commemorative ceremonies, relies on a notion of the, "...inertia in social structures..." To return to Lévi-Strauss (1966), this inertia or structural transformation, which is invoked as a continuity or tradition, has as its material foundation the continuous, dynamic process of bricolage.

Richard Parmentier (1987) sketches a semiotic framework for understanding the concept of history. He states,

I take history to be a universal cultural category differentially manifest in societies, in which the relationship between past, present, and future states of a society is expressed by signs in various media which are organized by locally valorized schemes of classification. (Parmentier 1987:4-5)

He subsequently explains that the English word "history," glosses three distinct meanings: historical events which happened in the past; historical records used to construct knowledge; and historical discourse, or narratives and representational devices that depict the past within political frameworks of the present (Parmentier 1987:5).

Understanding history in these terms opens areas for academic inquiry around notions of

time, maintenance of material evidence, and the range of representational media that affect historical consciousness. In this work, I am particularly concerned with historical discourse, or the relationship between contemporary identity politics and the representation of the past. Parmentier (1987:11) presents the study of historical discourse as a topic of inquiry primarily concerned with classes of signs, which are physically manifest representational media. As I began to explain above, my usage of “discourse” includes embodied social practices which can be understood as performances of historical consciousness. This is a somewhat broader sense than Parmentier’s semiotic usage, but the spirit behind the word remains the same.

If historical discourse takes place through physical media, then it can be circulated, negotiated, and disputed. Michael Herzfeld (1991) has offered a lucid ethnography of a Greek town, centered on such negotiation and articulation of multiple pasts, placing “history” and its relation to “identity” under a critical lens. Herzfeld chronicles how residents of a Cretan town respond to the imposition of nationalist history on their community. This nationalist history converts lived places into “traditional neighborhoods” and “archaeological monuments,” within the framework of what Herzfeld (1991:6-10) calls “monumental time,” or well-delineated periods that encapsulate entire clearly defined identities. This local response takes many forms ranging from accommodation of the materialized state history to the development of very different forms of historical consciousness. The rhetoric of monumental time is differentially appropriated and invoked, a surface texture within which multiple interpretations and conceptions of time may be embedded. Struggles that superficially appear to concern property and maintenance or destruction of monumentalized

architecture, turn out to have a foundation in debates over the control of history.

Ultimately, the negotiation and circulation of histories cannot be understood in terms that simplistically oppose the state and the masses. Negotiations and conflicts over objects and history play out within each of these constituencies (Herzfeld 1991).

This concept of *circulation* has played a critical role in social theory through the course of the last two decades. The circulation of materialities including commodities (Appadurai 1986), print media (Anderson 1991), and scientific texts or “inscriptions” (Latour 1987) have each become central topics for question of the creation and negotiation of value and knowledge, communities and nations. Specific types of objects constitute the materiality of historical discourse: forms such as archaeological artifacts and inscribed texts, including both “primary” and “secondary” documents. Like commodities, these things travel through networks and map the contours of communities. Appadurai (1986:57) insists that we understand the link between exchange and value of circulating objects, especially commodities, as constituted by politics, understood broadly as, “relations, assumptions and, contests pertaining to power...” He details the multiple forms of such politics: “...the politics of diversion and display; the politics of authenticity and authentication; the politics of knowledge and ignorance; the politics of expertise and sumptuary control; the politics of connoisseurship and of deliberately mobilized demand” (Appadurai 1986:57). Herzfeld (1991:10) reads the monumentalization of homes and buildings by the state as a particular form of Appadurai’s political *diversion*, wherein there emerges an enhancement of value only for those who accept the official form of historicity.

With corollary emphases of political forms, Anderson (1991) has argued that the circulation of print culture at the beginning of the nineteenth century can be understood as the principle mechanism for the construction of national identities in many modern nation-states, including most of Latin America. But, as should be clear from my overview of Salvadoran history, the relationship between the delineation of a sovereign nation-state and the construction of a Salvadoran national identity has proven unsteady. Salvadoran history could probably be held up as another counter-example to or qualification of Anderson's thesis, a place where provincial identities remained largely contradictory to the invoked nation-state until late in the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century (see Castro-Klarén and Chasteen 2003). The civil war of the 1980s and the continuing, if muffled, political tension speaks to the multiplicity of voices and national discordance.

As I demonstrate through the sections of this work, social identities and corollary histories in Nahulingo form and reform through social performances and negotiations. Fernandez's (2003) application of Locke's "emergent qualities" may shed some light on how such histories and identities emerge in places and through actions. "Emergent qualities" is a term that describes the moments in which multiple systems of signs converge to convert spaces into meaningful places and bodies into subjects of discourse. This process, which Fernandez describes with the metaphor of "architectonics," occurs in a conceptual space somewhere between the immediate moment of interpellation, and the constructive process of bricolage. It exists in a system of social relations between the individual and the society. In fact, in his description of the Mina and their conversion of spaces into meaningful places, Fernandez (2003:200) draws out the connection between

bodies and places. To extend Roy Wagner's (1991) tropic imagery, the body and types of places, like the Mina ritual arena, exist in holographic or fractal relationships. The ritualized place subsumes the body as an introjection, and simultaneously exists as a projection of body image. These perspectives have successfully applied intersubjective relationism, which rejects the opposition of individual and society, a function of western ideologies and jurisprudence (Wagner 1991:159).

In this section, I have provided an overview of the important theoretical perspectives that inform my work. I have summarized and integrated significant perspectives describing the creation of subjects and histories, with particular emphasis on historical discourse. In the following synthetic chapters, I describe intersubjective practices which can be understood in terms of interpellation, emergent qualities, and bricolage. I emphasize the circulation of objects and people and begin to illustrate processes of historical discourse in Nahulingo.

### **Methods**

As a preliminary exploratory project, I informally and flexibly structured my fieldwork and goals. Primarily, I aimed to introduce myself to the community, and participate in Nahulingo's daily social life. I appropriated a multisited research strategy (Marcus 1995). The central research site remains this and other texts, inscriptive translations of social experience. Other sites are both spatial and conceptual, and include the public plaza and streets of Nahulingo, the historical memory of community members, the local and national museums, the United States news, the website of the Salvadoran government agency CONCULTURA, and the anthropological literature. This multisited approach has permitted me to begin to understand the ways in which certain concepts of progress, history, and indigeneity circulate to create senses of community identity.

In Nahulingo, the basic strategies that produced the ideas in this work are the following: participating in social interactions, recording unstructured interviews with community members, and photographing and recording public events. I facilitated my social interaction with members of the community by spending part of every day in the local Casa de la Cultura, or CONCULTURA office. I also spent time every day in the public space of the plaza or the basketball court and adjacent food stand. Through this public presence I befriended a handful of Nahulingüenses, such as Arturo Garcia<sup>4</sup>, with whom I subsequently interacted with on a nearly daily basis.

I conducted eight single interviews with one person each, two interviews with one person, and one interview with two people, for a total of ten interviews. Four of the ten total interviews took place in the Casa de la Cultura office. The remainder took place in peoples' homes or public places. I solicited five interviewees, and the other five asked me to interview them. The issues treated in the interviews varied dramatically. I offered some minimal structure to the thoughts and representations offered by the interviewees by generally explaining that I was doing a project on concepts of local history. I also typically asked what the interviewees associated with the "indigenous" and what the associated with certain features of the social landscape, such as the plaza, ceiba, and church.

The third distinguishable strategy was the documentation of public performances and events. In cooperation with the mayor's office I photographed and recorded two major events: the inauguration of the local museum; and the celebration of Nahulingo's transition from *pueblo* to *villa*. I also photographed a variety of events that occurred

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<sup>4</sup> In order to protect the identities of informants, all names included in this document are pseudonyms.

throughout the patron saint festival. I have used these photographs as a basic medium to spur my own memory of these events and extrapolate on the ideas that I first recorded in my field notes.

### CHAPTER 3 PLACE AND PERFORMANCE

Once there was a young boy who tended a field for his father. One day, along came a man on a horse. He did not see the boy and stopped to relieve himself along the path. His horse started to run away and the boy corralled it, returning it to the master.

The man asked the boy what he was doing in the field. The boy told the man that he was tending crops for his father: planting and pulling weeds. The man, surprised that the boy was alone in the field, asked why he didn't have an umbrella and what he would do if it rained. The boy responded that there were houses nearby that he could go to or that he could protect himself from the water under a tree. The man continued to ask questions.

"Well, don't you need a machete to get around and cut through the underbrush?" the man asked.

"No, the boy responded. "I can walk anywhere I need to or use a stick from a tree."

The man asked, "well, don't you need to go to school?"

The boy answered, "Sometimes I go. But it's very expensive; you have to buy books and notebooks and pencils. So, no I don't need to go to school."

"Well," the man continued, "don't you need money to buy candy or toys?"

Again the boy responded, "My father gives me one coin a week and with that I buy everything that I need."

Seeing that the field boy had everything, the man mounted his horse and rode away.

--Don Fernando de Jesús Garcia, June 24, 2004

The morning of June 24<sup>th</sup>, Don Fernando de Jesús Garcia left his house, adorned with a pair of brown dress pants, a white collared shirt, and a baseball cap. Like many other mornings, he patiently trekked down the Segunda Calle Poniente, toward the Casa de la Cultura office. After arriving at the office and speaking briefly with the local cultural events coordinator, he stopped to tell me a story. Like most of my interactions with Don Fernando, this one went unrecorded; I have paraphrased it above. He related a

sort of parable, titled “the philosopher who didn’t know it.” The tale presents a young boy who tends a field alone, a seemingly deprived child. To the contrary, the boy is happy with what he has, a sort of minimalist satisfaction. Don Fernando made clear that the story was allegorical. The moral, so to speak, is that everyone should be happy with what they have. Where the man on the horse sees the life of the boy as lacking, the boy characterizes his own life as full.



Figure 2. A food stand on the corner of Segunda Calle Poniente and Primera Avenida Norte, Nahulingo, El Salvador. Don Fernando de Jesús Garcia, leaning against the electric pole, gazes into the park. In the background, employees of the municipal mayor’s office and the Casa de la Cultura prepare for the inauguration of a local museum.

In a sense, this “be happy with what you have” attitude contrasts sharply with the sentiments of many younger Nahulingüenses with whom I interacted regularly. Unlike other informants, Don Fernando rarely complained about anything. He has traveled to

the United States, but does not express envy. Many characterize themselves as poor or lacking, in need of something. This comes to the surface readily because I am from the United States, which they do regard as *el norte*, a land of promise and opportunity.

### **The Disco Móvil**

This moment of social history and this fact of social structure have to be firmly grasped if we are to appreciate the moral nature and social significance of the sentiments that underlie peasant-worker existence: the history is one of enclosures, barbed wire, sugarcane, and hunger. (Taussig 1980:92)

When I arrived in El Salvador, a new friend described the nation-state as a “land of contrasts.” In my two months in Nahulingo, I began to cultivate an understanding of what that may have meant to her. Don Fernando’s optimistic attitude deeply contrasts with members of a younger generation, including his grandson, Arturo. Here, I will give a brief example of how the “contrasts” of attitude and exclusion manifest in Nahulingo public performance. Through providing a textual glimpse of a local ceremony or performance, the *fiestas patronales*, or patron saint festival, I offer the reader an opportunity to understand the social impact of exclusion and its situation and effect on concepts of place in Nahulingo, El Salvador. I have excerpted the following directly from my field notes:

The *fiestas patronales* began here last night [July 18, 2004], with the official crowning of the queen. After the crowning there was another *discoteca móvil* (mobile disco), which is a temporary structure erected in front of the municipality office. They played dance music at an extraordinary volume. I paid the three dollar entry but only stayed for about half an hour. At that point my ears could no longer tolerate the intense reverberations. The music was so loud that my shirt was shaking. Even back at the CBI (150 meters away) the sound was incredible and the reverberations shook loose objects. It’s notable that the vast majority of people who lingered about the plaza during the crowning did not enter the mobile disco, almost certainly due to the entry fee. Many stood at the fence and watched as music videos played on a huge screen and the queen(s) began to dance under the psychedelic disco lights.

I think that this exclusion is intentional. It seems like a means to elevate certain individuals at the expense of the masses. By no means are the people on the other side of the fence marginalized. But it is difficult not to sympathize with them, as they grasp the fence and stare into the disco. This discourse of exclusion plays off of a variety of social themes. Unquestionably, there are colonial undertones here, which (also) reverberate through the whole festival. It's a festival based in Catholicism, and (as witnessed today) it incorporates a significant amount of Catholic imagery, mixed with representations of local *brujeria* (witchcraft) and international politics. The act of "crowning" is drawing an explicit connection between the community and its Spanish forebears. And if "crowning" is a Spanish or colonial act, then we can begin to see the *disco* as a place which represents an upper class, a class with explicit connections to Spain and nobility. In metonymic imitation of the historic division of labor, the fence separates the *patrones* from the *peones*, the (hacienda) owners from the laborers, the upper class from the lower, and, significantly, the urban from the rural...The whole notion of a disco mimics urban, upper-class Latin American nightlife. The *campesinos* don't go to discotheques. That's the territory of the middle and upper classes, who are more associated with Spanish predecessors than the rural *indios* or—in the common diminutive form—*inditos*, which is to say "little indians."

Notably, the event also has an official feel. The disco structure is constructed on the street in front of the municipality office, and the lower floor of the municipality is opened to the attendees. The candidates for the queen and the queen of the Casa de la Cultura sat dining a typical chicken dish before getting up and becoming the first group of people to start dancing. The queen and candidates are high school students, maybe 14-17 years old. For me it wouldn't be appropriate to call this a sort of "coming of age" festival, through it also has that sort of inflection. It's overshadowed, however, by the notion that the municipality is initiating a new generation of young leaders. Of course, the leaders that are paraded around and crowned during the *fiestas patronales* are all young women. . . . [M]otifs evoked in the parade also toy with notions of femininity (and sexuality).

The *disco móvil* transformed typically public space into a regulated field of semi-public social action. Both the contiguous mayor's office and the police officers controlling entrance legitimated this exclusion. The queen of the Casa de la Cultura and the candidates in the school-run local queen election entered the disco first. Accompanied by Ernesto Diaz, director of the Casa de la Cultura, as they left the crowning ceremony and entered the disco, these young women represent a future of economic and social stability (Figure 4). In his editorial in the patron saint festival program, the mayor, a member of the conservative ARENA party, commented on the

significance of cultivating the contemporary youth in order to ensure a progressive future: “[t]oday’s Nahulingo, laborious and enthusiastic, struggling with this age and against natural phenomena, but with clear vision towards the future, though progress took the delayed train; a batch of young professionals begin to mold a new elite.”



Figure 3. The *disco móvil*. The photo is taken from the outside looking in. While it permits their gaze to enter and does not constrain the voluminous music, the fence in the foreground offers a barrier to those who cannot afford the three dollar entry, creating a crowd of spectators.

Molding a new elite involves parading and celebrating a handful of youth, exemplified by the queen contests and their public exhibition, while publicly ignoring or neglecting the majority. The fence embodies this neglect, a mechanism of socio-spatial differentiation. The barrier articulates at a significant place in the field of social action, acting as both a symbol and mechanism of exclusion. It interpellates social actors,

hailing their recognition of social difference. In my interpretation, the fence reinforces a conception of social differentiation in material form, evoking reactions which uphold a social division and oppression between a class of elite with access to the social capital of the disco and a class without such access. It resembles the fence that Taussig (1980) references in the quote included in my section's header. El Salvador of the 2000s is not Colombia of the 1970s, and the peasant-worker existence is less apparent. But enclosures, barbed wire, sugarcane, and hunger remain. This fence too enforces and softly unveils the muffled oppression that continues to plague rural El Salvador.

During an interview, Alberto Fernandez, one of the mayor's in-laws, emphasized such exclusionary tactics, calling attention to the economic rather than the material barrier. He seemed eager to discuss the festival, and I asked whether it had changed much during the course of his life: "[n]ow it has changed. Now it has changed. Now the dances are paid. Drinks, paid. It's not like it was before..." He continued by discussing changes in the content of the patron saint festival and the saint's week festival, while periodically characterizing the contemporary festival as a more socially and economically closed event than it had been in the past. This idealization of the past events and concurrent relativization of the summer, 2004 event revealed a frustration with specific mobilizations of the sign "festival." Fernandez expressed a desire for using the past to refigure the present and future.

Reading the event in a more profound historical scope, social regulation of events conducted during the patron saint festival incorporates themes of a factional past.



Figure 4. Ernesto Diaz escorts the Casa de la Cultura queen from the crowning ceremony in the community center to the *disco móvil*.

Through costumes and ceremonies social actors selectively incorporate motifs drawn from beauty pageants and coronation events (Figure 4). Conceived through the mayor's comments, these young women became unified as a collective synecdoche of the progressing community. This is a preliminary assessment: I have not spent enough time in the community or witnessed the organization of disco themes and places to assess how memories or conceptions of the past are incorporated and negotiated.

At this point, I have begun to elaborate on the significance of social exclusion and differentiation as enacted in and around the semi-public place of the *disco móvil*. Obvious methods of social exclusion and differentiation offer a compelling space for interpretation. I now transition to the interpretation of another patron saint festival public

ceremony through which community members enmeshed themselves in layered structures of inclusion and exclusion, the parade.

### **The Parade**

In what interest or interests does the necessity to keep up this game of difference—India is “India” and the United States is the “United States,” and the two are as different as can be—emerge, today? (Spivak 1996:268)

In this section, I translate an act performed during a Salvadoran patron saint parade. I use my memory and conception of this aspect of the parade to base a discussion of political and community identities in Nahulingo, El Salvador. Among the varied acts of this July, 2004 Nahulingo parade, a cadre of youths marched through the streets dressed as Salvadoran and U.S. soldiers (Figure 5). A battalion surrounded a converted oxcart depicting the fall of Osama Bin Laden. Remembering and sharing my thoughts on the act, I hope to spur questions pertaining to contemporary historicity, politics, and progressivism. In broad scope, I read the event as a reflection and refiguration of narratives structuring current and historic colonialism. Specifically, I organize this section around two questions: (1) How did the act incorporate contemporary political rhetoric and imaginings of transnationalism that challenge or reconfigure local and national identities; and (2) how did it situate this conception of contemporary politics within memories or narratives constituting colonial and postcolonial historical and religious parade themes? I conclude by drawing connections between the political rhetoric and historical conceptions and questioning how the act incorporated and refigured contemporary narratives of progress. Personally, I suggest that specific remembered objects and events, such as the religious figure of *Santiago*, which I describe later, are centers that permit the temporary maintenance of community identity, figuring the contours of inclusion and exclusion.

In Salvadoran communities, such as Nahulingo, annual parades represent critical components of patron saint festivals. Primarily under the organizational aegis of the local school system, the parade of July, 2004 transformed the Nahulingo streets into a place where prominent social themes became embodied and performed by youths. Many of the motifs and themes incorporated by parade participants had certain shocking effects, interpellating the audience into specific ideologies. They forced spectators, including myself, to take positions on predominant social and political conflicts, and to understand these issues within simplified conceptual frameworks. While some young Salvadorans marched the streets of Nahulingo in school uniform, harmoniously playing Salvadoran music on brass instruments, others acted out gruesome imagined scenes of Middle East conflict (Figure 5). Yet others celebrated, or perhaps flaunted, queer sexualities for a predominantly conservative public audience. Before I transition to explicit interpretation I want to provide my own expressive depiction of the performance.

Amidst satirical, cross-dressing baton-twirlers and masked, wigged grim reapers bearing fly-ridden cow horns on bamboo poles, the camouflaged troops emerged from the Christopher Columbus Schooling Center. Dotted the Nahulingo street, they loosely converged on the showpiece of their act: a like-wise camouflaged vehicle supporting the figurative corpse of Osama Bin Laden. Signs adorned the leaf-covered converted oxcart: “the capture;” “Bin Laden is falling;” “our Cuscatlan Battalion is trapping Bin Laden the terrorist;” “death is birth.” I sat on a doorstep removed from the walled-in school ground by a crowded street, discussing punk rock and Iroquois influence on the American constitution with a Salvadoran friend. The emergence of this re-formed oxcart literally

brought me to my feet. My first experience with Latin American parades, I felt unnerved and surprised.



Figure 5. A group of masked Nahulingo youth mobilize conceptions of Salvadoran and U.S. soldiers, reforming an oxcart into a military vehicle, during the 2004 Nahulingo patron saint festival.

While I cannot translate my personal shock and uneasy fascination with this and other parade acts, I can begin to address the networks of historical and political knowledges, which may have influenced this particular style of performance. Mayanists Gary Gossen (1986) and Victoria Bricker (1973, 1981) have provided conceptual foundations for historicizing contemporary festivals in Mesoamerican communities. Gossen (1986) describes a highland Chiapas Tzotzil-speaking Maya community's "Festival of Games," which addresses and inverts the normative themes of social life. As Gossen details, the festival simultaneously celebrates and parodies ethnic identity and

historical events of national and international scope. The festival corresponds to the Maya calendar and participants incorporate symbols that carry both Maya and Christian referents. Gossen emphasizes that the festival occurs outside and even counter to the institutionalized church ceremonies and saints: “It is a time of barbarism, of demons, precultural monkeys, armed warfare with Mexicans, Guatemalans, and Spaniards, a time of abandon and suspension of rules and ordinary behavior” (Gossen 1986:229). Further, Gossen understands the Festival of Games as a complex and condensed reliving of the cycle of Maya history, containing stories of creation and conflict with outside forces. It is an enactment and “macroanalysis” at the same time, with built in commentary on every discernable social domain.

Gossen’s (1986) work clearly builds on the pioneering structuralist approach of Bricker (1981). Describing the Carnival rituals of the Maya communities Chamula, Chenalho, and Zinacantan, Bricker (1981: chap. 10) attempts to boil structure out of the seeming hodgepodge comprising public historical drama. Bricker (1981:135) asserts that the Carnival events in each of these communities telescope time, presenting multiple events of ethnic conflict as inevitable instantiations of the cyclical Maya calendar and oral tradition, altering historical conception through bricolage. For example, in the community of Chenalho, a singular set of symbols represents seven historical events:

- (1) the Passion of Christ, (2) the wars between Christians and Moors, (3) military campaigns against the Lacandon Indians in retaliation for their raids on Spanish settlements during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, (4) the Cancuc revolt of 1712, (5) the French intervention of 1862-1867, (6) the Chamulan rebellion of 1867-1870, and (7) the mistreatment of Indians by Ladinos. (Bricker 1981:135-6)

In a corresponding fashion the cast of persons who embody these Carnival events simultaneously depict multiple personages. For example, performers called “Blackmen” multiply play the roles of Moors, Turks, monkeys, and Frenchmen (Bricker 1981).

Many of the personages described by Bricker (1981) and Gossen (1986), including the Blackmen, played roles in the Nahulingo patron saint parade of July, 2004.

Due to the limitations of my initial field research project, I am unable to discern whether the Salvadoran parade entailed layered representations of the magnitude presented by Bricker (1981). The parade contained actors costumed and performing in styles similar to those in Chamula and Chenalho, including the Blackmen. Like the Blackmen described by Gossen (1986), the Nahulingo actors of this category traveled both in groups and as individuals spread throughout the parade. They seemed to merge with similar but different personages, including soldiers and punk rockers. To some degree it seems that these representations of ethnic conflict did discernibly entail the effect of telescoping described by Bricker (1981), though perhaps in lesser magnitude. Given the centrality of performing major events of ethnic conflict in the communities described by Bricker (1981), one might expect that the events of 1932 would feature prominently in the Nahulingo parade. I did not witness any obvious references to the events, and hypothesize that this absence is the effect of the continued salience of political factions. Unlike Gossen's (1986) and Bricker's (1981) presentations of Guatemalan and Chiapas Maya communities such as Chamula, Nahulingo remains politically divided by lines similar to those of the early twentieth century. Thus, the patron saint festival may have reflected sociopolitical cleavages as much as it reflected a sense of solidarity.

Whatever the case, the actors whom I have begun to describe were clearly not uniformly and homogeneously re-presenting Salvadoran soldiers. While they might even have had familial connections to the troops in Iraq, the historical and spatial contexts of

the Nahulingo parade disciplined the choice of materials and roles that they engaged. I begin by demonstrating how contemporary political rhetoric defines and delimits this style of parade performance. I concentrate on depictions that I think reflect challenges to unified national identities. I proceed to an examination of the potential impact of historical memories or conceptions of acceptable parade themes and styles on the enactment of the “fall of Bin Laden.”

The first rotation of 360 Cuscatlan Battalion soldiers departed for Iraq in August, 2003 (Associated Press 2003). One year later, and shortly after *my* departure from the Central American nation, the third rotation of the Cuscatlan Battalion left for Iraq. Since the initial battalion’s departure, until the authorship of this work, the nation-state has consistently maintained between 360 and 380 troops in Iraq. The Salvadoran government extended its military presence despite withdrawal troops by all other Latin American states. The Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Nicaragua followed Spain in ending their involvement in the war by August, 2004 (Gray 2004). At the behest of recently elected conservative ARENA party president Antonio Saca, El Salvador has continued to (re)place troops in Iraq; over 1100 have now served time there.

As I stated, the three Cuscatlan Battalions all served in Iraq. The youths’ depiction of the Battalion, however, incorporated both textual inscriptions mobilizing “Bin Laden,” and a costumed, handcuffed, towel-bearing, bearded actor (Figure 6). In concert with international political rhetoric constituting the “War on Terror,” the parade participants situated the Afghani al Qaida leader in an imagining of Iraq. Upon further examination, the soldiers’ national affiliation similarly deconstructs. The oxcart bore signs declaring the actors members of the Cuscatlan Batallion, but other costumed

soldiers wore shirts indicating their status as U.S. troops. I maintain that the blurring of seemingly static delineations of political domains reflects and propagates a collective Salvadoran imagining of transnational and historical conflicts that incorporates a telescoping effect. This is complicated by the fact that U.S. intervention in El Salvador and the nation's contemporary neo-colonial status blurs the boundary between what it means to be "Salvadoran" and "American."

Though the Reagan administration acted an instrumental role in supporting the repressive militia during the 1980s civil war, postwar reconstruction efforts have received significant funding from the American government. USAID and the Peace Corps have substantial presences in El Salvador. In 2002, the nation-state adopted the dollar as its official currency. All of these obvious and well known connections to the U.S. lead many Salvadorans to express that they are in a state of dependence. During my short stint in the town, a range of Nahulingüenses suggested that they perceived El Salvador to be a sort of American "colony."

In an Associated Press article published in U.S. newspapers at the beginning of May, a Salvadoran soldier stated that "our country came out of a similar situation as in Iraq 12 years ago, so people in El Salvador can understand what is happening here" (Gray 2004). This comment helps illustrate how Salvadorans link the civil war of the 1980s to the contemporary conflict in Iraq. Such a stated linkage helps naturalize their continued involvement in the Middle East. Simultaneously it telescopes a historical memory of war with the contemporary Iraqi intervention in much the same way that the parade actors may have combined and refigured conceptions of both conflicts through their costumes and artifacts.



Figure 6. Street actors in the patron saint parade included a representation of a captured Osama Bin Laden, under heavy surveillance.

El Salvador's neo-colonial status problematizes the notion of independent nation-states conceived as individual bodies constituting the world politic. The political state, as the dominant body of democratic capitalism and a fundamental lynchpin for organization of "modernity," has been challenged by many scholars, including Althusser and Appadurai. I assert that the blurred character of Salvadoran economic and political ties with other nation-states resembles a holographic (*sensu* Wagner 1991, 2001) conception

of sociopolitical scales: personal bodies, communities, and nation-states are imagined as structurally isomorphic on different scales of size. This resembles Bricker's (1981) metaphor of telescoped historical events: through a conception of time as cyclical, seemingly disparate events are united. Transnational neo-colonialism's blurring effect, like the shifts between acts in the spatialized parade, resonates profoundly with a conception of the subject as multiplicitous and complex. This applies equally to narrativized personal and political bodies. Maybe the parade structure exemplifies how narratives of the "nation-state," the "community," and the "self" deconstruct and emerge anew in Nahulingo. As I describe later, it is effective to read *Santiago* as the center of one conceived narrative structure of the parade and patron saint festival, a part of community and personal bodies.

I read the image and description of the Cuscatlan Batallian mock-up as a synecdoche for transnational political relations. As a part of the very process of nation-state's deconstruction, the mock-up exemplifies a challenge to essentialist national identity. Who do these Nahulingo youth re-present in their enactment of a military battalion? This is an exciting but significantly unanswerable question. There exists no singular and unproblematic referent of the act; nothing is opaquely signified. The complex web of rhetorics and conceptions that may have influenced this act should become clearer in the remainder of this section.

From my visual perspective, the distinction between parade actors representing soldiers and those representing other characters was unclear. The materials and knowledge available for parade actors to construct their costumes limited their abilities to present an original product of their fictive imaginations. My description of *this* Cuscatlan

Battalion ought to convey the manner in which historical and political themes are re-figured and combined in new ways with new materials, the effect of *bricolage*. The use of masks by youth playing the Cuscatlan Battalion helped naturalize this patron saint parade as a continuance of the historical practice of public drama. Military and folk parades draw on long histories in Spain and Latin America, and masks are central props (e.g. Bricker 1981). Many masks, celebrated as indigenous or historic artifacts, find their way into the glass boxes of museum displays (Figure 7). The use of masks and other artifacts embedded in historical memory of public performances may have helped legitimate or counter-act the macabre and deeply ironic character of the event.

As demonstrated by Gossen (1986) and Bricker (1973, 1981), Mesoamerican folk performances have consistently evoked colonialist and anticolonialist themes. In discussing the role of Santiago and other saints in festivals, folk theater scholar Max Harris has employed James Scott's (1990) notions of "public" and "hidden transcripts" (Harris 2000). The "Moors and Christians" and "Dance of the Conquest" performances combine indigenous traditions and costumes with Spanish enactments of the expulsion of the Moors from Spain (Bricker 1981, Harris 2000, Ricard 1932). Mexican and Central American productions have combined representations of the Christian-Moor conflict with that of the Spanish and the Aztec. This theme, at least the conflict between the Spanish Christians and Moors, is enacted throughout El Salvador during festivals, and may easily translate into the imperialist context of U.S. intervention in Iraq. Salvadoran actors politically attach themselves to the hegemonic state and become the colonizers, rather than the colony. The character of "Bin Laden," in the parade, becomes the othered



Figure 7. A historic wooden devil mask, associated with public theatre. The artifact is displayed in the Nahulingo Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum.

enemy. Telescoping time, the enacted historical conception of Islamic Moors figures into the contemporary staging of Islamic “terrorists.”

This imaginative merging of domains bounding the historic Moors and contemporary “terrorist” groups such as al Qaida may be locally reinforced by associations with the town’s patron saint, *Santiago Apóstel*. In Spain and Latin America, the signifier “*Santiago*” (“Saint James”) mobilizes conflicted histories and memories.

The saint represents both the Biblical Saint James and also *Santiago Caballero* (Saint James the Knight), the patron saint of the Spanish *Reconquista*. He is heralded as the leader of the Spanish forces who purged Spain of Moors. *Santiago Caballero* has even been projected into the Biblical past in a Mexican festival, defeating Pontius Pilate (Harris 2000:21).

Parade participants did not incorporate the local saints *Santiago Apóstel* and *Santiago Caballero* into the parade. Older community members carried *Santiago Caballero* through the streets during a distinct session of the patron saint festival, the *paseo*, or procession (Figure 8). I am not unproblematically reading the multivalent play of Latin American depictions of *Santiago* directly into the parade drama of Middle East conflict. But I suggest that we should entertain and probe influences between contemporary transnational politics of war and dependency, and the continued embrace of such multi-faced religious and historical figures. The unification of different historical events and political message creates an emergence of new political forms. Nahulingo's *Santiago Caballero* did not act out a defeat of youth depicting Osama Bin Laden. But I maintain that the use of such a militaristic figure, loosely associated with at least three imagined conflicts, may provide tacit support for El Salvador's linked arms with the imperialist United States. *Santiago* momentarily centers the structure; he is both within and without it. *Santiago* offers a structural coherence to the parade, without needing to show his face. His simultaneous presence and absence in the spatialized parade permits the internal play of signs, in the sense of Jacques Derrida (1967). This play, here imbued deeply with irony, holds significance because it contradistinguishes the parade from the formal religious ceremony of the procession.



Figure 8. The procession. Members of the Nahulingo Catholic Church carry religious icons depicting Santiago, Mary, and Jesus toward the church.

James Fernandez has noted this play of irony in distinguishing the parade and procession in northern Spain. Fernandez states that

In both cases of procession and parade the self is caught up in the greater whole attracted by the display of the significant other. The spectator is re-impressed, constrained, and loyally reconverted to expected allegiances by that display. Parades and processions are...moments of both constraint and conversion in the presence of the significant other, though there is much more constraint in the former and conversion in the latter; there is also more imposed sincerity in the latter and voluntary sincerity in the former. (1986:286-287)

Transposing this argument onto the context of Nahulingo is effective. In experiencing the dramatic depiction of events constituted by circulating sociopolitical rhetorics, audience members must create allegiances. At that moment, the capture of Osama Bin Laden is a central performance, offering the most hyperbolic “significant

other.” It mobilizes the political affiliations of the audience, creating allegiances and desires. It simultaneously reveals the instability of “nation-states.” This allegiance may help naturalize the oppressive conditions of colonialism.

But this punning display is also saturated with irony, and we do not have to take the performative allegiance seriously. The syntagmatic or linked quality of the parade acts underlies a sense of conversion. I mean that the spatial contiguity of acts within the parade connects previously independent memories and identities, the process described by Fernandez (2003) as an emergent quality. Perhaps the blurredness of the parade’s acts reflects a dis-ease with current narrative productions of western nation-states, democracies, and colonialisms. The captors of Bin Laden are, after all, monsters. Harris (2000) reads masks as critical artifacts that may seem irrelevant to the dominant performative message but actually introduce a resistant “hidden transcript” into the “public transcript.” Can I understand the use of grim reaper and gorilla masks by the battalion actors as revealing a “hidden transcript?” Certainly. Is it? Perhaps. Addressing whether actors perceive that their use of specific materials and refiguration of specific themes imbues the event with layered and contradictory meanings constitutes a hypothesis to be tested in future research.

CHAPTER 4  
NARRATIVE AND MEMORY

**Narrating Santiago and Exclusion**

*Santiago Caballero* offers an inroad into discussion of local history as presented through oral narrative (Figure 9). He embodies idiosyncratic significance for Nahulingo. But the Nahulingo presentations of *Santiago* also mimicked and played the structure of other mobilizations of the character. Town lore related to me by Ernesto Diaz, among others, maintained that in 1934 a deluge caused the two streams that represent the east and west town borders to nearly unite, almost flooding Nahulingo. Tellers of the story maintained that town residents removed the *Santiago Caballero* icon from the church and positioned him in the street between the two flooded areas. In some versions of the story, *Santiago Caballero* left the church on his own prerogative, without the aid of townspeople. Tellers claim that this (re)placement of *Santiago Caballero* caused the retreat of the waters, saving the town. Huezo also maintained that Nahulingüenses removed the *Santiago Caballero* icon from the church during the 1932 insurrection, carrying it around the town in order to protect the area from insurgent communism.

Stories of Santiago, beginning with the Biblical Saint James and continuing in Spain and the Spanish Americas today, fit within a long-standing allegory of social defense and exclusion. He is the sword bearer, cutting down all impediments to progress. *Santiago* has defeated Pontius Pilate, the Moors, the Aztecs, the Spanish, Nature, Communism, and probably myriad other Evils. The defeat of Osama Bin Laden even occurred during a festival held in his honor. But I must be cautious in making explicit

connections between these distinct historical events, especially comparing Spanish and American appropriations of Santiago.



Figure 9. *Santiago Caballero*. Nahulingo Catholics prepare *Santiago* for the climax of the procession, when they raise and touch him to the icon of Mary and Jesus.

Ethnographic projects among Maya groups in the Yucatán and Highland Guatemala have aptly illustrated appropriations of Santiago into local Maya cosmologies (Watanabe 1990, 1992). Mayanists Nancy Farriss (1984) and John Watanabe (1990, 1992), among others, have shown that during the early colonial period, Maya communities replaced their banished deities and fallen kings with Catholic saints. Rather than emphasizing the saints' roles in divine salvation, communities incorporated Catholic figures, such as Santiago Caballero, into local community-based devotions and rituals, affixing them with local individuality. Not just in effect, but in actuality, saints became community

members with local personages and histories, though saints with the same names occupy multiple communities. Yucatec and Highland Guatemalan Mayans have projected saints into communities' precolonial pasts and imbue them with Mayaness. The saints complement the religious roles of local ancestors and earth lords, who are comparable to ladino devils (Watanabe 1990). Devotional acts for the saints reflect a commitment to local reciprocity and moral accountability. In turn the saints protect the local territory, which they survey during the yearly procession.

How do local appropriations of saints in neighboring towns in El Salvador and Guatemala resemble Nahulingo's appropriation of Santiago? Given the paucity of ethnographic work in El Salvador, I cannot currently answer this question. Thus, rather than deriving definitive conclusions from this aspect of my preliminary work in El Salvador, I return to the messages presented by Watanabe and Fischer (2004) and reinforce the necessity of engaging a pluricultural ethnography that incorporates communities in lower Mesoamerica, especially western El Salvador. Concern with translocal meanings and identity politics in Mesoamerica has taken off in conjunction with the pan-Maya movement. Studies of indigenous communities should not end at the southern Guatemalan border. As I began to describe in my brief section on history, Salvadorans have engaged in a unique range of historical events that resemble and differ substantially from neighboring nation-states. This difference is mediated by the emerging participation of Salvadorans in transnational movements, and their engagement with circulated materials such as academic texts. Invocations of instrumentalist Maya identity gained force after the end of the Guatemalan civil war and have now entered El Salvador. How are these multisited expressions of communal identity differentially

appropriated and employed in Salvadoran contexts? Local expressions of indigeneity in Nahulingo are evident through narrativized memories and museum displays of indigenous materiality. But the manner in which these historical conceptions and identities converge and diverge with those enacted in other communities across the nation-state borders remains an unanswered and central question.

In the preceding chapter and this section I have discussed the possible impact of political rhetoric on local performance of the imperialist war in Iraq, and the manner in which this figures into a deep historical narrative of exclusion embodied by icons such as *Santiago*. Here I offer a final and powerful resonance between a conception of *Santiago* as the defender of Good and community, and a distinct enactment of progress through destruction of a radical other. In further interpretation and discussion, I would like to question how these conceptions fit within a broader framework of western progressivism. But now I want to refract<sup>1</sup> the lyrics of a song about Nahulingo's Santiago and excerpts from the Associated Press article about the Cuscatlan Battalion that I mentioned above.

A short monograph celebrating the town includes a chapter that valorizes a few significant residents of the last century. The section commemorating a man named Rogelio Cabrera Rivera includes a song that he wrote about the community. I offer a translation of the second half:

In July we celebrate the titular festival of the image that we have of a valiant soldier. Santiago is this valiant one, the leader of this town, and with his blessed sword he protects us all. All come together to celebrate his festival, the authorities,

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<sup>1</sup> I employ the notion of “refraction” as used by Sarah Arturoklin (1997) in her study of assisted conception, which resonates with Shanks’ (2004) and Pearson and Shanks (2001) textual formatting or style based on the trope catachresis (or “katachresis”). The technique involves the juxtaposition of previously isolated domains or ideas in order to expose the way in each of them are brought into being and naturalized. Placing distinct ideas or conceptions of the world into (syntagmatic) textual contiguity exposes differences and similarities in their ontological formulation. Here, I am specifically concerned with the commonality of formulations of social exclusion and radical otherness.

professors, and the rest of the town. And with this I leave you and end my song. I invite all to come venerate little Santiago. I invite all to come venerate little Santiago. (Fajardo 1993:158-159)

The May 4, 2004 Associated Press article glamorizes the valiance of the battalion unit leader, who, much like *Santiago Caballero*, drew his knife (depicted in bloody form in the corollary photograph), and courageously defeated the radical Muslim alterity:

One of his friends was dead, 12 others lay wounded and the four soldiers still left standing were surrounded and out of ammunition. So Salvadoran Cpl. Samuel Toloza said a prayer, whipped out his knife and charged the Iraqi gunmen.

In one of the only known instances of hand-to-hand combat in the Iraq conflict, Cpl. Toloza stabbed several attackers swarming around a comrade. The stunned assailants backed away momentarily, just as a relief column came to the unit's rescue.

"We never considered surrender. I was trained to fight until the end," said the 25-year-old corporal... (Gray 2004)

Just as Santiago manages to be within and without the parade, he manages to be an aggressor and a peace keeper. As demonstrated through the AP article, these Salvadoran soldiers accommodate a similar contradiction. Like those depicting them in Nahulingo, members of the Cuscatlan Battalion are characterized by such multiplicity. Denis Gray, the article's author, balances the gruesome scene of Toloza's aggression with emphasis that they are out to keep the peace. Both the article and the soldiers must satisfy multiple audiences. Gray (2004) states that,

The Salvadorans are eager to stress their role as peacekeepers rather than warriors, perhaps with an eye toward public opinion back home. Masked protesters last week seized the cathedral in the capital, San Salvador, demanding that President-elect Tony Saca pull the troops out of Iraq.

I am left wondering what *these* masks reveal and what they conceal.

### Indigeneity and Toponymy

Lauria-Santiago (2004) and Henrik Ronsbo (2004) have each addressed the historical and contemporary fluidity of indigenous identity in El Salvador. In examining indigenous “ethnodiscourse,” Ronsbo (2004) concludes that contemporary self-identification as *Indio* in El Salvador more actively invokes forms of rural labor than a deep historical imagining of continuity or sense of essential identity. He asserts that Salvadoran Indios are the “deportees of the ethnodiscourse” because they do not effectively assert a sense of national identity or articulate into transnational Mesoamerican indigenous movements (Ronsbo 2004:225). While it may be reasonable to generalize about the absence of a coherently imagined nation of Salvadoran Indios, I maintain that it is also useful to examine how social actors represent themselves and their ancestors as selectively or partially indigenous, maintaining a social memory of significant practices. Here I provide evidence from the domain of historical narrative.

Narrative representations of *Santiago*, like that offered by Ernesto Diaz, articulated the saint as a critical figure and symbol used to combine Precolumbian and Spanish belief systems. Diaz expressed that the indigenous residents of Nahulingo and Tacuzcalco accepted the saint and thus the religious practices of the Spaniards due to the material unification of the horse and the human. Diaz maintained that the use of animals as central idols for the Pipil and Maya led to the colonized subaltern’s acceptance of the new saints. Bricker (1981:5) describes the appropriation of Catholic symbols and their reinterpretation in terms that make sense to Mayans as one predominant means of Maya revitalization movements. Through the social mobilization of saint, indigenous and Catholic religiosities converged and re-formed. Diaz’s narrative expressed that indigenes

were drawn to Catholic religiosity through these animals, such as the horse upon which *Santiago* is mounted.

One can imagine that the *Santiago* horse conceals another “hidden transcript” of indigenous resistance to Catholic proselytism embedded deeply within. This significant creation of historical memory and narrative comes into being in a Salvadoran nation where the populace is grasping for a unified national identity after the end of the civil war. Such mobilization and conflict over the significance of this patron saint reflects a common trend to utilize such saints in struggles to express ethnic, national, and racial identities in nation-states where Catholicism is the prevalent religion (e.g. Bricker 1981; Johnson 1997; Rey 2002; Westerfelhaus and Singhal 2001; Watanabe 1992). Diaz suggests that the continued use of *Santiago Caballero* rather than the local *Santiago Apóstel* in the procession reflects such continued influence of indigenous religiosity. By mobilizing the central religious icon as an embodiment of resistance and a signifier of indigenous beliefs, Diaz and others imagine a complex past which can be celebrated in the present to refigure a nationalism opposing state domination.

In this section, I offer resonant examples of how conceptions of indigeneity are mobilized through historical memory and narrative in Nahulingo. The memories of town residents draw prominently on the theme of indigeneity. I focus on the representation of sexual regulation as a common historical memory which idealizes the historical community endogamy, implicitly critiquing the present as degraded. I proceed to suggest how toponymy plays a role in figuring historical conceptions of indigeneity. Maps and toponymy have played significant roles in cultural negotiations and redefinitions of places (e.g. Orlove 1991). These examples complementarily demonstrate how the

memories and imaginings of an indigenous past base desires for a different contemporary community.

Through interviews and social discussions, I regularly inquired about the local meanings of indigeneity, and opinions on contemporary or recent historical indigenous practices. Nahulingo is one of few Salvadoran towns where residents and advocates claim a deep indigenous history, reinforced by material remains and historical documents. This becomes evident through even a brief perusal of the new local museum.<sup>2</sup> However, nobody that I met proactively identified themselves as indigenous. In fact, it was common for Nahulingo residents to actively point out the “indigenous” character of neighboring towns, especially Izalco and Nahuizalco.

During discussions with community elders one significant characterization of historical indigenous identity emerged strongly: the regulation of sexuality and reproduction. Of the many practices loosely associated with indigeneity, such as outdoor markets and “traditional” clothing, several interviewees commented on one early twentieth century practice, the regulation of sexual intercourse by community leaders and household elders. The story tellers, often in a rather hushed tone, related how these leaders and elders either walked through the streets or announced within the household once or twice a month that it was proper for young fertile couples to copulate. Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2004) situate this practice within a discussion of indigenous village endogamy and patriarchy. They maintain that such patriarchal endogamy fostered women’s desires to have relations with ladino men, which aided the erosion of

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<sup>2</sup> The museum also distances the indigenous past through the use of typological time (*sensu* Fabian 1983) like that employed in many Latin American (and other) museum exhibits.

indigenous ethnic separatism. This perceived miscegenation augmented the pervasive and strong class tension, contributing to the 1932 peasant uprising.

Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2004:332-333) draw their discussion of this sexual regulation from the work of Alejandro Marroquín (1959), whose informants remembered a practice strikingly similar to what elderly Nahulingüenses related to me during summer, 2004:

In Panchimalco (an indigenous community south of San Salvador), the elderly informants of anthropologist Alejandro Marroquín recounted that in the early twentieth century, the community shared a belief that the 11<sup>th</sup> day following the start of a new moon was propitious for procreating health, strong bodies and that an earlier date in the lunar cycle would produce ‘cowardly men.’ Thus, according to Marroquín’s informants, on “*once luna*,” around nine o’clock, municipal authorities would walk the streets beating a drum and at intervals shouting: “Now is the time to conceive, gentlemen.” From houses people would then responded [sic], “We’re working on it.” For the next eight days, sexual relations were encouraged. After the eighth night, municipal authorities prohibited relations (an enforceable regulation since the thatched roofs shook during the act). (Marroquin 1959:194-195)

Both male and female Nahulingo informants related to me a likewise structured practice of sexual regulation. Retrospectively formulated within the contemporary sociopolitical context, these memories today figure into a broader conceived narrative of miscegenation. Nahulingüenses revealed their beliefs that such “mixing” caused social and corporeal degradation. This became clear during an interview with park-keeper Eduardo Marmol:

MW: Were there indigenes here when you moved to Nahulingo?

EM: No, no, they had already left. The actual ancestors, as I said, had died. There remained others, the ones who lived in the round houses, but only five of the original ancient ones remained. These remaining little people were so humble . . . and well, this little people didn’t understand their own capabilities. They were very timid, not like us now, the way that we chat all the time. Them, no, they were only social within themselves.

MW: And how do you know this?

EM: Because my mother tells me. My mother told me that her parents died very old and she died of one hundred . . . one hundred . . . five years. Her, imagine that! And, so the other little old people a ways back lived a ton of years. People used to live longer. They lived to one hundred fifteen, one hundred twenty years of age.

MW: Why?

EC: Well, they took better care of themselves, in all sorts of ways. I'll even tell you this. To have sex . . . they only . . . with this area's moon every fifteen days...they had sex with their wives. The kids were quite . . . strong. Right? Now, no. Before, in the early morning . . . they passed by . . . the day that people could have sex someone with a drum passed by at four in the morning, or three in the morning. They passed by playing the drum saying "now it's time to conceive. Now it's time to conceive." It was the time to have sex. That was the custom.

MW: Do you remember that?

EM: Well, yes, I was very young when that happened, but yes I remember. That was their custom. So that the children came out stronger.

The narrative of purity and strength draws proactively on the colonial trope of blood. Similarly, "blood" as a signifier came to the fore in a discussion that I had with two elderly women, Isabela Marquez Palos and Rosa Allende Espinosa. After Isabela Marquez Palos used the metaphor of mixing paint to describe the process of miscegenation, the two women began to discuss "strong" and "weak" blood:

RE: If your blood is stronger, your children will come out looking like you. But if your blood is weak, they will come out looking like the mother.

MW: So you can have strong or weak blood?

RE: Yes.

MW: And how do you know if your blood is weak or strong?

RE: You know how? Our blood is not equal. There are strong bloods. And there are...

IP: Sometimes there are people who are 100 years old but they look really young.

MW: They are old but look young.

IP: Yes, it's because their blood is quite strong, right?

MW: So could you say that the indigenes didn't age as quickly because they had stronger blood?

RE: Look, before, people lived on and on for years and didn't get old. Now people live fifty or sixty years and they are old. Why? Because their blood is weaker. Because of that the man needs to choose his pair so that his children come out well . . . It's like this. If the man is going to sow his corn or beans he has to search for the right seed and the right plot so that the crop comes out well. I was going to tell you about how conception used to happen. Husbands used to . . . [laughing] . . . well, this happened between the indigenes. Look, when they were going to conceive, they pounded a drum in each house. People came out saying "conception, conception." Everyone got up happily because they were going to be able to see their wives. . . .

MW: So someone in every household played the drum. And how frequently did this happen?

RE: They determined when to do it based on the moon.

IP: It didn't happen every day, more like every month.

RE: Nobody touched their wives without hearing the playing of drums and the announcement that it was the day for conceiving. Nobody touched their wives without the moon being right, and the children came out well and lived a long time.

Here the trope of blood is used in combination with references to cyclical

regulation of sexuality based on lunar cycles and facilitated by the public use of drums.

Though I cannot draw conclusive results from my initial interviews, references to the use of drums and lunar cycles may resemble Maya social practices and conceptions of space and time. Simultaneously, their telling on the story may allude to the historical transition to wage or peasant labor on *encomiendas*. The colonial *encomienda* owners who took control of land in the beginning of the twentieth century forced rural, often indigenous, workers into an oppressive labor relation. No longer could they plant the seed of their corn and bean crops based on their beliefs about agriculture. Ladino *encomenderos* began to regulate the agricultural cycle. At this same time, indigenous women may have attempted to improve their social positioning by marrying or procreating with members

of the ruling class. Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2004) relate the desire of indigenous women to “whiten” through miscegenation with ladinos. They claim that this strengthened the revolutionary sentiment of the peasant workers. Movement away from endogamy weakened the social and corporeal health of the community and its members. Thus, I tentatively understand the analogue between crop’s and children’s health as reiterating and reinforcing a challenge to the dominant labor conditions of the twentieth century, which disrupted community structures, and, apparently, caused bodily degradation.

Likewise, toponymic designations permit contemporary populations to construct imaginings of and links to past communities (e.g. Orlove 1991). A name figures the identity of a place, fixes something into the landscape and social memory, allowing people to have a point of reference and produce mutual understandings. Presumably, the contemporary population of “Nahulingo” resembles in some ways the past populations, residing at the place with the same name. The name provides a basis for kinship and community. In Nahulingo, it reinforces a sense of history invoked through the recovery of Precolumbian archaeological materials. Simultaneously it signifies certain pathways and commonalities with other indigenous communities, principally “The Four Izalcos:” Nahuizalco, Caluco, Izalco, and Nahulingo. Some Salvadorans recognize that the suffix “-co” or “-go” was Nahuat for “place.” They connect long indigenous histories to town names with such suffixes. Names force the Salvadoran and the visitor to consider or create differences between these communities and, for example, the Spanish Catholic settlement and name “Sonsonate.”

Place names are simultaneously reinforced by aspects of local dialect, slang known as “Caliche” (Fajardo 1993). In response to a question about the existence of regionalisms rooted in Nahuat, Don Fernando inexplicitly drew out the connection between local slang and place-names, anecdotally evidencing their common source:

Yes, there are words from Nahuat. Once a man named Enrique Palma told me that he had visited the house of a woman that he knew and a singing hen entered the room. The child said “Mommy, the *nemotila* laid a *siste*. So he asked the woman what the child was saying. She said “He was saying that the hen laid an egg.” *Nemotila*, hen. *Siste*, egg. For that we understand that the town of Texistepeque means the place of the egg hill. *Peque* is hill and *siste* is egg. Texistepeque. There is the town of Quetzaltepeque. That means the hill of the birds of paradise. And listen to the name of Cuatepeque. Cuatepeque means *Cuat*, serpent, and *peque*, hill. Hill of the serpent. We have the name Apaneka. *Apan* says river, *neka*, wind. The place of the river of wind.

As I would find out through continued dialogue, Don Fernando had taught himself translations of the Nahuat place-names through a toponymic atlas that he owned. As evidenced by the anecdote presented above, Don Fernando used the knowledge that he had acquired through personal experience and the knowledge acquired through book-learning to reinforce and account for each other. The combination of sources provides Don Fernando with greater representative credibility and authority. Just as effortlessly, Don Fernando might have made a connection between the Nahuat word for snake, *Cuat*, present in the place-name Cuatepeque, with an artifact he owns and has loaned to the local museum. The artifact, a small bowl, has an elaborate rim, which Don Fernando and Arturo represent as a snake, symboling Quetzacoatl, the Aztec deity who is represented as a feathered serpent

Don Fernando de Jesús García’s description of indigenous place-names and words emerged during our first recorded interview, the morning of June 16, 2004. That afternoon he returned to the Casa de la Cultura with the toponymic atlas. He sat down

across from me and began to read place-names and describe their meanings. I took the prerogative and asked about the importance of understanding toponymy:

MW: For you, why is this important?

FJG: This toponymy?

MW: Yes

FJG: For us it is important to be familiar with how the republic of El Salvador was formed, and how it was divided into zones of haciendas. In each hacienda there are hills and other features. So it is important to know the names of places in the ancient language of those places. And now they have other names; but the names haven't really changed, it's the populations that have. For this reason we think this issue is important. So that we know what they were called anciently and what they are called now. Because the Spanish changed various words. We have the word *guacal*. *Guacal* is a container made of wood or other material. So, they called it *Pohal*. The Spanish translated it to *Guacal*. It's *pohal*. We have the word *shuco*. Now nobody says "*shuco*" but they say "*chuco*" with "ch," *chuco*, and it's written "*chuco*." This means sour. So they make a form of *atol* that is called sour *atol*.<sup>3</sup> So, for this, they changed it to *chuco*. It's not *shuco*, it's *chuco*. For these reasons it is important for us to know what the language of our ancestors was, what we are the descendents of. Though we are almost entirely crossed because with have another's blood, right? We are what you could call hybrid. We are no longer a pure race, of pure blood.

MW: And do you know where your ancestors came from? You say that you have some ancestors from Spain and others from here, like Pipiles.

FJG: Yes, we have Pipil blood. There was an exodus of Pipil that left Mexico towards here; first they entered Guatemala. They populated the whole department of Escuintla [Guatemala] and they populated Sonsonate, Santa Ana, Ahuachapan and part of the center of the country up to the Lempa River, and from there they went toward Nicaragua. They crossed the gulf and arrived at Nicaragua. The Pipil race. But when the Spanish arrived here they became enamored with the indigenes, as no women came from Spain during the Conquista, just men. So, by necessity as they did not have anyone else, they had to accept the local women. And that's how the race began to mix. They named the new mixing race *mestiza* to indicate that it was a mix [*mezcla*]. That's the predominant reason that I tell you we are hybrid, because we are the mix of a white race with . . . well, blacks, a *mestiza* black. It's *mestizo* because it's a cross of black and white. And so, the race that came kept mixing and mixing. They produced whites, and *morenos*, you see. And the whites

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<sup>3</sup> *Atol* is a drink made out of cornmeal, which is frequently sold by street vendors.

were called *ladino*. So the mix of *ladino* with the indigene produced what they call *mestiza*.

Toponymy offers Don Fernando insight into the prehispanic history of El Salvador. Indigenous place-names provide the same sort of knowledge that he creates through collecting material artifacts. As I initially suggested in my opening anecdote about the mayor's use of "Tacuzcalco," local actors mobilize indigenous place-names to create narratives of history. Place-names, for Salvadorans concerned with history like Don Fernando, are not a singular lens for understanding the prehispanic past and are often understood in connection to other types of symbolic resources like material artifacts and local slang. As demonstrated by the text of the interview that I have provided above, toponymy provides one type of insight into a conception the past that is intimately connected to other artifacts and conceptions. Additionally, Don Fernando's gives texture to such presentations of the past, and understands the relationship between the Spanish and the indigenous Pipiles with the common metaphors of mixing and blood.

I have begun to describe the context of the above interaction, but I need to qualify my interpretation of Don Fernando's history before continuing. Don Fernando, a community elder and primary benefactor of the Casa de la Cultura, approached me with a concern about the past. He knew, more or less, why I was wandering about that Salvadoran community and he seemed to want to provide me with a limited understanding. His words came at the beginning of my fieldwork and, as such, figured much of the way that I would come to terms with my being in the community. That day, Don Fernando demonstrated a clear concern with teaching me, tutoring me about Nahulingo and Salvadoran history. It makes sense that he used toponymy as an inroad into addressing *my* historical concerns. I had, after all, appeared one day in a community

with an indigenous name and a landscape littered with ceramics and lithics and told people that I was there to inquire into conceptions of history.

In my question about Don Fernando's ancestors, which led to his description of national mixedness, I intended to prompt him to address his personal ancestry and their identities. My own semantic ambiguity led him to prioritize a discussion of general ancestry and racial identity. This reflects a tendency of Don Fernando to speak for Nahulingo, or El Salvador, often articulating himself as a sort of spokesperson. He more often speaks in the first person plural than the first person singular. And I think he honestly cares for his society; the "we" is important to him. At this point in the discussion I was even more curious about how he figured himself and his ancestors into this historical schema of social and racial relations. I clarified my question:

MW: And yourself: Do you know where your ancestors were from, like your grandparents and great grandparents?

FJG: Yes, we say that my grandfather was of Chapin origin, in Guatemala. My grandmother no, she was from here, El Salvador. She was from a town called Tenancingo. But she was already of the white race, my grandmother.

MW: Had her parents or recent ancestors come from Spain?

FJG: No, when she was alive this place had already been conquered three hundred or more like four hundred years. And there was a lot of the white race. So she belonged to the white but little race.

MW: "But little," what does that mean?

FJG: White with yellow eyes. Because the ancestors of the Pipil race around here had yellow eyes but not light blue ones, nor were there blue or green eyes. The races kept on mixing and those colors began to appear. That's like my family. My grandfather was of indigenous race and my grandmother was *ladina*.

MW: Was he Pipil?

FJG: Yes, Pipil. "Pipil" means small, little, yes.

By presenting his own genealogy, Don Fernando managed to also summarize and exemplify significant patterns of historical relations among racial groups in El Salvador. As alluded to by the inclusive “we” he employed in the previous description of Salvadoran history, Don Fernando incorporates all the identified conjunctures that dominate representations of Salvadoran racial history into his personal narrative account. His grandmother was white and *ladina*; but he also uses a different category of racial-thinking, qualifying her whiteness by maintaining that she was also “little.” The evidence for her being “little” was a light eye-color, something idiosyncratic to indigenes, according to Don Fernando. The excerpt of an interview conducted with Estevan Canivales Mendoza that I included above also employs uses the trope of “little” to describe past indigenes. This is a translation of “Pipil” which resonates with the common diminutive *indito* (little indian).

## CHAPTER 5 RHETORIC AND MATERIALITY

### **The Ceiba and Metonymy**

In Nahulingo, no buildings stand taller than the Catholic church. The plaza and the religious structure set on higher ground. Ernesto and other community members claim that the Spanish built the original church on a raised mound where the indigenous temple previously stood. Simultaneously, the construction of colonial architecture into the indigenous landscape and the reallocation of architectural features may have permitted the maintenance of aspects of indigenous identities. As I mentioned above, Ernesto mobilizes *Santiago* as a syncretic icon, created through the reformation of Catholic religious practice to include indigenous imagery. Unlike the Nahulingo buildings, the ceiba tree towers above the contiguous church and likewise embodies multiple histories and images (Figure 11). The ceiba gives form to histories, and its conception brings to mind a range of memories and conflicts for Nahulingüenses.

I conceptualize the ceiba (and associated aspects of the landscape) as a sociomaterial axis that individuals use to link contemporary social practice to aspects of the conceived past. Trees like the ceiba figure prominently in postcolonial Mesoamerican, especially Mayan, symbolism. In postcolonial Mayan cosmology, for example, the Sun/Christ is slain and nailed to a tree, rather than a cross, before he travels to each of the quadrants of the universe, a cosmogenic movement that establishes the contemporary categories of time, space, and cosmic order (e.g. Gossen 1986:229).

Through discussions with Nahulingo residents, I learned various associations



Figure 10. The Nahulingo ceiba. The photograph is taken from the central plaza. The structures between the park and the plaza are temporary businesses in town for the patron saint festival.

between the tree and historical events. One informant associated the tree with historical markets which took place in western El Salvador on weekends in the nineteenth century. Markets currently occur around such trees in northern El Salvador and Guatemala (see Anderson 2004). Don Fernando presented the tree as an indigenous meeting place. Additionally, Don Fernando claimed that indigenous Nahulingo residents used the tree as a sort of location device and that there were four other ceibas on the town periphery, marking the cardinal directions. This conception of spatial order and the centrality of the ceiba therein resembles the Maya system of cosmological and spatial order. Don

Fernando himself identified the trees as significant indigenous markers, describing how he found an indigenous jade pendant buried next to one of the peripheral ceibas.

These histories articulate the ceiba as a central material feature revealing the historic and contemporary indigenous elements of Nahulingo. Analogous to the mayor's comments that I quoted in the introduction, memories attached to the tree links the practices of the precolonial Pipil residents of Tacuzcalco and Nahulingo with the practices of early twentieth century indigenes and communists. They met in the "same place." This metonymic connection and the symbolic power of the ceiba did not go unnoticed by the neo-colonial government death squads who aimed to wipe out the indigenous Nahuatl speakers and the communist insurgents (or, just anyone carrying a machete) in one fell swoop. Multiple subjects claimed that the massacre of local indigenes and communists took place at the base of the tree in 1932. One friend and informant occasionally commented that the ceiba "had lead in it." Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2004) corroborate this claim, quoting an informant who states that the ceiba tree in the neighboring (and closely associated) town of Nahuizalco was a meeting place for the communist insurgents before the massacre. Just as their colonialist predecessors may have "killed" the local religious structure and metonymically resurrected a Catholic church, the death squads lined up and assassinated local rebels and indigenes under the massive symbol, co-opting its power and associating it with the repressive state rather than the indigenous peasant.

### **Progressivism and Nationalism**

Recognizing with Anderson that the nation is an imagined thing, I also recognize the critical reciprocal of his insight, that it is the imagination that will have to carry us beyond the nation. (Appadurai 2003:337)

In the final interpretive section of this work, I draw on multiple sources to discuss and interpret concepts of progress and presentations of objects in Nahulingo. As I began to elaborate in the section on performance and the parade, ontologies that frame Western politics circulate through and affect the community of Nahulingo. Both the political rhetoric enacted and reformulated during the parade and Don Fernando de Jesus Garcia's use of a toponymic atlas to envision a national and historical landscape constitute examples of the circulation of translocal texts and objects, like that described by Anderson (1991) and Appadurai (1986). Beyond political rhetoric propagated by transnational news programs and the international circulation of texts that reify conceptions of toponymy, here I briefly expound on the mobilization of concepts of development and progress. I discuss the museum and its organization of historical materiality within the framework of such political and historical conceptions.

Since the end of the civil war in the early 1990s, branches of the national government in El Salvador have incorporated ideas formulated through academic discourses, including those of anthropology, into a wide range of development strategies. Despite a general lack of national anthropologists, the government has drawn on such discussions to define and commemorate places, materials and practices as culturally significant. These definitions and ideas, borrowed largely from UNESCO, directly shape the face of social relations throughout the nation-state, impacting everything from local development projects to community and religious festivals. The government sector primarily responsible for the implementation of development strategies and anthropological ideas, CONCULTURA (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y el Arte), delineates specific national and institutional objectives (which can be found at its

website, <http://www.concultura.gob.sv>). The organization also maintains a material and human presence throughout the state, in the form of multipurpose local offices, Casas de la Cultura.

Through its website, CONCULTURA explicitly presents its mission and vision, in addition to national and institutional objectives, which imply a sense of evolutionist development. The expressed mission is to “articulate and position Cultural Politics in the process of national development.” The expressed vision is broader, appealing to a universal humanity: “to contribute to the development of Salvadoran human potential through an integrative Cultural Politics.” In the “national objectives,” CONCULTURA provides a rewording of its vision, emphasizing the positioning and articulation of “culture” as a key element for development and human potential. Other national objectives listed on the website, which seem secondary, include promoting creativity, strengthening identity and historical memory, broadening knowledge and conscientiousness, stimulating cultural dialogue and reweaving the social fabric.

CONCULTURA’s programs proactively benefit many communities. In Nahulingo I worked closely with community members, including Diaz, director of the Casa de la Cultura. This Casa de la Cultura provides necessary resources—both material and ideational—to the community. Among other projects, Diaz and the Casa de la Cultura, in coordination with the local mayor’s office and a Spanish non-governmental organization, have designed and opened a small local museum. In addition to historical photographs and community paintings, the museum predominantly displays precolonial artifacts found through the luck and curiosity of the town residents. The museum’s layout, and its material and textual content mimic the Salvadoran national museum and draw strongly on

evolutionist typologies. I offer a description of the museum and my discussions with Salvadorans about this institution as an example of the impact of such knowledges on the conception and representation of local history.

Before further describing the content of the Nahulingo museum, here I relay a story told to me about the acquisition of the building that recently was inaugurated as a museum. This suggests how the museum, like the lived spaces described by Herzfeld (1991), has become a locus of contestation and negotiation of local history. My interlocutor was Ricardo Fox, a budding student of anthropology and employee of the Centro de Capacitación y Promoción de la Democracia (CECADE), a Salvadoran NGO that generously helped arrange and facilitate my work in Nahulingo. According to Fox, after the 1980s war the state branch responsible for the development of museums, which would later transform into CONCULTURA, was also in charge of developing prisons. For Fox, the irony of coupling the institution that existed to shun members of society, to isolate them through incarceration, with the institution that aimed to elucidate and (sometimes) celebrate the past did not go unnoticed. So, the building that Nahulingo inherited as a potential future museum had been a state prison during the war. He spoke of how he and others did not want to remove the prisoners' graffiti that adorned the walls before converting the building into the museum: in Fox's view, that graffiti was history, and created the appropriate ambient for a local museum, a testament to local history. Fox and others had attempted to negotiate this with the Nahulingo mayor. But the mayor refused to grant their request, citing that a "place of culture" should not have walls decorated with vulgar expressions. Fox and I joked about how some future

archaeological excavation of the building might uncover a more dismal history hidden beneath the thin veneer of repainted walls.

Should museums and other representative fora recall forms of explicit discipline, such brutal production of docile bodies? Salvadorans of the early 2000s have a strong historical memory of recent oppression and conflict. Even in Nahulingo, where the civil war had little effect, the political parties that materialized through the conflict remain critical social factions. The gazing eye of the state lurks about, peering through the glass panes of the mayor's office, spatially contiguous to the museum. The mayor's sentiment reflects that he thought the "museum" a celebration of an idealized past. Perhaps he also feared that the re-appropriation and transformation of the "jail" might engender an inverted gaze, opening a critical window into what Foucault called "that darkest region in the apparatus of justice . . ." (1979:256).

Through this description of a rift between distinct potentials for historical representation in the museum, we can understand the latent conflict between a sense of deep-time history and a recent historical memory. The choice to mobilize photographs and artifacts from historical religious processions and Precolumbian artifacts reflects the formulation of a specific historical narrative. This example makes it increasingly evident that the creation of such narratives and their public expression always requires the *exclusion* of other meaningful narratives of historical conception. Instead of creating an explicitly and unavoidably political museum exhibit, the museum's directors have mobilized a style of cultural history. This reflects the higher-level adoption and re-situation of similar rhetoric by CONCULTURA. As suggested above, I argue that this mode of representation has political implications. In a politically tumultuous and divided

state, the use of a generalized evolutionist framework provides a safe conceptual distance. Perhaps even in Nahulingo, where the civil war had few evident lasting effects, a textured local history remains distinctly off limits. This seems clear in the local museum. But simultaneously, the museum is a site of negotiation and expression of multiple local histories and identities, which emerge differentially for distinct visitors.

Having passed through the museum lobby, the visitor enters the ethnographic room and encounters photographs and a few artifacts, including a mask (Figure 7) and a ceramic cacao pod-shaped vessel. The photographs predominately depict historical religious imagery of processions and Catholic icons. During the museum inauguration, Arturo pointed out his grandmother in one of the black and white photographs. She stands as a child, in school uniform, a white blouse and dark skirt, surrounded by other girls her age. With their shoulders they casually support platforms upon which three Catholic figures stand. For Arturo, and his grandfather Don Fernando, this photograph had a personal texture. Their experience of the photograph and the room must differ significantly from other visitors.

After leaving the ethnographic room, the visitor steps into the world of the early prehispanic past. The first archaeological room consists of a handful of glass boxes containing ground stone and obsidian artifacts, aesthetically arranged. A hanging poster describes the early use of stone tools, identifying the artifacts with a pre-ceramic era. The third room boasts another few cases of artifacts; this time with ceramics. The cases display predominately Postclassic ceramics, including vessels, stamps, a drum, and whistles. Don Fernando has glazed some of the pots to help preserve them. The hanging poster describes how the development of ceramic vessels bettered the lives of the “first

populations” of El Salvador, and that they expressed their own styles in these vessels. The final room is a space for temporary exhibits. It currently holds local community artwork, paintings by Diaz among others. Diaz wrote the text that guides the visitor through the museum and commented to me that the structure of the accompanying explanatory materials mimics that of the National Museum and other museums in El Salvador.

The personal involvement that some residents of Nahulingo have had in developing and providing materials for the museum evidences how the space is differentially experienced. Recent scholarship has emphasized how such spaces are imbued with distinct meanings by groups and individuals with different sociopolitical interests in specific modes of historicity. Barbara Bender (2002) and Kevin Hetherington (2000) have discussed Stonehenge as such a negotiated place. The officially endowed historicity of Stonehenge masks conservative class interests and marginalizes the unrepresented nomads known as the New Age Travellers, who lay claim to the site as a significant cosmological place (Hetherington 2000). Using Margaret Rodman’s (2003) complement to the anthropological term and strategy of multivocality, both Stonehenge and the Nahulingo museum are experienced *multilocally*. The dissonance between the local mayor’s imagining of the museum and that of CECADE demonstrates how this multilocal place emerges as a site of social contestation.

I met Arturo in the Nahulingo museum. Within an hour of arriving in Nahulingo I found myself in this place of representation and remembrance offering my hands to help affix the posters that offered some clarification of what these exotic pieces of stone and clay reflect. Later in my fieldwork, Arturo and I began to discuss the need to

contextualize the pieces, and he informed me of some of his archaeological speculations and ambitions. The prominence of symbols on the pieces implied to him that literacy and, thus, education, was fairly prominent. Arturo also talked about “his dream,” as he put it: to find an archaeological piece with the iconographic representation of “Nahulingo” and to use this iconography in place of the town shield, as (he said) is frequently done in Mexico.

Arturo’s enthusiasm for using a piece of unfound prehistoric iconography in place of the contemporary town shield reveals the nationalist implications of his involvement in archaeology. Unlike his politically and religiously conservative grandfather, Arturo seems to articulate his understanding of prehistoric society and his created connections with the past in order to legitimate a specific political agenda. A central aspiration of this agenda is to replace the colonial “shield” bearing symbols inherited from a Spanish tradition with the precolonial symbol for “Nahulingo.”

In concert with this sentiment, Arturo offered a novel interpretation of the meaning of “Nahulingo.” The typical etymological reading of the Nahuatl name is as follows (Fajardo 1993):

Nahuilingo: The place of four movements.

Nahui: Four

Olinía: Movement

Co: Place

In a basic monograph produced by the patrimony group which became CONCULTURA (Patronato Pro-Patrimonio Cultural), Juan José Fajardo relates the following local interpretation of the town’s name: “The locals, in relation to the

vernacular name, propose a solution to the issue, stating that it is derived from the fact that from the town of Nahulingo split four roads: one to Guatemala, another to Acajutla, another toward Izalco and one to Caluco” (Fajardo 1993). Fajardo was apparently not directly informed of this by local community members. Rather he cites a historical source (Clará de Guevara n.d.). Arturo thinks that the name is better translated as “the place of Four Movement” (rather than “the place of four movements”), which refers to an Aztec sun god, or a ritual/day celebrating the sun god, documented in the Aztec “codices.” Arturo’s argument was born out of his having read *Reyes y Reinos de la Mixteca* by Alfonso Caso (1977).

As Arturo explained this to me, his grandfather sat quietly cleaning the ceramic vase, only speaking occasionally, for example, to note the design in red paint that was appearing as he cleaned the dirt off of the ceramic vessel. Arturo’s hypothesis about the meaning of “Nahulingo” did raise his grandfather’s eyebrow, so to speak. He turned and corrected his grandson.

“No, ‘Nahulingo’ means four movements, which refers to a dance, and to the fact that four roads split from here: to Guatemala, to Acajutla, to Izalco, and to Caluco,” Don Fernando stated gruffly, nearly quoting the Nahulingo monograph, clearly frustrated with his grandson’s dissonant interpretation. While he is not cited as a source for the etymology of the town name, Don Fernando did participate in an interview which is partly reprinted in the book (Fajardo 1993). In fact, the first day that I spoke extensively with him, he picked the book off of the desk in the Casa de la Cultura office and flipped through it to find and show me his name.

With his grandfather sitting to the left and me directly in front of them, forming a triangle, Arturo winked at me with his right eye, and continue talking. This suggests that the place and objects of the Nahulingo museum are differentially experienced even by members of the same family: generation and political orientation mark a social faction here, rather than kinship. While the photograph that depicts Don Fernando's wife or Arturo's grandmother may represent a site of familial unification, the multiple meanings of the name "Nahulingo" marks a social conflict.

At the beginning of the patron saint parade, Arturo expressed to me a similar sentiment, once again drawing on an idealized conception of indigeneity to base a critique of contemporary society. He relayed a story that he had "read in a book about Abraham Lincoln." I offer a translation of the story, entitled "to show that the Indians aren't dumb:"

Abraham Lincoln told a story about an Evangelist missionary who went to work with an American Indian tribe. The Evangelist arrived and called a meeting with the chief. He asked that the chief call together all the tribe's members, because he had an obligation to teach them the Christian faith. The chief obliged to the request of the missionary, and gathered everyone from the tribe to hear the Christian words. As the crowd settled, the missionary began to forcefully preach about the righteousness of the Christian faith. For three whole days without rest, the missionary explained the meaning and Truth of the Bible in detailed prose. The chief, and the rest of the tribe, surrounding the missionary sat patiently and listened carefully as the Evangelist elaborated his faith.

After three days of preaching, the missionary brought his sermon to an end. The chief thanked him for sharing his beliefs, and asked that, in turn, the Evangelist listen to the chief as a spokesperson for the tribe and its beliefs. The missionary agreed and began to listen. During the first two hours of the chief's sermon, the evangelist listened carefully, with the tribe still surrounding him. As the chief continued into the third hour the Evangelist began to tire and grow hungry. By the fourth hour he had stopped paying attention and in the fifth hour he asked that the chief stop so that he could go rest and recuperate. The chief looked squarely at the missionary, and asked why he should accept the beliefs of someone who preached for three days but refused to allow his audience equal time to share their own faith.

Arturo presents this story to counter the unstated rhetorical misrepresentation of all indigenes, or *inditos*, as “backwards.” Taken contextually, this rather eloquently expressed tale reflects Arturo’s sense of (indigenous) nationalism. This may be an example of how pan-Mayanist and similar movements have entered the Salvadoran public consciousness.

By telling a story about the proselytizer’s impatience, highlighting the tolerance and intelligence of the indigenous chief, Arturo incorporates and extends a subaltern rhetoric of unity. Arturo seeks to find alternatives to contemporary national and international political structures by positing an indigenous past as opposed and superior to a neoliberal present. Such historical play, which I have noted throughout this text, brings the past into conceptual contiguity with the present and future. It is an act of imagination and invention, the use of a conceived history to envision a more egalitarian future. This imaging, imagining, and desire reveals a trace of frustration, but also traces of hope and optimism. In the synthetic comments on my preliminary fieldwork I focus on these latter sentiments, and I pose new questions about how Nahulingüenses, like many others at the beginning of the 2000s, have begun to imagine themselves beyond the nation.

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters I have offered a range of interpretive positions on social action and representation in Nahulingo, El Salvador. I intend for the sections and chapters in this work to provide groundwork and questions for multiple types of future research. I structured this work with a definite set of themes and arguments which integrated the various conceptual and spatial sites of my preliminary fieldwork. In this final chapter, I briefly elucidate the predominant threads that tie together my perspectives in order to create a foundation for future research questions. I summarize how Nahulingo actors engaged memories, histories, and actions that implicitly or explicitly critiqued contemporary social conditions and offered revitalized visions of the future. I specifically propose questions about the ways in which Nahulingo actors mobilize objects and notions of indigeneity, a central process of historical discourse.

Historical articulations through public events, narratives, and museums, for example, always have a quality of bricolage. I treat oxcarts, memories, masks, and ceramics alike, as symbolic resources used by social actors to invent the past, define the contemporary community, and envision the future. My experiences with these symbolic resources occurred within the social landscape of Nahulingo, in specific meaning-laden places. Substantial bodies of historical conceptions, or stories with distinct scopes and themes, inhabit Nahulingo landscapes and consciousnesses. I have argued that much of this historical discourse can be understood with the aid of conceptual tools such as interpellation, emergent qualities, and bricolage.

I bring this work to a close by drawing attention to the optimistic and inspired imaginations in Nahulingo that, perhaps, structurally oppose and complement a pervasive frustration with the present. Alberto Fernandez expressed to me his frustration with the contemporary patron saint festival; everything cost money. But he had in mind an alternative, an idealization of the past that could be mobilized to create effects in the present. Ernesto Diaz is one actor who has mobilized such imaginings of the past to create effects, and beneficial change in the Nahulingo community. His work with others to use the local Casa de la Cultura and the new museum as community and educational centers stands, like the ceiba, as one of the constructive central aspects of the contemporary community. He has even mobilized an imagining of cacao production to create community events, solidarity, and economic profit through the narrativized commodity of cacao. In this context, such acts give strength and a sense of communal self to Nahulingo. This history of cacao production, like the history of other local materialities, such as masks and *Santiago* (which circulate through distinct contexts) or the ceiba (around which Nahulingüenses circulate), constitute narratives and places of contemporary historical discourse. By deeming the active agents in Nahulingo historical discourse ‘bricoleurs,’ I emphasize that they are not cogs in a machine, forced to think about the world in specific well-bounded channels. Instead, they reformulate their consciousness through a combination of historical memory and contemporary materiality.

Compelling research has recently emerged out of actor-network approaches in science and technology studies that trace artifacts and signifiers (often deemed “tropes”) through multiple geographical and conceptual sites, documenting the shifts in meanings attached to them (e.g. Adams 2001, Franklin 1997). Multisited approaches in

ethnography offer the same appeal, an opportunity to trace how artifacts and tropes travel, giving form and substance to communities (Marcus and Fischer 1986, Marcus 1995). Through the internal mobilization of things in Nahulingo such as masks, *Santiago Caballero*, and ceramic pots, historical narratives emerge. Ceramics, lithics, and indigenous place names serve as critical nodes in a social landscape that enable locals to articulate Nahulingo into narratives of Precolumbian history produced predominately through the circulated texts of anthropologists such as Caso (1977) and Fowler (1989). Arturo's interpretation of the meaning of "Nahulingo" and desire to replace the colonial shield with precolonial place-name iconography evidences such articulation of academic and local knowledges or narratives. The parade act and Arturo's historical stories both demonstrate the types of creation that constantly occur in places where people have vested interests in history and access to resources such as those provided by the Casa de la Cultura (in, Arturo's case, the Caso volumes).

As I began to explain in my historical overview, Salvadorans and others frequently contrast the nation-state with Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, claiming that El Salvador no longer has indigenes. I hope to strengthen the perspectives advocated by Lauria-Santiago and Binford (2004), emphasizing that indigenous self-identity in El Salvador remains a critical aspect of historical discourse. In fact, by the mid-2000s, a decade after the end of the civil war, it seems that a range of people are comfortable publicly articulating the indigenous components of their kinships, histories, and selves. Ilda Margarita Vecinos de Perres, Rosaura Elisa Espinosa, and Estevan Canizales Mendoza even recalled their own family's and community's recent historical reproductive practices within narratives of indigeneity. Simultaneously, social actors

who have prominent roles in the construction of local discourses of history and indigeneity such as Arturo, Don Fernando, and Ernesto have begun to proactively acquire academic knowledge by reading literary scholarship, a relatively new aspect of the social landscape. CECADE has used anthropological ideas and rhetoric to structure a political agenda. This situates Nahulingo as one critical place where anthropologists can continue to develop cooperative and multivocal projects, including archaeology, material culture studies, and ethnography.

The creation of dynamic anthropological approaches to studying Nahulingo requires the integration of material culture studies, ethnographies, and historical and archaeological studies, conducted by teams of researchers and community members. This objective extends the contemporary trend of cross-fertilization between material culture studies and ethnography (e.g. Geismar and Horst 2004, Low 1996, Robin and Rothschild 2002). Like Seta Low and others, I have started to explore latent meanings in public places and acts, constantly transforming through the material productions and social constructions of places. I have begun to discuss and draw linkages among events such as the patron saint festival, the *disco móvil*, the parade, and the procession.

These events involve the transformation of history, memory, indigeneity, the ceiba, and the museum artifacts. How have contemporary objects and structures emerged? How are these emergences and transformations contested and negotiated? In a discussion of such ethnographic emergences, Michael M.J. Fischer (2005:60) has recently incited anthropologists to action: “we need to go beyond slogans of multisitedness. We need to push into distributed infrastructures. We must look for enunciatory communities, rules of play, and sites of contestation.” This involves the innovation of new comparative

methods, scanning for multiple voices and knowledges, such as the project posed in Watanabe and Fischer's (2004) *Pluralizing Ethnography*.

I propose to further explore the materiality and history of local religious figures such as *Santiago Caballero*, in addition to their contemporary social meanings, and mobilizations through public festivals. This involves examining the manner in which social actors create historical discourses, imbuing objects and places with historicity. The museum represents such a dynamic place where members of the community articulate and negotiate historical identities. How do such objects circulate within and through the social and spatial fields of Nahulingo? How do objects transmute, moving into and out of historical discourse? Ultimately, how are local aspects of the landscape such as the museum and the ceiba contested and experienced multilocally?

Answering such questions necessitates a deeper, longitudinal research project. Discussing the patron saint parade in a more textured style, for example, would require that I probe social fields that exist behind the surface veneer of the performance. While I describe the performers and some of the historical and social contexts, the limitations of my fieldwork experience prohibited a deeper description of the production of the parade. A network of social actors exists behind this veneer, including affiliates of the local government and school system whom I do not discuss in this preliminary work. How do these social actors define the message and style of the patron saint parade? What are the sources of their ideas and how are they circulated through the students acting on the streets? Are the messages of the parade contested in reference to conflicting historical and religious conceptions? Are there differences between the messages of the social actors setting the agenda for the parade and the students enacting it? Approaching these

questions requires an understanding of how social actors are produced in historical and cultural contexts. This necessitates a longer fieldwork project and possibly archival research.

I could ask a similar set of questions of the other domains of historical discourse and social action that I have described in this work. Selective access to the *disco móvil* and distinct historical narratives associated with the ceiba may both constitute materializations of longer-standing social factions and contestations. Returning to Fischer's (2005:60) comment that I quote above, if these are significant sites of contestation, who comprise the contesting enunciatory communities, and what are the rules of play? As I have alluded throughout this work, such communities may transcend the local and articulate with rhetoric and objects produced by national and international social actors and institutions such as CONCULTURA. The second stage of my research will use these questions to frame a study of historical conception and negotiation around objects and sites with distinct and conflicting historicities.

Through this work I have begun discussing historical discourse in Nahulingo, as manifest in three distinct social domains. I have offered a limited reading of community ontologies and conceptions of history and identity. The work ultimately serves as a starting point, a foundation for engaging other scholars and community members in the production and contestation of knowledge in and about the history of Nahulingo and El Salvador within the broader scope of Mesoamerican studies.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in California, I grew up in Crawfordsville, Indiana, around the Wabash College community. I attended Grinnell College and received a B.A. in anthropology and Spanish. I have conducted a genealogical historical ethnography in North Carolina, and archaeological field research in Costa Rica.