IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY: THE PLACE OF SPACE, (PROTO)RACE AND IDEOLOGY IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL HONDURAS

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By

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The objective of this study is to identify and explain the different processes and discursive practices that constructed the national character and identity of the Honduran people. Through a diachronic analysis of Honduras from its colonial period to the early 20th century, I discuss the multiple types of fragmentations – territorial, political, economic, identitary – that were produced by the colonial powers as well as the post-Independence governing body who dismantled established colonial structures and replaced them with newly constituted ones. I argue that at the crux of this second period of configuration was the elaboration of an official history and national identity based on a common Indo-Hispanic past and rejection of an Afro-mestizo heritage.

The project is composed of two major parts: one is a detailed and multidisciplinary reconstruction of the development of a multi-racial and pluri-cultural society in
order to demonstrate that Honduras was and continues to be the site of a dynamic mestizaje of African, European and Indigenous populations and customs. This is accomplished through the analysis of parish records and censuses of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th century. The second part of my research is an exploration of the various processes and discursive practices by which this independent territory began construct its national identity. Essential to the formation of the Honduran nation was the recovery and transformation of two icons from its past into national symbols: Copán, the great Pre-Colombian Mayan city; and Lempira, a 16th century indigenous cacique who opposed Spanish Conquest. I explain how and why numerous manifestations or expressions of these two icons were created, their relation to the scientific racial discourses prevalent in Latin America during the 19th and early 20th century, and why the State supported them since the late 19th century.
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INTRODUCTION

Aquí en Olancho no hay negros.
Somos en parte indios
Y no hay negros en Honduras.
Bueno, los negros están en la costa.
Son los Garífuna quienes tienen costumbres raras.

[Here in Olancho there are no Blacks.
We are part Indian
And there are no Blacks in Honduras.
Well, the Blacks are located on the Coast.
They are the Garífuna who have strange customs]

The words above are those of a prominent government employee of the city of Catacamas when I asked him in January of 2010 how he felt about the strong Afro-mestizo heritage that has been erased from the official history and Honduran memory. His reply was not surprising and was very similar to the other responses I received from most Honduran citizens. More importantly, his words point to a greater issue that plagues the Honduran people: it is a society with a problematic and fragmented sense of identity.

The objective of this study is to identify and explain the different processes and discursive practices that shaped the national character and identity of the Honduran people. Through a diachronic analysis of Honduras from its colonial period to the early 20th century, I discuss the
multiple types of fragmentations—territorial, political, economic, identitary—that were produced by the colonial powers as well as the post-Independence governing body who dismantled established colonial structures and replaced them with newly constituted ones. I argue that at the crux of this second period of configuration was the elaboration of an official history and national identity based on a common Indo-Hispanic past and rejection of an Afro-mestizo heritage. This homogenizing and ideological enactment by the ruling minority during the period of nation-building was achieved in part through the recovery and transformation of two icons from its past into national symbols: Copán, the great Pre-Colombian Mayan city; and Lempira, a 16th century indigenous cacique who opposed Spanish Conquest.

Because identity is a construct, it is created and recreated to fulfill the changing needs of a nation and its people. Consequently, any study of the elaboration of Honduran identity must take into account the colonial past of its society. It is during the colonial period that the first stages of this continuous process of identity formation took place. The conquest and colonization of Honduras by Spain have had numerous repercussions at the
human level. With the arrival and the establishment of Europeans and Africans in a territory inhabited by diverse indigenous groups, mestizaje was inevitable. It is from this lived experience that the Honduran people originated: the product of miscegenation of Indians, Spanish and above all Africans. To this I add that, as the result and site of various types of exchanges, national identity was embodied in this racially and culturally mixed population.

Most studies that explore the racial and cultural composition of Hondurans have in large part highlighted its Spanish and indigenous elements and downplayed the prominent African component. This is erroneous because African slaves and those of African descent have played an important role since the discovery and colonization of Honduras. The first slaves brought to Honduras were the few who formed part of the personal retinue that accompanied the first conquistadors. The discovery of numerous silver deposits, coupled with the limited indigenous labor force, fueled the need for more slaves. They were introduced through both legal and illicit means to work in the mining regions, in domestic services and agricultural activities. The exact numbers of how many slaves were brought to Honduras is unknown, but their significant presence was
undeniable by the 18th century when the majority of the population was of African origin. Several documents reveal that the total sum of *mulatos*, *pardos*, *negros*, *sambos* and *ladino* populations was far greater than the number of Spaniards and even Indians.

As was the case in most Spanish American colonies, a complex system of taxonomy was utilized in Honduras to determine the race of its inhabitants and denote hierarchy. But what is interesting about the Honduran case was the application of the category of *ladino* (a term with a long and varied history) to denote those who were neither Indian nor Spanish. Since the late 17th century, numerous government and ecclesiastical officials claimed that the level of miscegenation in Honduras had erased most, if not all, perceivable physical differences. This led to the classification of all mixed-race groups under the elastic and less specific epithet *ladino* and terms such as a *mulato* and *paro* to fall in disuse. The systematic use of *ladino* was particularly dominant in government spaces and documents where the African presence has almost always been neutralized. This phenomenon escalated after independence from Spain when State officials and a small group of intellectuals consciously redefined the term *ladino* by
stripping it of any association with the black race as part of the process of formulating the Honduran nation.

To argue that Honduras or the national identity of its citizens was solely founded on the promotion of homogeneity is to oversimplify nation-building projects. Both were products of a continuous tension between unifying and differentiating practices as well as the identification of which shared elements would become part of the national imaginary. In other words, to form a single unit and identity, racial, regional and cultural differences within Honduras were first identified and defined by those in power. This was most apparent during the Liberal Reform Period (1876-1883) in Honduras when the State and the elite intelligentsia emphasized the geographical, cultural and population differences between the interior of the country and the coastal areas in an effort to promote a common Indo-Hispanic heritage. The people of the interior were characterized as ladino or mestizo – the latter term being used more extensively since the 1920s – and more civilized while the inhabitants of the northeast coast were described as savage and Black. These representations were formulated and legitimated, in part, by 19th and 20th century scientific theories of race. These are some of the aspects
that gave form to the Honduran identity, but it is also important to emphasize that race and space were central to the way it was conceived.

Numerous and wide-ranging works in terms of scope and content constitute the primary and secondary sources for this project. To reconstruct the particularities of Honduras’s colonial past and trace the evolution of its multi-racial and multi-cultural population, I analyze colonial documents dating from the 16th century and found in the General Archive of Guatemala, the National Library of Honduras and parish Archives housed throughout Honduras. I place an emphasis on texts that make reference to racial categories and include demographic statistics of the Honduran population. Careful attention is paid most all to the baptismal certificates and ecclesiastical reports because they provide the most detailed information of the racial composition of numerous groups, and attest to the dominant Afro-descent population that developed in colonial Honduras. When I discuss the aspects of the numerous nation-building projects, I draw data from the Honduran constitutions, travel narratives, maps, political and scientific treaties (created within and outside of
Honduras), census records as well as different forms of artistic expressions of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The historical and cultural details, documents and concepts that I have outlined are woven into four chapters. In the first chapter, I establish the theoretical framework for discussing the particular case of Honduras by synthesizing some of the most important literature on the concepts of space, race and identity. I also provide a chronological and etiological explanation of these three concepts in an effort to demonstrate that there is a mutually constitutive relationship among them. It is in this chapter that I attempt to formulate a theory that integrates race, space and identity, and is appropriate to the understanding of the colonial and independence periods of Honduras.

In the second chapter, I outline many of the historical and social factors that produced and shaped a heterogeneous society during Honduras’s colonial era. I examine the complex nomenclature that was developed in this territory to define the nature and makeup of the overwhelmingly mixed-race population and provide numerous reasons for why it largely fell into disuse by the end of the 18th century. I particularly focus on the African and
Afro-descendant groups and demonstrate through statistical and textual analyses that most Hondurans then (and today) are of African descent.

In the third chapter, in which I provide an extensive historical and cultural analysis of the first few decades of independence from Spain, I discuss how race and space were at the forefront of all nation-building practices enacted by the Honduran State and intelligentsia. I describe how the basis for the proposed nation and its identity were seemingly contradictory ideologies of inclusion and exclusion, of unification and differentiation. Lastly, I argue that the incorporation of La Taguzgalpa region – an area that had been under the control of the British and nomadic indigenous tribes until 1859 – and the immigration of racially “less desirable” groups changed the course of Honduran identity. These events also served as a stimulus for the elaboration of an official national identity based on an Indo-Hispanic past, which I discuss at length in chapter 4. This last chapter is an explanation of Hispanicization strategies employed from the 1870s to the 1920s by those in power to achieve a racially and culturally uniform nation. I end by delineating the main reasons for the adoption of the
mestizo in the 1930s as representative of the Honduran people. The mestizo is the image with which Hondurans identify until this very day.

Honduras – the territory, nation or culture – is rarely the topic of discussion in academic fora. Yet it has a complex and rich past that must be retrieved and studied to understand the character of its current society and that of other nations whose history is intertwined with that of Honduras. This project attempts to bring to the forefront the significance of studying Honduras’s history and culture. Latin American countries share a history of conquest, colonialism and nation building, but the particularities of these processes and their consequences are by no means homogenous. Therefore each country should be studied. More importantly, I hope this work serves to restore in the official history and consciousness of Hondurans the importance of their African origins.
Chapter 1: Contributions to the Conceptions of Race, Space and (National) Identity

All cartographic representations are produced for numerous reasons. They are created to record exploratory experiences, to document and promote settlement or to reflect the beliefs and values of a certain culture. In the case of the Spanish Americas, prior to its independence from Spain, many of the early maps that incorporate visual and spatial images of these lands reflect the way Early Modern man conceived and gave form to territories and peoples that prior to 1492 had not existed in the European imaginary. The same holds true for the country of Honduras.
The earliest cartographical representations of Honduras are two Portolan drawings created by Spanish explorer Bartholomew Columbus, brother of the Admiral, dated 1502 (see figure 1). In these illustrations, B. Columbus provides rich information regarding the coastal areas that he traveled to during Christopher Columbus’s fourth voyage to the New World. B. Columbus includes four isles with their aboriginal names – oalaua (Utila), manaua (Roatán), banassa (Guanaja), and oaque cacao (Barbareta) – that make up the modern day Bay Islands of Honduras. He
also depicts the Cape of Gracias a Dios and Cape of Honduras, which he names *c. de luna* and *p. de consuela* and places on the Asian coastline. In order to reflect the orientation of the coast of “Asia,” the north coast of Honduras is represented as running north to south, rather than east to west. In these two sketches, B. Columbus also incorporates some the names (*Serica, Sinarum Situs* and *Serici Montes*) used by Ptolemy to identify the current country of China. Both representations of the Honduran coastline are clearly in Asia, but this is more apparent in the bottom map where he depicts a large portion of the Asian continent. In the top map, the Admiral’s brother attaches the coastline of Asia to the “Mondo Novo” [The New World], presumably to reflect the explorations of C. Columbus’s third voyage to the Americas. Lastly, B. Columbus inscribes in these maps written details of the voyage from Spain to Asia, and clearly indicates that Ptolemy’s works had influenced these representations. Thus, it is undisputable that these drawings are the product of Columbus’s experiences as well as his understanding of classical and medieval conceptions of the world.

Like many visual representations produced during the Age of Discovery, these illustrations are reflections of
Spanish desire for material wealth and eventual control of this area. The emphasis on the coastal region of the territory, with an advantageous access to the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, coupled with the labeling of port implies the intention to develop systems of commerce and trade. The absence of natives and civilizations, whether deliberate or not, suggests that the terrain is open to be conquered and that its history will be re-written, as further symbolized by the domination of writing in this drawing. This land is presumed to be terra nullius, and as such, it can justly be acquired through occupation. Overall, these maps manifest some of the ideals and concepts that shaped the discovery and colonization of Honduras, and as I argue have had a long lasting effect on its identity.

This initial chapter is a theoretical exposition of the concepts of space, race and identity, which I utilize in this dissertation as heuristic devices for discussing the particular case of Honduras during its late colonial and independence periods. I first present some of the important spatial theories that cultural geographers and sociologists have developed in the last 40 years. I show how spatiality provides an avenue for narrating the
processes of colonization and nation building as well as understanding the conceptualization of race and identity during different time periods. I then provide a chronological and etiological explanation of the notion of race starting with the Greek classical period in which I examine the function of racial thinking in the expression of ideologies and policies of exclusion and inclusion. Finally, I discuss the idea of nation where I argue that space, race and identity are the keystones of its articulation.

Theories of Social Space and Spatiality

Any theoretical discussion of space must begin with the ideas of sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre. He is regarded as one of the most influential theorists of the concept of spatiality because he took into account the social practices that produce space. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre elaborates a theory of how space is constituted – how it is perceived (spatial practice), conceived (representations of space) and lived (representational spaces), and how all three spatialities
form a conceptual triad (33).\(^1\) Spatial practice or perceived space refers to what the human senses register; it is “the process of producing and the material form of social spatiality...both medium and outcome of human activity, behavior and experience” (Soja, Thirdspace 66).

Representations of Space are conceptual abstractions that take form through verbal and visual signs. Lefebvre considers this “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” and the site of knowledge, power and ideology where social and political practices are apparent (38-45).

Representational spaces are the lived spaces of inhabitants and users. It is the terrain that is open to change, appropriation and resistance because it is not subject to rules of consistency or cohesiveness (Lefebvre 39-41).

Like Lefebvre, cultural geographer Edward Soja has contributed greatly to spatial and social thought. In his book Postmodern Geographies, Soja discusses the importance of space to the study of societies and cultures. He indicates that since the 19th century, social theory has been dominated by historicism and the submergence of

\(^1\) All quotations and pagination come from Donald Nicholson-Smith’s 1991 translation of Lefebvre’s text La production de l’espacement.
spatial thought. History and time has for the most part been privileged over geography and space, and this has caused the active and constitutive nature of space to be largely unexplored (Postmodern Geographies 4). By examining historical and cultural processes only in terms of time – which some academics continue to do – Soja argues that scholars do not always understand how relations of power and control are inscribed into different spaces of social life and how the arrangement of places and peoples (human geography) stems from ideology and politics (Postmodern Geographies 6). In other words, what Soja is advocating is a dialectical relationship between space and time. This argument is further developed in Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and to Other Real and Imagined Spaces where he unites spatiality, temporality and sociality in what he calls the concept of thirldspace. As a reconceptualization of Henri Lefebvre’s representational spaces and philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopias – spaces that act as counter-sites and places of otherness and contestation2 – Soja defines thirldspace as “an-Other way of understanding

2 See Foucault’s lecture “Of Other Spaces” for a detailed description of the concept of heterotopia and the six principles that makeup this particular form of space.
and acting to change the spatiality of human life” (Thirdspace 10), as the social environment where ideas, events and meanings can be contested. Foucault, Lefebvre and Soja may have different names for explaining social relations and the spatiality of human life, but all agree that space is a product of human practices – an idea that is applicable to Latin American colonial spaces and everyday encounters among different populations.

The Formation of Colonial Spaces and Relations

The colonization of the Americas generated multiple configurations of physical spaces and human populations. Amerindians, Africans, Spaniards and groups of mixed descent were in continuous movement and frequently reorganized as a result of circumstance, desire or colonial force. Native societies who inhabited these lands had their own spatial organizations and cultural practices, but the arrival of Spanish colonizers and the ensuing colonial settler projects altered, destroyed and replaced existing indigenous spaces with improved replicas of the societal spaces they had left (Mar and Edmonds 2). The Spanish created cities, Indian reductions as well as missions, and demarcated territories and places for the different racial
groups in order to establish hegemony and form the parameters within which controlled types of relationships might be formed. However, when the sociality of these “zones of settler colonialism” is accounted for it is apparent that they are not static or free from resistance (Mar and Edmonds 6), but are rather what Lefebvre called lived spaces and Soja termed thirdspace. Like the entire process of colonialism, these produced spaces are the sites of continuous negotiation between colonizing and colonized groups. This is what made possible the creation of multi-racial and pluri-cultural populations and new colonial subjectivities despite the efforts of those in power to construct social structures of space that restricted mixed-raced relations.³

In The Lettered City, literary critic Angel Rama describes colonial cities as the materialization of the ideologies of colonialism and the physical instruments by

³ Although I do not emphasize the gendered aspect of colonialism, gender and sex certainly played a role in the creation and reconfiguration of spaces, relationships (including mixed-race) and populations as a whole. In her study of colonial governance and the sexual politics of empire, anthropologist and cultural theorist Ann Stoler has identified these spatialities and defined them as “vital political sites”. See for example, “Tense and Tender Ties: the Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things and Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule.
which order was created. But, how does a city create order and how did this notion originate? Spanish authorities built cities in the American continent using the checkerboard or grid urban layout (trazado en damero) known for its geometrical unity and regularity since Ancient Antiquity. As reflected by Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Strabo, Hippodamus of Miletos (also a philosopher and urban planner) was the first to theorize that a city or polis embodied order because it is a space for the civil, rational and civilized. During the Early Christian and Medieval Periods, Christian scholars and theologians appropriated the Greek notion of urbanity and imbued it with religious significance. Most notable is St. Augustine and his articulation of polis in his work The City of God where he metaphorically divided humanity into two cities, that of man and that of God. Europeans were familiar with these ideas and they used them in their conceptualization of cities in the New World. Spaniards defined themselves as vecinos (citizens) and inhabitants of urban centers where civic and Christian virtue could prevail, while relegating others – the indigenous, Africans and other groups – to the peripheral regions of the cities.

4 See Aristotle’s Politics and Strabo’s Geographica.
Thus, an orthogonal grid-based city in Colonial Spanish America was more than a simple locale; it was the manifestation of the operation of sociopolitical and religious ideologies – the division of civilized and Christian from barbarian and pagan (Martínez, “Space, Order and Group Identities” 14-15).

An Indian republic was created by the colonial powers to bring the indigenous communities to the Christian faith and efficiently collect tribute. This urbanizing project organized those classified as Indians into congregations and reductions that emulated the structure of the Spanish colonial city whenever possible and that were often adjacent to the places of labor (Martínez, “Space, Order and Group Identities”15). Indigenous communities were in theory supposed to lead segregated lives, as Spaniards were not allowed to live among them, and the Indians in turn were not permitted to inhabit Spanish urban areas. These restrictions were later to include those of mixed ancestry. Native populations were obligated to pay tribute in goods and services and inevitably drawn “into a European labor and money economy” (Bethell 83-84; Wade, Race and Ethnicity 26-28). Indigenous towns were also the geographical locations where the identities of these colonial subjects
were constructed because they reflected where an Indian came from as well as where he or she was allowed to go, and often determined his or her actions, habits and everyday life practices (Reynolds 11). Not all Indians were subject to these restrictions as some were able to escape to territories not controlled by the colonial authorities. In addition, those who did live in Indian spaces used the same political and economic system to contest these restricted spatialities and form different forms of relations with other cultural and racial groups. With the arrival of African slaves and other sources of labor, which in turn further complicated spatial boundaries and identitary categories, Indians were also able to “pass” as other castas or racial groups (Fisher & O’Hara 11; Hill, Hierarchy, Commerce and Fraud 198). Despite strenuous attempts by Spaniards to form distinct and separate human and spatial clusters, they were not successful because space and identity are always open to reformulation. Also, the colonial period ended in the Spanish Americas during the long 19th century, and independence brought about new spatialities and subjectivities (Mills 158). The colonial structures and practices were replaced by new
administrative, legal or educational systems that gave form to the nation-states and its national citizens.

**The Ancient History of Race**

Race is neither constant nor universal. It has been defined as a term, concept, a construct and discourse that emerged in the wake of European expansion and exploration to explain human and social variation. It is also a notion that at different moments in history has been built on other concepts such as heredity, phenotype, nature, biology and semantics. In other words, there is no simple or concrete meaning for race, and to try to create an all-encompassing and neat definition is perhaps impossible and erroneous. Instead of trying to elaborate a fixed definition of race, I will take on a chronological and etiological approach by discussing how the meaning of race has changed over time and by exploring the reasons and contexts in which different definitions emerged. I will also point out how many “modern” theories of race are often elaborations of inchoate conceptualizations about human diversity and similarity.

The etymology of race can be traced to the early 16th century Italian word *razza*, which signified a group with
common features, a stock or an offspring line with a common ancestor (Williams, 248-250). Although the term race itself is only five hundred years old, the origin of race – in the sense of denoting difference – is as ancient as humanity. By making such assertion, my intention is not to disagree with scholars who consider race an invention of modernity and inextricably linked to European colonization since the 14th century. In fact, I argue that the elaboration of race within a Latin American (and Honduran) context could not have preceded the discovery and conquest of this territory. Yet one cannot ignore the fact that human variation has always existed and that groups of people have probably always identified themselves in opposition and relation to others.

Prior to the Age of Exploration, Western racial theorizing was primarily based on the interpretation of authoritative Judeo-Christian and Classical Greek texts. Also, the common belief was that mankind had a common origin (a belief later coined monogenism) and that the external natural environment caused human difference. For example, in the Book of Genesis, all human lineages share the same ancestral genesis: Adam and Eve, the “first” people on Earth. But, as Peter Wade has cogently argued,
while the Bible may have suggested that in "essence" all individuals were related, it also provided the means for asserting difference and hierarchy among people. Wade indicates that the passage pertaining to Noah’s three sons — Japhet, Shem and Ham — and the lands that were given to each became the genealogical framework for explaining the peoples of the three Old World regions of Europe, Asia and Africa. To be precise, Japhet, Shem and Ham were considered the forefathers of Europeans, Asians and Africans, respectively. In addition, as the descendants of Ham, Africans were viewed as cursed and inferior to other lineages because in Genesis 9 Noah had cursed Ham for having seen him naked and drunk. (Race and Ethnicity 8). It is important to note that the book of Genesis does not associate each of Noah’s sons with a particular racial group or Old World region, much less characterizes Africans as inferior to the other two. There is also no direct reference to the idea of a tripartite division of the World (Jordan, 18-19).

The version of the sons of Noah that circulated during the Early Christian and Medieval Period was the product of successive interpretations and elaborations of the original biblical passage. In “The Sons of Noah and the Construction
of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods,” historian Benjamin Braude provides a comprehensive analysis of how this narrative was appropriated and altered over time before becoming the rational for human differentiation. He identifies Flavius Josephus’s midrashic work *Jewish Antiquities* (c. 94 AD) as the first text to list the lands that Noah’s descendants were granted and to designate Ham as the sole ancestor of Africans. *Jewish Antiquities* was also the text that ensuing biblical scholars read, cited and appropriated to further elaborate on the passage of the sons of Noah. For example, Josephus’s writings influenced Jerome’s *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologie* and Alcuin of York’s commentary on the book of *Genesis* titled *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesi*. Nonetheless, Braude makes it point to indicate that while Josephus may have been the first to utilize the geographical terms Africa, Asia and Europe, and his interpretative work was the source text for numerous Christian scholars, one cannot attribute to him the “three-son, three-continent” Noahic narrative. Josephus’s distribution of lands was not neatly formulated, or still remained vague, because he had placed Japhet’s descendants in both Europe and Asia, Ham’s
offspring in Africa and Asia and Shem’s progeny in Asia (111-113). Seven centuries passed before Alcuin of York formulated the conventional tripartite division of the World in his *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesi*. Since then, York’s commentary on the Noahic narrative became the most authoritative and most widely disseminated in the Western world.⁵

Up to this point I have explained how Ham has been identified with Africa since the 1st century. But, when did the racialization of Ham and his lineage occur? At what point did the figure of Ham become a Black African?

Although Ham was considered throughout the Medieval Era as a figure of Otherness and blackness was associated with sin and the devil (Wade, *Race and Ethnicity* 8), there was no direct correlation between Ham and blackness during this period. Medieval Biblical and laic manuscripts seldom described the figure of Ham or his descendants as having black skin or other phenotypical characteristics that became markers for physical difference in the Modern Period. According to Braude, most Medieval works portray

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⁵ Although Alcuin of York’s work was considered the most authoritative, there were texts circulating around the same time as his that rejected his version of the Noah narrative or granted a different land to the sons of Noah. See Braude, p. 113-114.
Ham as having white skin, and he has found that only those linked to Cush (one of the descendants of Ham) have been depicted with curly hair – a physical characteristic later associated with the “black race” (1201-121). The figure of a white African Ham may seem contradictory or perplexing at first, but there is a simple explanation for this representation. At this time, the concept of geography was very different from our contemporary notion because many conceived the three regions as being continuous. Consequently, for most Europeans Africa was another coast of the Mediterranean region (Braude 123).

Africa, as the continent we now know, did not become part of the European imaginary until the 15th century when Portuguese explorers began a series of expeditions to West Africa. In addition, it was this initial European contact with West African populations that opened a space for subsequent explorations of other territories during the next few centuries, including the Americas. As Europeans came in contact with these never before seen lands and peoples, they began to search for ways to explain their origins. In the case of the black Africans (but not Amerindians) Europeans argued that they found their heritage in the Noachic paradigm and the figure of Ham
(Braude, 126-138). This formulated link between Ham and African blacks, as I will later explain in this chapter, is what led to the eventual construction of a black subject and black race in the modern sense.

As I have indicated above, environmental conditions were believed to account for human constitution and variance. The notion that human nature was affected by factors such as the geography or climate of a location has a long history; it can be traced to the Classical Era and the writings of the historian and father of ethnography, Herodotus of Halicarnassus and the physician Hippocrates. In his illustrative text of the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars known as Histories, Herodotus includes several accounts of the lands and peoples he encountered or was informed of during his travels throughout the Old Persian Empire. As anthropologist Mary Hodgen suggests in “The Classical Heritage,” Herodotus’s descriptive practice can be considered one of the first, if not the initial, systematic taxonomy of populations because it was built on a specified set of criteria. Among the identifiable categories that Herodotus employed were customs, descent, language and geographical location. In addition, while Herodotus believed the nature of humanity to be immutable,
he discussed at large the variance he observed among individuals – both human and semi-human or monstrous – and indicated that such differences were the result of the environment.\textsuperscript{6} For Herodotus the environment included the physical as well as the social surroundings of an individual (Hodgen, 20–22; Wade, \textit{Race and Culture} 50). Nonetheless, Herodotus did not adhere to a strict interpretation of climatic causality because, according to \textit{Histories}, humans have the ability to not only adapt to, but also control the environment (Chiasson 59).

Since the time of Herodotus many of his accounts and proposed ideas pertaining to the nature of man became an influential part of the doctrine of environmental influences or cultural milieu that developed in Western society. They survived in numerous treatises; were further elaborated or modified in works such as those of Aristotle, Pliny the Elder and Saint Augustine; and more importantly, his categories of differentiation and established correlation between human nature and the environment provided a discourse on observable phenomena and diversity

\textsuperscript{6} In the \textit{Fall of Natural Man}, Anthony Pagden explains how all Greeks from Homer to Aristotle believed that man was, biologically at least, a single and unique genus. Pagden also indicated that the differences that Greek thinkers perceived between themselves and others were rationalized using categories of value (17).
for future Western philosophers, explorers and colonizers (Hodgen, 20-21). Although Herodotus claimed that his writings were without prejudice and solely based on observation or the words of others, these assertions have and should continue to be questioned. The reasoning for this is that Herodotus’s descriptions and classifications were clearly founded on a deliberate comparison between his people and those he observed and the premise that his own population existed as the point of comparison. Herodotus makes use of words such as “advanced,” “learned” and “barbarian,” defines others in terms of what they lack when compared to the Greek populations, and in general presents his people as the model to follow. In other words, what Herodotus achieves in his writings is the construction of two subjects, the Classical Greek man and the “Other,” with the prior being more civilized and superior to the latter.

Like Herodotus, Hippocrates also believed that the physical and social environment influenced human

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7 My argument is based on philosopher and sociologist Richard J F Day’s discussion of Herodotus’s notions of differentiation in his text Multiculturalism and the history of Canadian diversity, p. 50-51.

8 As is the case for many of the concepts defined in this chapter, barbarian and its cognates also have a long history. Initially, the term was utilized to designate a foreigner, in the 4th century it meant the inability to speak Greek, and since then has been employed to indicate cultural and moral inferiority, both of which have been liked to racial inferiority. See Anthony Pagden’s “The Image of the Barbarian” in The Fall of Natural Man.
composition and character. This is most reflected in Hippocrates’s medical treatise On Airs, Waters and Places where he argued that climate and lifestyle had a direct effect on the well being of the human body. Working within the theory of four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile), Hippocrates indicated that diseases were the body’s response to an imbalance in the proper mixture of these humors caused by the environmental conditions in which an individual lived (McCoskey 315). Differences in surroundings helped to explain why certain individuals were more prone to certain ailments, why some were able to cope better than others, and in general why physical and behavioral differences existed. For instance, Hippocrates attributed the prevalence of impotence among upper-class Scythians to the cold and wet climate of the region (Eurasia) and their practice of horseback riding. According to Hippocrates, there was also an unquestionable relationship between environmental conditions and the character of an entire people. He argued that the nature of the land influenced and determined human traits and customs, but also believed that changes and improvements to an individual or group could be effected through social and environmental engineering – a concept later formulated as
the inheritance of acquired characteristics or soft inheritance theory. Social institutions and exposure to a different environment, generally considered to be superior, could affect and often correct the human nature of an individual previously established by the physical environment (152-158). That is, an individual could acquire new physical and moral traits during his or her lifetime and transmit them to his or her offspring, thus possibly altering the composition of an entire group.

The theories proposed by Hippocrates served to explain the complexity and diversity observed in living systems and allowed for changes in human nature. Nevertheless, these naturalizing discourses also served to legitimate the claim of European superiority. In the second half of his work, Hippocrates indicated that his intention was to demonstrate “how different in all respects are Asia and Europe, and why races are dissimilar, showing individual physical characteristics” (159). Yet, Hippocrates certainly does more than that in his descriptions. He attributes particular values to several physical and behavioral features to argue that the European people were superior to

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those in Asia. For example, Hippocrates associates the “fierce, hot-headed and discordant temperament” common among the European races and absent in “Asiatics” (Asians) with courage (167), a distinguishing quality of populations with a finer nature. To further substantiate his argument, Hippocrates adds the self-governing nature he observes in Europeans as another contributing factor to their supremacy (167-168).  

The application of the principles of climatic determinism and the ascription of values to certain attributes became the norm among westerners to claim an essential European superiority and to place this continent at the center of all power.

But, how do Herodotus and Hippocrates’s arguments fit into this examination of race? How did their writings help formulate modern racial ideas? First and foremost, the physical and moral nature of mankind has and continues to be at the center of most racial studies because it is common to define race in terms of physical appearance, heredity and behavior. Moreover, just as Hippocrates and other Classical writers have done, it is the building of

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\(^{10}\) See Denise McCoskey’s “Egyptians and the Problem of Race in Classical Antiquity” and Andrew Wear’s “Place, Health, and Disease: The Airs, Waters, Places Tradition in Early Modern England and North America.” They both provide more textual examples of how Hippocrates applies certain values to conduct and physical traits.
ideas or values onto certain characteristics that has resulted in the construction of race. That is to say, differences in phenotype do exist among humans, but they are socially meaningless in the sense that they do not influence much less determine social differences. “But people build ideas about race onto chosen perceived biological differences” (Wade, Race and Nature 43). For example, hair, skin color and other physical traits have been worked into racial signifiers. In addition, these phenotypical features were associated with the presence or absence of certain cultural features, thus blurring the distinction between biology and culture (Gilroy 61). In addition, until the early 20th century the doctrine of environmental influences was considered the basis for those observed physical differences and served as the rationale for numerous civilizing missions designed to improve the racial make-up of those considered less civilized. Nevertheless, the possibility of change – which indicates that race is not fixed – also resulted in different expressions of anxieties regarding racial miscegenation and degeneration. This phenomenon marked the history of the Spanish colonies.
The New World and The Elaboration of Complex (Pre)-racial Ideologies

With Columbus’s first voyage to the Americas in 1492 many of the ancient theories pertaining to the physical nature of the world and difference were transplanted to the newly discovered territories and their inhabitants. Columbus’s descriptions and classifications of the Amerindian populations he encountered reflect a knowledge and application of scholastic ideas of the time. For instance, Columbus’s representations of some of the natives as simple, servile, easy to dominate and Christianize, lacking any form of government, and prospective slaves was influenced by Aristotle’s notion of the natural slave found in his Politics. During his return to Spain from his first voyage to the Americas, Columbus claimed to have heard from the natives, tales of an island inhabited only by women, and of their mates, the cannibals. The cannibals are described to Columbus as having one eye and the face of a dog.11 Scholars have often interpreted these comments as evidence of Columbus’s reading of Marco Polo’s 13th century travelogue, The Travels of Marco Polo, but as Miles

11 See Columbus’s diary entry for November 26, 1492.
Davidson has indicated, these legends have existed since Classical Antiquity (Columbus Then and Now 254). They are developed, for example, in Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*. I mention this work in particular because Pliny the Elder’s discourse on the natural environment also influenced Columbus’s account of the mastic trees he found in the Americas.\(^{12}\) Nonetheless, no other work has probably influenced Columbus more so than Pierre d’Ailly’s *Ymago Mundi*. Because this work is a compendium of numerous treatises on cosmographic and cosmological concepts as well as theories on human nature (proposed by many of the scholastic figures since the time of Antiquity), *Ymago Mundi* is without a doubt the main source for Columbus’s project of discovery.

The same holds true for many of the early 16th century explorers and settlers who were laden with much of the same cultural baggage as Columbus, and who made use of Classical and Medieval systems of categorization and hierarchization (described above) in an attempt to explain the origins and nature of the autochthonous peoples (Pagden, 2-3; Hanke, 1-3). In the case of the Spaniards, the concept of blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*) served as the paradigm of

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\(^{12}\) See Columbus’s diary entry for November 12, 1492. There he specifically cites Pliny the Elder.
exclusion of the “Other.” Moors, Jews and Pagans comprised the old “Others” while Indians and Africans constituted the new “Others.” Elaborated in Iberia during the 15th century, blood purity was utilized to distinguish old Christians from new Christians – newly converted Moors, Jews, Pagans and their progeny. According to this idea, new Christians were considered to have impure or stained blood due to their religious and racial origins. Furthermore, the absence or presence of such stain was believed to determine an individual’s character traits and possibilities at political and economic rights (Silverblatt, Foreword xi-xii; Hill, “Casta as Culture” 243-245). In other words, *limpieza de sangre* was another concept for naturalizing hierarchy in Spain and in the Americas.

To argue that the system of nomenclature developed in Colonial America was a simple transference of European criteria of differentiation is to simplify the complexities of colonial realities and categories, and to deny the constant debate about the applicability of some of these standards to New World subjects. This is particularly true of the case of the Amerindian and the category of “Indio,” both of which did not exist in the Spanish imaginary prior to the conquest and colonization of American territories.
During the first half of the 16th century, there was much uncertainty as to the human nature and ability to reason of the indigenous peoples. For example, there were two different, but concurrent, discourses for describing them: the noble Amerindian and the barbarous Amerindian. These two forms of representation were often a reflection of the degree to which the Amerindian had accepted Spanish colonial rule (Hulme 21). Directly tied to the image of the barbarian (and more specifically the cannibal) was the argument that the Native American was a natural slave in the Aristotelian sense and the Spaniard his superior (Hanke, 44-59). Nevertheless, there was no consensus as to this matter; the slavery of the indigenous was outlawed in 1542 and the Indian was to be officially protected by Spanish law. As previously stated, the category of “indio” was established and so was his place in the colonial order. Indio was an administrative, fiscal, census and spatially-constructed category given that the Indian was one who typically lived in a community composed solely of his own kind (república de indios), who paid tribute in labor and goods and who was counted in the population registers. Yet, with their eventual biological, cultural and spatial intermixing – otherwise known as mestizaje – with Spaniards
and Africans and the surge of new classifications, “indios” were able to “pass” from one grouping to another.

In the case of the African populations, their status was not as clearly defined. The category of slave had previously been established given the fact that Christians and Moors had enslaved each other during the medieval period. The Spanish had participated in the African slave trade, and both the Bible and Aristotelian philosophy justified the subjugation of captives of a just war. As such, many of the first Africans brought to the Spanish colonies were slaves and not subjects of the Crown as Indians were (Wade, Race and Ethnicity 26-28). But some Africans were or became free through the process of manumission, resulting in an elaboration of a series of ambiguous and malleable groupings (Fisher & O’Hara 3). The tripartite colonial system of classification was expanded and now included labels such as zambos, mulatos castas, pardos, and morenos. These and other terms for populations of mixed descent were not new inventions, but what was particular to the New World realities was that their

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13 By tracing the etymology and history of colonial nomenclature, literary scholar Ruth Hill has convincingly proven that most, if not all, classifications utilized to denote individuals of mixed descent were brought over from the Old World by secular and religious authorities. See “Casta as Culture,” p. 236-258.
meanings varied depending on the social and institutional setting. In addition, despite the existence and use of these classifications, those who were not considered Indian, slave or Spaniard were not always differentiated, but rather grouped together (Fisher & O’Hara, 11-12). For example, in New Granada and Brazil, those of mixed-descent were simply libres (free people); in Cuba they were pardos (light brown) or morenos (dark brown), a reference to skin color (Wade, Race and Ethnicity 29); and in Central America, they were ladinos or pardo-ladinos (Lutz, 101-103).

My aim is by no means to enter in a detailed analysis of the etymology of the entire nomenclature that developed in the Spanish American colonies. It is not possible, and as I indicated above these terms were constantly reconstituted. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that there was no single or clear criteria for these terms of difference. It also cannot be argued that they were primarily biological – as biology as we define it today did not exist and the distinction between nature and culture were blurred – but rather socio-cultural. In other words, what I am espousing is the concept of calidad to describe these colonial categories. Calidad or quality goes beyond
one definition or one observable or non-observable characteristic; it includes references to origin, purity of blood, economic status, dress, morality, skin color and other traits that the external environment was believed to influence (Carrera 6; Hill, *Hierarchy, Commerce and Fraud* 200). The malleability of the application of such labels is also part of the definition of the concept of *calidad*. The categories that Church and Royal officials assigned to individuals “could be modified by design, customary practice or accident” (Tavarez 82) and were subject to “constant interplay between internalized understanding of self and group association and externalized social norms” (Fisher and O’Hara 15).

The complexities of the New World, coupled with the beginning of the Enlightenment Period in the 18th century, gave rise to varied ideas on human nature. Intellectuals and scientists, above all, discussed and wrote numerous works on whether or not recent discoveries and more methodical observations disproved the theory of monogenesis and put into question the fixity of human nature. Part of the debate on the permanence of human disposition and makeup included the distinction between culture and nature, which up to this point, was often unclear. Philosophers
Johann Gottfried Herder, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, historian Edward Long and physician Charles White were among those who argued for polygenesis – the notion that different human populations had distinct origins and were essentially different – or at least questioned the long-standing notion of monogenesis. Herder’s ideas were probably among the most radical as he suggested that the different racial forms were the result of genetic material, and as a result, change and variation could only be achieved through sexual reproduction and the transmitting of genetic material (Wade, Race and Nature 50-53). The works of these thinkers were quite significant because they challenged the doctrine of monogenesis and served as precursors for those who would elaborate the science of race in the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet they were part of the minority, as many scholars continued to promote monogenesis.

The doctrine of inheritance of acquired characteristics has existed since the time of the Greeks, but it became even more dominant during the 18th century. Scholars like natural historian Comte de Buffon, botanist Carl Linnaeus, anthropologist Johann Friedich Blumenbach and naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck – considered in the
modern era the father of the theory of soft inheritance – heavily relied on environmental influences to explain human difference. As Peter Wade has indicated, the espousal of environmentalism by these thinkers may seem counterintuitive because the theory itself allows for the possibility of change and improvement. Of course, the form of transformation was never fully specified and change was never believed to be immediate, but rather occurred over many generations. These writers may have well assumed that humanity originated from one species and were fundamentally the same, but the fact that they also believed that change was probable does seem to imply at the very least a recognition of the difference between “a permanent underlying nature and more flexible overlying culture” (Wade, Race and Culture 51).

The works of Blumenbach, Buffon and Linnaeus also converted many images and descriptions of human difference into coherent systems of classification that became part of the basis for describing race as a type. Buffon argued that human categories should include a series of physical and mental features such as hair-type, skin color, intelligence and physiognomy (Hudson 254). In 1735 Linnaeus subdivided the human species into four varieties or races based on
shared physical traits: the white European, the red American, the black African and the Brown Asian. Blumenbach later created a system of human classification very similar to that of Linnaeus, but he divided humanity into five different races. They included the Caucasian or white race, the American or red race, the Ethiopian or black race, the Mongolian or yellow race and the Malayan or brown race (Hudson 255). Nevertheless, neither Linnaeus nor Blumenbach made any real distinction between physical and cultural traits (Wade, Race and Ethnicity 7-11). This was done in the two decades that followed.

Elaborating the Science of Race

Beginning in the 19th century human difference was no longer defined in terms of lineage, but rather type. According to the notion of racial typology, which built on Blumebach’s fivefold classification and theory of polygenism, humanity was divided into permanent and separable racial types. Scientists like Georges Cuvier and James Prichard argued that human beings did not necessarily descend from a common stock (Abraham) and as a result could be assigned to a particular race on the basis of observable physical traits such as cranium shape, skin color and hair
color (Wade, Race and Nature 60-61). Racial types were hierarchically ordered as lineages had previously been, but the basis for this structure was often the innate differences of ‘biology’ amongst the races. That is not to say that the ideas of soft inheritance and monogenism were discarded by the surge in scientific discoveries and knowledge. In fact, those two theories continued to be the dominant explanation for racial difference during this century. Nevertheless, by mid-century scientific racialism began to solidify and gain further support with the establishment of British racial science and the American School of Ethnography, both proponents of polygenesis and racial hierarchies;\textsuperscript{14} the publishing of works like Samuel George Morton’s Crania Americana, Robert Knox’s The Races of Men, Charles Darwin’s The Origin of Species, Herbert Spencer’s Principles of Biology and System of Synthetic Philosophy where he applied Darwin’s theory of natural selection to economic, political and social matters (Social Darwinism) and Francis Galton’s Hereditary Genius and Inquiries into human faculty and its development, where he

\textsuperscript{14} Hartman-Strom provides a comprehensive description of the American School Ethnography in “If Success Depends Upon Enterprise: Central America, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Race in the Travel Narratives of E. G. Squier.” This particular text will be explained in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.
coined the term eugenics (Wade, Race and Culture 61); Gregor Johann Mendel’s identification of inheritance patterns of certain traits in pea plants which paved the way for the elaboration of genetics in the 20th century (Wade, Race and Ethnicity 13); and the dissemination and application of these works and the scientific principles of eugenics and social Darwinism throughout Europe and the Americas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Eugenics and social Darwinism emerged during the apogee of scientific racism. Both theories argued that physical, physiological and mental variations were the results of hereditary material and were often employed to promote the supremacy of the white European race. That is, these two philosophies planted the seeds for racist formulations based on the idea that the “race plasma” of certain groups – meaning that of the European race – was fitter and therefore superior to that of other degenerative populations. These weaker groups included those of hybrid racial composition (Stepan, 22-27). In 1883, English anthropologist Francis Galton put forward the idea known as eugenics by asserting that intervention in collective human sexual reproduction may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or
mentally. His arguments were based on the procedures enacted by naturalists and breeders of animals and plants and their conclusions drawn from crossbreeding (Galton, cited in Stepan 111). By the end of the century eugenics became a social movement on both sides of the Atlantic and began to influence public policies pertaining to human sexual reproduction and control (Wade, Race and Culture 65). Like Galton, Herbert Spencer elaborated on the conclusions of naturalists when he coined the term “survival of the fittest” and attempted to structure Darwin’s idea of evolution by natural selection within the social sciences and fields of social interactions and relationships (Bannister, 3-4). Spencer’s ideas became quite popular, especially in the United States, in the ensuing years and led to the bolstering of notions like laissez-faire, individualism and the rationalization of socio-racial inequalities (Erickson, 70-71; Hofstadter, 4-5). Of course, these theories or their biological foundations were not always accepted or recognized, and in certain cases were combined with environmentalist theories.

\[15\] See Ruth Hill’s Hierarchy, Commerce, and Fraud in Bourbon Spanish America, p. 200-201. Here she discusses how certain scientists and intellectuals defined race as a social construct despite espousing the ideas of polygenism, eugenics and social Darwinism.
This was the case in most of Latin America during the period of nation building. Scientists and intellectuals drew from both neo-Lamarckian ideals of soft inheritance and hard-line innatist racial ideas when employing measures aimed at improving the physical and cultural makeup of its diverse and degenerative populations (Appelbaum 13).

**The Concept of Identity and Nation**

Much like the elaboration and application of various discourses pertaining to race, the construction of a national identity is concerned with exclusion and inclusion, with establishing who can become part of the proposed national image. Identity is a common but difficult concept to define. It is often described in either individualistic – what makes one unique, different from others – or in collective terms. But, a definition of identity should not favor the individualistic or collective aspect of such concept, but rather explore and emphasize the dialectical relation that exists between them. For example, as I have suggested above in my discussion of colonial subjectivities, the identitary labels of African, Indian and Spaniard are social as well as identitary categories. They indicate membership in collective groups
to which an individual was assigned at birth, are linked to terms that denote biological descent, but can be used and were as self-identification markers. Yet there is also fluidity in these categories as there have been cases where a royal decree has declared an Indian a Spaniard (Salles-Reese). The concept of identity is also frequently attached to other notions such as class, gender, nation and race because one typically speaks about a gendered, class, racial or national identity (which is the topic of this study). It is important to note that while national identity is a subcategory or only one possible component of the all-encompassing concept of identity, the scope of this section will limit itself to the discussion of this idea and its inextricable relation to race and space given that all three are mutually constitutive.

Since the surge of the modern notion of “nation-state” in the aftermath of the French Revolution in the late 18th century and the independence of most Latin American countries from Spanish rule in the 19th century, the concept of national identity has been the object of heated debate. Depending on the approach, geography and perhaps more importantly the historical, political and cultural

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16 This detail comes from a personal meeting between Dr. Salle-Reese and I, dated March 15, 2012.
conditions under which these newly formed states were created, intellectuals have proposed numerous, and often times contradictory definitions for national identity. In *Reframing Latin America*, historian Eric Ching and literary scholars Christina Buckley and Angelica Lozano-Alonso discuss what they describe as two main schools of thought: hermeneutic nationalists or modernists and semioticians or postmodernists. Modernists consider national identity an essential and “ontological spirit that binds people together into the national unit [for they] share intrinsic traits which are almost like bloodlines, which they cannot deny, and which fundamentally determine who they are.” Such shared and interconnected characteristics may include race, language, religion, culture, history and common experience. Post-modernists, on the other hand, argue that national identity (and by extension its traits) is an idea, a construct discursively constituted and reinforced (Ching, et al. 135). It is a conceptual abstraction conceived by leaders of newly-independent territories and made tangible through a series of processes. Nevertheless, there are scholars like cultural theorist Stuart Hall who provide a definition that falls somewhere between these two opposing views. By examining his own process of identification, Hall
argues that individuals “come from some place: they have a history, culture, or community that has framed their conceptualization of the world… [But these places are] constituted discursively, their meaning always in flux” (Hall, “Ethnicity” 347); that identity (including national identity) is not an immutable essence, but “something that happens over time, that is never absolutely stable [and] that is subject to the play of history and the play of difference” (Hall, “Ethnicity” 344).

Although scholars are not in complete agreement as to the nature, components or even consequences of national identity, most proposed definitions share certain elements. The definitions often refer to it as a construct, as the “sharing or commonality of a sense of belonging to a specific territory [or ancestry]” (Radcliffe and Westwood 16), as ties of “solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths [and] traditions” (Smith 15). But how and when is this feeling of belonging or bonds among individuals formed? Sociologist Anthony D. Smith, historian Oscar Rápalo Flores, literary critic Gregory Jusdanis – to name a few scholars – argue that members of a

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17 See also Hall’s introduction to Questions of Cultural Identity and The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism p 1895-1910.
community must go through a process of “socialization” where they learn to differentiate themselves from other communities while remaining identical to themselves. Socialization is typically achieved through compulsory, standardized, public mass education systems, through which state authorities hope to inculcate national devotion and a distinctive, homogenous culture...by providing repertoires of shared values, symbols...flags, coinage, anthems, uniforms, monuments and ceremonies (Smith, 16-17). 

These “resources and institutions of culture” serve as mnemonic devices that facilitate the feeling of commonality and belonging. In addition, there is a necessary utilization of history. In El orden de la memoria, historian Jacques Le Goff demonstrates how at the moment of facing the task of finding one’s origin and creating a nation and national identity, history is utilized and often manipulated; the past is recovered, reconstructed and is

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18 Many of the elements that go into the process of socialization are the same ones utilized in the creation of memory. Consequently, there is an undeniable relation between the two concepts especially since both are essential to identity. See El orden de la memoria, p 168-171.

19 In the Necessary Nation, Gregory Jusdanis indicates that resources of culture (interpretation, rhetoric, symbols and myths) and its institutions (art, literature, the academy) are exploited in order to promote the creation and maintenance of national identity (11).
converted into memory (collective memory 20 specifically) through the process of writing and the erection of monuments.

According to Le Goff collective memory and what he calls its scientific form, history, are applicable to two types of materials: documents and monuments. Memory is materialized through documents, which serve as material proof of events and monuments, which have a commemoratory aim. But, what do the terms monument and document signify? According to its philosophical origins, “monument” is
todo lo que puede hacer volver al pasado, perpetuar el recuerdo (por ejemplo los acontecimientos escritos)...

[Sin embargo] desde la antigüedad romana el monumentum tiende a especializarse en dos sentidos: 1) una obra de arquitectura o de escultura y 2) un monumento funerario... Documento del latín “documentum, deriva de docere <<enseñar>> [y] ha evolucionado hacia el significado de <<prueba>>, el sentido moderno de testimonio histórico solo data del siglo XIX (227-228).

20 Collective memory is defined by Pierre Nora (1978) as “lo que queda del pasado en lo vivido por los grupos, o bien lo que estos grupos hacen del pasado” (cited in Le Goff 179) [what is left of the past in the lived experiences of groups or rather what groups do with the past] (my translation).
[all that allows the past to return, to perpetuate memory (written accounts are examples). Nevertheless, since Roman antiquity “monumentum” tends to refer to two things: 1) a work of architecture or sculpture and 2) a commemorative stone. Document, from the Latin “documentum” derives from the word “docere” meaning to “educate” and has then evolved to signify “proof”. The contemporary denotation of document as historical testimony dates back only to the 19th century.] (My translation)

Nationalistic leaders and intellectuals were fully aware of the power of a monument to perpetuate memory and that of a document to serve as proof when creating a nation-state. As a result, they dedicated themselves to searching historical texts and constructing monuments that would serve their political purposes. This occurred as well in Latin America given that the ruling minority of the newly independent colonies launched nationalistic campaigns to unify fragmented, racially and culturally diverse societies under one nation.

Directly tied to the elaboration of national identity is the defining and establishment of citizenship. One of the challenges of numerous nation-states during their
formative years was the shaping of the once colonial subjects into national and homogenous citizens. Following the ideals of Republican liberalism, the ruling Latin American minority proclaimed judicial equality for all its inhabitants, but also established a set of criteria for citizenship – property-ownership, literacy and morality. On the surface such standards appear to lack any explicit racial demarcation, but as I have indicated above in my discussion of race, this set of criteria had been associated with racial discourses since the age of discovery. In other words, from the onset, Latin American notions of national identity were clearly racialized.\(^{21}\) Race became even more paramount in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th during the formulation of eugenic and medical practices that linked a salubrious environment to racial health (Stepan, 84-95). This was also the period in which many State officials and intellectuals articulated a broader and more inclusive conception of citizenship through the establishment of the mestizo – in both racial and cultural terms – as the national image and the

\(^{21}\) The inseparability and mutually constitutive nature of both of these concepts has been argued by numerous scholars, using different territories as case studies, like Peter Wade, Nancy Appelbaum and Erik Ching. See Race and Nation in Modern Latin America, Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and "Identity Construct 4: Nation" in Reframing Latin America.
rejection of European and North American assertions of the racial inferiority of Latin American hybrids.

Conclusions

Race, space and identity are concepts used by all to define, form and structure human reality. Since ancient antiquity, Western societies have elaborated systems of ideas and ideals that incorporate one, and often times, all three concepts in an effort to denote difference and establish hierarchy among populations. In this introductory chapter I have reviewed some of those ideologies and have begun to explain how they were applied to or re-elaborated in the Spanish Americas during the age of colonialism. I have also argued that these three terms have no fixed referents and that their meanings are always in flux because during (and after) the colonial period most ideas pertaining to race, space and identity were often challenged as well as reconstituted. Nevertheless, this assertion needs to be nuanced because although Spanish American nations share a common colonial past, the processes and the repercussions of this phenomenon vary from country to country. In the following chapters I focus on the particular case of Honduras and use the concepts of
space, race and identity to explain the processes that led to the initial configuration of the province of Honduras and produced different territorial and human arrangements. In the process, I formulate a theory that integrates race, space and identity and demonstrates that there is a mutually constitutive relationship among them.
Chapter 2: Miscegenation, (Proto)racial Classifications and The Development of An Afromestizo Population in Colonial Honduras

Housed within the walls of the main church of Manto—a small colonial town in the department of Olancho—a late 17th century oil painting titled “The Christ of the Souls in Purgatory” (see figure 1) was largely unknown and ignored as a result of its remote location and centuries of accumulated grime and wear. Once this painting was restored it uncovered the artist’s original form and hues and, perhaps more importantly, unveiled imagery that attests to the racial makeup of the colonial populations that has been masked since the 19th century through a series of complex
processes (see figure 2). From the bodies in purgatory, there is an evident racial gradation and two prominent and identifiable figures: an indio in the foreground and a negro in the background. Works of art such as this one and documentation largely overlooked and/or destroyed, challenge the prevalent notion that, except for the Caribbean coast where the Garífuna, Black West Indian and sambo populations settled, Honduras is a nation built and composed of the biological and cultural mixing of Europeans and indigenous populations.

In this chapter I discuss the various historical, cultural and economic processes that produced a racially and culturally heterogeneous colonial society. I begin by explaining the early years of the conquest of Honduras and its effects on the character of autochthonous groups who lived in this territory well before the arrival of the Spaniards. I pay special attention to the types of relations and spaces of miscegenation formed among Spaniards, Indians and Africans despite the efforts of secular and religious authorities to keep them apart. I demonstrate through an analysis of different government and ecclesiastical records how and why African slaves and African-descendants played an important role in all sectors
of colonial society and became in the 18th century the largest population group. Lastly, I explain the complex racial nomenclature that developed in Honduras with an emphasis on the problematic classificatory term *ladino*.

**Demarcating Initial Territorial and Human Spaces**

The earliest first-hand description that we have of Honduras and its inhabitants comes from Christopher Columbus’s encounter with a trading canoe off the coast of Honduras and his subsequent landing on the eastern shore during his fourth voyage to the New World in 1502. The account given by Hernando Columbus, son of Christopher Columbus, reveals a sophisticated society; one with women who covered their faces and bodies like Moors of Granada and men who demonstrated a sense of shame unlike the other natives they had encountered in the other islands (40-41). Between 1502 and 1523, there were a few voyages to the coast of Honduras – including that of Vicente Yáñez Pinzón y Juan Díaz de Solís who were part of Columbus’s fourth voyage and who have been credited for naming this territory Honduras for its apparent deep waters. But it was not until 1524, three years after the fall of the Aztec Empire, that
three simultaneous expeditions of conquest and colonization from three geographical points occurred. González Dávila from the island of Hispaniola, Hernán Cortés and Cristóbal de Olid from central México and Hernández de Córdoba and Hernández de Soto from Panamá all traveled to Honduras and made claims to this territory that was reputed to be another México and that had access to both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (Chamberlain, 12-14). During the next two years, these men created the first settlements along the coast: González Dávila established the cities of San Gil de la Buena Vista and Puerto Caballos, Olid founded Triunfo de la Cruz, Cortés formed the town of Natividad and Francisco de las Casas established the city of Trujillo, which became the main junction of commercialism and the point of communication with the metropolis via Santo Domingo o la Habana (Chaverri 206). Nevertheless, they did not find another great empire or the wealth they were seeking, which led many of the first explorers to abandon the initial settlements and to transport many of the natives to the Caribbean islands where there was a great need for labor (Pineda-Portillo 68; Chaverri 209). The extensive depopulation of Honduras that occurred during the first few decades had long lasting effects and eventually
led to the importation of slaves as an alternative source of labor.

Beginning in the mid 1530s, the focus of colonial activity shifted from the coast to the interior of Honduras. The discovery of gold and silver deposits throughout the western and central parts of the province provided Spanish colonizers with the possibility of material wealth. Consequently, numerous mines were excavated and many of the most important colonial centers of administration and economic activity were established in territories inhabited by numerous and diverse Amerindian populations. After much opposition from indigenous members of the Lenca group (including the Lenca chieftain Lempira, which I will discuss at length in the fourth chapter), the Spanish conquistador Gonzalo de Alvarado founded the city of Gracias a Dios\textsuperscript{22} in 1536, and Captain Alonso Cáceres assisted in the creation and populating of the villa of Comayagua in 1537 and the city San Jorge de Olancho in 1540 (Chaverri 207). Each of these settlements was important for numerous reasons. Gracias a Dios was not only located in the most heavily populated indigenous region of Honduras,

\textsuperscript{22} This city is now known as Gracias, part of the department of Lempira, and should not be confused with the department of Gracias of Dios in the northeastern part of the country.
but was the site of the Royal Audiencia of Confines (superior court in New Spain) from 1544 to 1549 before being transferred to Guatemala city; Comayagua, which initially was a small mining community, became the capital of the province and the main religious center; and Olancho was the site of some of the most important and productive mines (Chaverri 211). In addition, all of these cities were strategic points from which the Spanish authorities sought to organize many of the Indian communities that surrounded them and gain control of territories and Indian populations located to the east and south of these settlements.

Figure 3: Map titled “Descripción del Audiencia de Guatemala,” created by cosmographer and chronicler Juan López de Velásquez (1575). Source: Honduras: An Atlas of Historical Maps
Numerous indigenous groups with distinct linguistic and cultural affiliations inhabited this terrain before the time of conquest. Given Honduras’s isthmus location, it was a true passing bridge for different populations, with about eight groups organized into either chiefdoms or tribes settling in this territory between the late 5th and 18th centuries (Reyes-Mazzoni, “La frontera” 82; See Figure 4). Those classified as chiefdoms were in large part semi-complex societies or a cluster of agricultural communities ruled by hereditary chiefs. These chiefdoms had established forms of religious practices and their numbers could reach up to tens of thousands (Chaverri, 204-205). Although archeological evidence is quite limited and most of the information regarding Pre-Colombian societies derives from colonial documentation, three groups -- the Lenca, the Chorotega and the Maya Chortí -- have been identified as structurally organizing their population into chiefdoms. The Lenca was (and continues to be) the largest autochthonous group. They primarily inhabited the central regions of Honduras, areas now known as Intibucá, Lempira and La Paz. The Chorotega is a small group believed to have migrated from the South of México during the ninth and tenth centuries and settled in the southern region of
Honduras known as Choluteca. The Maya – the most well known, but the smallest chiefdom in terms of number – populated the most western part of the country known as Copán. Although much of the cultural remains of this civilization indicate that they reached the state level of organization during the Classic Period, most of its inhabitants abandoned the center city in the 9th century. The structure of those who remained was closer to that of chiefdoms than a State (Newson, 20-29).

Figure 4: Geographical Distribution of Chiefdoms and Tribes in Honduras (Roughly based on Chaverri’s Map found in “La formación histórica de Honduras,” p. 205)

The first few decades of conquest and colonization were characterized by brutal defeats of numerous members of the different chiefdoms and a damaging Indian slave trade
that resulted in the Honduran indigenous population being reduced by over 98%. According to the estimates that the Bishop of Honduras Cristóbal de Pedraza provided to the Crown in 1539, the Honduran Indian population had declined from 800,000 to 15,000. By 1541, Italian historian and well-known traveler of the West Indies and Spanish Americas Girolamo Benzoni argued that only 8,000 Indians remained in Honduras (Newson 125). Nevertheless, the arrival of the Spaniards to Honduras had other long lasting effects that extended well beyond the depopulation of indigenous groups. It is often not emphasized how the conquest fragmented the identities of these societies and dissolved their conception of the world. The native populations had their own spatial organizations, cultural practices and beliefs, but the arrival of Spanish colonizers and the ensuing colonial settler projects reduced the area available for Indian activity and subsistence and replaced existing indigenous spaces with European spatial forms of organization and hegemony (Newson 120). The distribution of land grants to colonists and the implementation of the encomienda system, which demanded tribute and forced labor from the natives, altered their way of life. Also, the establishment of two separate republics – one for Spaniards
and the other for Indians – limited the indigenous to specific controlled spaces and further redefined their identity. This urbanizing project was strongly enforced after the royal decree of June 10, 1540 ordered that all Indians living in the provinces of the current Central America be brought together or reduced into town provinces (Markman 4). In other words, it is at this moment that the identity of “indio” was created.

Indigenous communities were supposed to lead segregated lives in order for the Spaniards to effectively collect tribute, easily supervise native activity and maintain the racial and religious purity of Spaniards and Indians. Interracial contact and miscegenation was a great concern in Honduras because the limited number of Spanish females together with a majority of single male encomenderos resulted in a large number of illicit relationships between Indian women and Spanish men and an increasing number of mestizo children, exposing the failed two-system republic and limiting the amount of tribute that could be collected from their offspring. As a way to ameliorate the situation, the Crown issued a law (dated November 8, 1539) that required all single encomenderos to marry a Spanish woman and bring her to the province of
Honduras within three years or lose his encomienda (Aguiluz 105). While this decree did decrease the number of single Spaniards in Honduras, it did very little to impede the continuous racial contact or the anxiety surrounding it that grew even more with the emerging African slave and African-descendant populations of the following centuries. The colonial system of exploitation undoubtedly facilitated miscegenation. This led to more discovery and settlements in areas that were not explored in the first century of the conquest of Honduras.

As I indicated above, the Spanish colonial authorities had concentrated most of their energies on the western and central regions during the first 100 years of the conquest and colonization of Honduras. The few exceptions were the coastal town of Trujillo, established in 1524 and abandoned in 1643 after being sacked by pirates, and the few communities in the Olancho Valley near the Guayape River where most of the silver and gold mines had been discovered. There, many of the miners and their teams (composed of Indigenous men and African slaves who began to arrive in the mid 1530s) formed settlements and even began to reduce some of the Paya Indians who lived in and around the area and would become part of the tributary
populations. But as expressed by the Bishop of Honduras Alonso de la Cerda in a 1582 letter to the Crown, these establishments were often temporary, the site of rebellions, and many of the villages and mines were abandoned by both the natives and Africans who escaped deep into the mountains and other unexplored terrains because the Spaniards never exercised efficient mechanisms to oversee these populations. Moreover, there were few priests who lived among them who could indoctrinate them, administer the necessary sacraments and pacify them (AGI Guatemala 164). The consequences of these events were grave, especially at an economic level, as there was no one to work in the mines and very little tribute could be collected. There was a need not only to re-conquer those that had escaped, but also to find new sources of labor. They solution appeared to lie in the spiritual conquest and occupation of La Taguzgalpa, a space that was home to what appeared to the Spanish to be an abundant number of native populations.

The Conquest of La Taguzgalpa Region

La Taguzgalpa was a large territory that covered over 400 leagues. It encompassed the north coast region as far
west as the river Ulúa and east to the estuary of the River Jare o Segovia in the cape of Gracias a Dios, and extended as far south as the town of Juticalpa in the Olancho Valley (Cuddy 33). Before and during the Spanish conquest of Honduras, a mosaic of small socio-political units or tribes that were organized on an egalitarian basis inhabited this region. They were known for being hunters and gatherers and in general their religion was based on animism and shamanism (Newson 67). Prior to the 17th century there appear to have been three major indigenous groups in this area of the country: the Xicaques who inhabited the present day departments of Yoro and Olancho, the Paya who were present in small nuclei in the departments of Colón, Olancho and Gracias a Dios, the Taguacas (also known as the Sumu) who settled in the mountainous region between Olancho and Gracias a Dios. During the mid 17th century and the latter part of the 18th century, two additional tribal groups began to inhabit the northeastern region of Honduras (Pineda-Portillo 71).

Unlike the previously mentioned groups, these populations cannot be classified as indigenous because they are racially mixed. The Mosquito-sambos are descendants of Indians who lived in the far-east coastal jungle region and
a group of African slaves who, according to the Bishop of Nicaragua Benito Garret y Arloví, had taken shelter in the territory after their ship was wrecked off the coast of Honduras in 1641. After defeating many of the indigenous tribal leaders, the African slaves eventually settled in the land and intermarried with the natives (AGI Guatemala 299). Like the Mosquito-sambos, the Garífuna are products of the racial and cultural amalgamation between fugitive slaves and Amerindian populations. It is believed that Africans who fled from two Spanish slave ships that had been wrecked during a storm in 1635 found refuge on the island of Saint Vincent – an island the conquistadors were initially not interested in due to its lack of valuable metals. There they voluntarily integrated themselves into the Amerindian communities, formed a new culture that opposed European colonization and became a dominant society as more refugees immigrated to the island (Gargallo-Cecari, 161-163). During the 18th century things changed as territorial disputes and struggles for power surged among the communities. Also, the Amerindians began to form

23 One of the first Spanish sources that include a detailed narrative of the origin of the Mosquito-sambos was the November 30, 1711 letter from the Bishop of Nicaragua to King Phillip V. In addition to discussing the origin of this group, Bishop Garret y Arloví indicates that this group posed a great threat to Spanish settlements in both the province of Nicaragua and Honduras.
alliances with France and Great Britain who sought control of the island. After the Paris Peace Treaty of 1763 granted St. Vincent to England, a series of wars against the Garífuna people resulted in their expulsion from the island in 1796 and their exile to the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras in 1797 (Gonzáles 39; Sletto 22). Between 1797 and 1800, they began to migrate to the Honduran coastal cities of Trujillo, Tela and la Ceiba (Rivas 280).

But what measures did the Spanish colonial powers take to colonize and incorporate La Taguzgalpa to the overall territory of the Province of Honduras? The conquest of La Taguzgalpa began with intermittent missionary expeditions. Led by members of the Franciscan Order, there were a few attempts in the early 17th century to enter this territory but often there was little, if any, success. This was especially the case of the first two missions that commenced in 1608 and 1622 and quickly ended when the clerics who led them suffered gruesome deaths at the hands of tribal groups. Friars Verdálate and Juan de Monteguado were killed by a group of Taguacas and Friar Cristóbal Martínez was massacred by the Mosquito-sambos (Alvarado-García, El misionero español 18-19). Juan Ferrez, one of the soldiers who survived the encounter with the Mosquito-
sambos, indicated in his testimony that “savage” people tortured Friar Martínez, broke his legs and crucified him before leaving him to die. The other missionaries who accompanied Friar Martínez suffered the same unfortunate fate as well (Alvarado-García, El misionero español 27-28). These gruesome deaths and other unsuccessful attempts at infiltrating La Taguzgalpa region resulted in an immediate suspension of all missionary expeditions for the ensuing 43 years.

In 1664, a wealthy livestock farmer from Olancho by the name of Captain Bartolomé de Escoto petitioned the Audiencia of Guatemala for assistance in protecting numerous towns that were being attacked by Xicaque tribes. Escoto had been instrumental in the reduction and conversion of the Xicaques and establishing four towns in the Olancho Valley, but by the mid 17th century many of these settlements were under attack by indigenous groups who had yet to be colonized. This resulted in the resumption of missionary activity in the Taguzgalpa and the creation of eight more or less temporary reductions in the Olancho Valley and Yoro. In conjunction with Escoto and other military men, Franciscan Friars Fernando Espino, Pedro de Ovalle and Lorenzo Guevara were able to
Christianize, relocate and reorganize some of the nomadic indigenous populations into the following reductions – San Bartolomé, San Buenaventura, San Felipe, San Sebastián, San Pedro de Yoro, Santa María, Luquigue and Talanga (AGCA A1.23 Leg 10075 exp 1520).

In addition to providing a more peaceful means by which to control these native tribes, many of these religious men produced texts that contained invaluable information about their experiences and the lands they explored. For instance, at the request of his superiors Fernando Espino wrote in 1674 his account of the missionary expeditions to this region titled Relación verdadera de la reducción de los indios infieles de la provincia de la Taguzgalpa. In his narrative, Espino described a difficult and inaccessible terrain – one that required weeks of travel up and down rivers, mountains and jungle areas that had never been explored, much less colonized. In his journey he identifies specific landforms, provides interesting demographical information about the inhabitants he encounters and those found to the north of these settlements. In addition, he describes in detail the route of his journey. The course of this expedition, which began at the site where the first Franciscans were killed in 1608
and ended where the Patuca River reached the department of Yoro, later benefited those who followed Espino and continued the colonization of La Taguzgalpa. Espino also detailed the limited success that both religious and secular officials had in keeping the previously reduced Indians from running away (especially those found in the reservation of San Buenaventura) or from being attacked by both Mosquito-sambos and African slaves brought by English merchants who sought control of La Taguzgalpa area as well. Escoto corroborated these arguments in 1685 when he indicated, in a letter to the General Captain of Guatemala Henrique Henriquez de Guzmán, that the Mosquito-sambos and their African allies killed many Indians belonging to the reductions of San Francisco and San Sebastián. According to Escoto, of the many indigenous women and children captured by the Mosquito-sambos, only fifteen were able to escape (AGCA A1 Leg 2013 exp 13934). Indeed, many Indians became casualties during this battle among Spaniards, British and nomadic tribes for control of La Taguzgalpa. But it is important to note that some of these raids were the result of alliances among Mosquito-sambos, Africans and the natives of these reductions who were not only tired of being forced to pay tribute to the Spanish Crown, but also
began to hear of the more favorable conditions of those who collaborated with the English merchants who had settled in the northeast of Honduras.

Attracted by news of possible riches, the English arrived in the Bay Islands and coastal region beginning in the late 1570s. Shortly thereafter, unlike the Spanish, they developed a strong economic, political and military presence in the Taguzgalpa by engaging in commerce with many of the Xicaque and Mosquito populations (Argueta 416; Jiménez-Moreno 21). The British were able to take full advantage of the resources found in the area including wood and gold and established a profitable timber and rubber business. In exchange for their cooperation, the natives were supplied with numerous tools, firearms, and other manufactured objects that they used to fight off any efforts by the Spaniards to subjugate them or gain control of their lands (Gold, 9-10). Curiously, some Spanish officials also engaged in a series of contraband affairs with their supposed enemies, which further facilitated English claim to the land. The British were able to form permanent settlements along the Río Tinto (they lasted until 1786 when Spain and England entered into a treaty) and, following an appeal by chiefs of the Mosquito Indians,
a British protectorate was declared over the entire coastal region extending from Honduras into Nicaragua. This colony survived until 1859 (Argueta 416).

The strong British presence clearly played a major role in the Spaniards’ inability to solidify establishments in La Taguzgalpa. But there were other factors, especially at the organizational level. First and foremost, the attempts at domination were few, sporadic and poorly structured – they lacked a clear strategic vision and a systematic course of action. Even when the Spanish were able to create towns and Indian reductions, the mechanisms to oversee these populations were quite weak or non-existent. Soldiers were for the most part absent and there were usually only one or, at most, two priests for the different establishments separated by large distances and antagonistic landforms. In addition, there was no clear center from which to exercise hegemony over the reduced populations and protect them from outside attacks. There were discussions and requests by the authorities, including a Friar Antonio Bersián who in 1685 argued that a plaza or armed space that was strategically located in a point equidistant to all indigenous settlements was necessary to assure their control (AGCA A1.12 Leg 13934 exp 2013). The
delay with which the Spanish colonial powers implemented a more commercial course of action is another explanation for their minimal presence in this area. As demonstrated by the success that the English had with both Xicaques and Mosquitos, was a more effective tactic for integrating the indigenous populations and this territory. Nevertheless, this was not seriously considered until the late 18th century when Ramón Anguiano, the Intendant Governor of Honduras, proposed that like the English they too should enter into commerce with the Xicaques and Payas who had recently been reduced. Spaniards were to assume the role that the British had traditionally carried out: suppliers of agricultural instruments, textiles and cheap jewelry and buyers of local products such as balsam, wax, mahogany, spices and tobacco (Argueta 419).

Up to this point I have demonstrated why La Taguzgalpa was the site of contestation and why the Spanish authorities had limited success in acquiring and controlling this peripheral territory. But what were the consequences of settling this minimally domesticated and inhabited region? As previously mentioned, the Spanish Crown did not gain control and begin to repopulate the area surrounding the city of Trujillo until 1797 and the
Mosquitia was not relinquished by the British to the Honduran state until 1859. Another effect was the development of culturally heterogeneous and multi-racial populations. Despite the efforts of the Spaniards to segregate the indigenous groups they had been able to convert and place into reductions from those not reduced and, more importantly, from Mosquito-sambos and African slaves who lived in nearby English communes, the close proximity of these settlements and the constant invasion of Spanish Indian reductions led to inevitable exchanges among the distinct groups and further racial mixing. The invaders at times forced these relations, but as was the case in areas where Spaniards had a stronghold, some were the direct result of deliberate alliances among indigenous, African and mixed-race groups who opposed Spanish colonial dominion. In other words, La Taguzgalpa provided a space – or thirdspace to quote Edward Soja – for rebellion and contestation and allowed these oppressed populations to exercise agency. Furthermore, the natives of this area interacted and formed close interpersonal relationships with the ladino populations (a complex classificatory term utilized to designate those of mixed race) of the contiguous reductions that were established in the mid and
late 18th century. Ladino reductions were created with the purpose to safeguard the recently converted natives from being attacked by nomadic tribes and from consorting with them. While they did serve these intentions, they also unintentionally facilitated the increase in racially and culturally mixed offspring between Indians and Ladinos (Taracena 82, Vallejo 108). This rise also augmented the number of inhabitants with a percentage of African blood—a fact that affected the way Honduran identity was constructed and defined, but has largely remained unknown. The racial makeup of Hondurans, largely made up of African elements, will be silenced in the construction of identity. Yet it is important to demonstrate who were those originating groups, how they were culturally modified, and what different types of interracial relationships they developed with other groups.

**Importation of Africans and Its Demographic Effects**

The majority of studies regarding Honduran culture and population demographics during the colonial period have downplayed the African presence. This is in part due to the notion of an Indo-Hispanic nation that has been ingrained into the Honduran population since the late 19th century
and has neutralized the heterogeneous cultural and racial make-up of the Honduran people. The belief in a shared Indo-Hispanic past is so fervent among Hondurans that even scholars who are fully aware of the important role that Africans played in all of Honduras have sometimes refused to debunk this national myth. But there are other reasons as well. Demographical surveys have favored certain colonial documentation such as official population censuses and tributary records, and have overlooked or not fully considered other forms of documents like geographical reports, ecclesiastical records or correspondence between government officials, members of the Church and the Spanish Crown. Linda A. Newson’s study of human populations does not take into account many of these documents. Yet until this day it is considered by many scholars the most important source in Honduran colonial demographics and as a result rarely questioned. It is important to note that by no means do I seek to discredit Newson’s invaluable investigation found in The Cost of Conquest, but it is important to qualify her sources and bring forth other sources that might shed light on the complex and heterogeneous populations that developed in Honduras. Using these additional sources could substantiate the argument
that the “Negro and mulatto presence dominated” this territory in the 18th and early 19th century (Markman 128).

The African slave trade in Honduras began in the 16th century and lasted until the latter decades of the 18th century. The first slaves transported to Honduras were those purchased in Lisbon by the Bishop of Honduras Cristóbal de Pedraza. To compensate for the loss of an indigenous, the source of labor, Pedraza distributed among the Spanish citizens of the main colonial settlements 150 “piezas”24 (Martínez-Castillo, El paternalismo 5). That same year, Pedraza also requested from the Spanish Crown the purchase of 500 slaves to work in the mines (AGI Guatemala 44). But beyond these facts, the documentation on the African slave trade in Honduras is limited and often times inexact. This is particularly the case of early colonial sources that provide statistical information on the number of slaves who were introduced into the province through the port cities of Trujillo and Puerto de Caballos (Velásquez 201).

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24 A pieza was not always the equivalent of one slave. Its definition depended on who the slave trader was, and it was not until 1696 when the Trading Company of New Guinea was established that a more precise definition was developed. From then on, a pieza was a slave of 7 “cuartas de altura” or about 1 meter and 80 centimeters (Leiva-Vivas, “Tráfico de esclavos” 54).
It is possible to provide estimates of the number of slaves by assessing the reports that the governors of Honduras created (although not always) when vessels containing slaves arrived at specific ports as well as the requests for slaves that both secular and ecclesiastical authorities made to the Spanish Crown. According to the official statement made by the then governor Luis de Maldonado, 165 slaves arrived via Portugal in 1542 and were distributed among the vecinos of Gracias a Dios, Comayagua and San Pedro. A year later 150 additional slaves were brought over to Honduras from Santo Domingo. All of these slaves were destined for the mines in the Olancho region (Leiva-Vivas, “Tráfico de esclavos” 92). Since then more slaves arrived and, by 1565, governor Alonso Ortiz de Elgueta indicated that 2,000 slaves were working in the different mines throughout Honduras, but that at least 1,000 additional slaves were needed to efficiently pan for gold and silver (Leiva-Vivas, “Tráfico de esclavos” 103). The different religious chapters of Valladolid of Comayagua and mayors of Tegucigalpa who petitioned for 2,900 slaves between 1574 and 1581 reiterated this need for slaves. They solicited four hundred slaves in 1574, five hundred in 1576, one thousand in 1579 and an additional one thousand
in 1581 (Martínez-Castillo, El paternalismo 5). In all, from 1565 to 1581 a total of 3,900 slaves were solicited from the Crown. It is not certain if all or any of these petitions were met because there was no institution in place to keep a record of all contracts. This changed by the end of the sixteenth century when the House of Trade began to control the African slave trade and introduced the official asiento system or contracts specifically for the slave trade in the Hispanic world. The creation of contracts did not assure the fulfillment of all agreements, but they did include important information regarding the possible number of slaves that were brought to Honduras.

The institution of the official asiento allowed the Spanish Crown to keep a more systematic and complete record of the different contracts it made with slave traders. The first asiento was granted to the Portuguese entrepreneur Pedro Gómez Reynel in 1595. As asentista, Reynel received monopoly rights to deliver 4,250 piezas annually to the Spanish American colonies for nine years for a total of 38,250 slave piezas. In 1601 the Crown awarded a second asiento to Portuguese Juan Roriguez Coutinho for nine years that required the delivery of a similar number of slaves to the Spanish colonies. Two aspects of Coutinho’s contract
are important to emphasize. First of all, his contract specified that he was to introduce 200 piezas to Honduras per year for a total of 1,800. In addition, all male slaves were to be accompanied by their wives and children who were not always counted as part of the official number of required piezas. In other words, more than 200 slaves were to be transferred to Honduras every year. Nevertheless, Coutinho died in 1603 and was only able to complete two years of his contract. His brother took over the contract in 1605 for the remaining 5 years (Leiva-Vivas, “Tráfico de esclavos” 53-54). Thus we can estimate that at least 1,400 slaves were brought to Honduras if the Coutinhno contract was completely met. I also add that if the conditions of Coutinho and Reynel’s agreements are almost identical, then it is possible that Reynel was also required to introduce 1,800 piezas to Honduras. Given the statistics I have surveyed from reports, requests and asiento records, it is safe to argue that anywhere from 5,200 to 9,100 African slaves inhabited Honduras by the early 17th century. If this is the case, then there is a possibility that Africans outnumbered Indians as early as 1610 and all claims that the number of Blacks in Honduras was quite minimal are erroneous.
During much of the 17th and 18th centuries, the number of slaves who were introduced to Honduras seems to have drastically diminished. According to Leiva-Vivas, after the completion of Cotinho’s contract an additional ten agreements were awarded to Portuguese slave traders but the number of slaves distributed to the Central American provinces was minimal when compared to the first few decades of the asiento system. He also indicates that Honduras and other Central American provinces had to share to a greater extent the small number of slaves with other port cities in northern and southern America. For instance, a total of 700 slaves were distributed among Honduras, Vera Cruz, Campeche and La Habana with Honduras obtaining the least number of slaves (“Tráfico de esclavos” 55). This trend continued even when monopoly contracts were no longer granted to individuals but rather to trading companies like the French Guinea Company and the British South Sea Company. In total these two companies are believed to have introduced “about 89,031 slaves to Spanish America by 1739 when the War of Jenkins Ear effectively ended the Anglo-Spanish contract” (Palmer 27). Exact figures or estimates as to how many of those 89,031 slaves were brought to Honduras are unknown. Scholars believe that the number was
quite small because most Spanish citizens could not afford the increase in price for slaves that resulted from the rise in requests (Euraque, “La diáspora africana” 39).

As a response to rising prices for slaves and the continuous demand for a source labor that was intensified by the discovery of additional mines and a more diversified economy, many Spaniards resorted to other means to fulfill their needs. Honduras and other Central American provinces established marketplaces where individual dealers offered to the highest bidders Africans who were in large part captured through illicit means. According to Leticia Oyuela, miners from Tegucigalpa purchased the majority of their slaves from merchants who resided in the contiguous province of Nicaragua, including a Spaniard by the name of Miguel de Uriarte who claimed to have introduced 400 slaves per season for a total of 4 years. This led her to conclude

25 The price of a slave was proportional to his or her age, with those between the ages of 20 and 40 costing the most. In Honduras the asking pricing for a male or female slave was generally the same (Velásquez 219). From my analysis of “cartas de ventas,” I have observed an increased of anywhere from 300 to 700% for the price of an adult slave since the 16th century. For example, in 1542 the asking price for a slave was about 50 pesos, but by the mid 17th century, it ranged from about 200 to 400 pesos. See Leiva-Vivas’s “Tráfico de esclavos” p. 91 and Velásquez’s “El comercio de esclavos en la Alcaldía Mayor de Tegucigalpa” p. 217-219.

26 By illegal trade I mean that most of the slave traders belonged to countries that had prohibited its citizens from carrying on the traffic.
that by the end of the 17th century the populations surrounding Tegucigalpa were primarily of African origin (Honduras: religiosidad popular, 55-56). This argument is further substantiated by the lucrative internal slave trade that Spanish citizens developed within Honduras. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Honduras, but as historian Mélida Velásquez has indicated, the majority of slaves who were sold domestically were mulattos and pardos\(^\text{27}\) whose numbers had grown exponentially. The offspring of female African slaves and male Spaniards or Black females and male Indians were often sold and resold to owners of mines as well as an emerging class of livestock ranchers, wealthy landowners and tobacco producers. African slaves and their descendants — females more so than males — had worked in domestic service and in agriculture since the 16th century, but their numbers paled in comparison with the overall number of blacks who participated in these forms of labor during the two centuries that followed (199). This is in

\(^{27}\) According to Vinson, pardos were the product of Indians and Africans. Initially it was the equivalent of sambo although pardo was more commonly used in Central America. By the mid 17th century, the meaning of the term was altered because it lost its indigenous referent and was used as synonym for mulato (262). Hernández corroborates this argument in El gobierno del intendente Anguiano by suggesting that in the 18th century those with any trace of African blood or features often received the denomination of pardo (93). I argue that sambo became less common than pardo because in Honduras sambo was typically applied only to Mosquitos.
part due to the economic success of the mining regions, especially those in and around Tegucigalpa and Comayagua, which afforded Spaniards the possibility of large estates in the countryside and more domestic servants. Also, the increase in population led many to immigrate into territories outside of the city centers previously reserved for Indian villages. In the eastern part of the country Spaniards began to raise livestock and in the western regions established lucrative tobacco plantations (Newson 172). These factors explain how and why African and afro-descendant populations dominated most of Honduras and racially mixed people invaded Indian villages.

Tegucigalpa, the economic center and its surrounding areas, saw the greatest immigration activity and became heavily populated by Blacks. Geographical reports of the late colonial period suggest that the Afro-descendant presence was so great that they sometimes made up over 90% of the population of certain areas of the alcaldía mayor of Tegucigalpa. In his 1743 geographical report, town magistrate Baltazar Ortiz de Letona indicated that in most of the curacies that made up the alcaldía mayor the number of "negros and mulatos" was extraordinary. For example, 890 Blacks and Mulattoes, 100 Spaniards and only 54 Indians
inhabited the center city. In Cantarranas, 1,400 of a total of 1,480 inhabitants were also of African origin. The figures for the other parishes are quite similar, and in sum, over 58% of about 23,600 inhabitants possessed African blood (AGCA, A1.17 Leg. 5011 exp. 211). In the next few years Ortiz de Letona created additional reports where he made the same argument, but the figures he provided are more general because they only included the number of families (Martínez-Castillo, El paternalismo 6). The demographical numbers of the mayors who followed Letona are not as detailed or as complete as his because they focus exclusively on the center city of Tegucigalpa. Nevertheless, these records are important because they also reflect a growth in the number of Mulattoes and Blacks. In 1777 they constituted 92% of the inhabitants, and in 1783 they made up 90% of the entire population (Taracena-Arriola 90).

The movement of racially diverse populations to the countryside had an impact on the character of Indian villages. Indian space was diminished and both landholding and landless persons of mixed race settled in indigenous lands they had rented or usurped from Indians. Legislation was introduced to impede such an occurrence, but it was not
effective because a large number of Mulattoes, pardos and mestizos permanently settled in those spaces. In fact, most villages possessed at least a few individuals of each of these racial groups (Newson 207). Yet the migration was not exclusively one directional, for many Indians deserted their villages and moved closer to the city centers and mining regions in the hopes of obtaining permanent employment. The frequency with which this transpired is unknown because government records continued to classify many of these Indians as tributaries rather than lavorios. This is not surprising because for tribute purposes natives were always enumerated in their place of births (Newson 206).

It is evident that the demographical information for the province of Honduras is infrequent, incomplete and even contradictory. But despite these limitations, the great extent to which miscegenation and interracial contact occurred cannot be challenged. Also, the degree to which most inhabitants possessed African blood is undeniable. So why do Hondurans deny their African origin as an essential element of their identity? The answer lies in the conceptualization and use of the complex classificatory term “ladino.” It became the most commonly applied label to
all individuals who were not Spanish or Indian. To this one should add the overwhelming value attributed to colonial census records over other forms of colonial documentation that do not neutralize to the same extent the heterogeneity of the racial categories in Honduras.

The Nuances and Problematic Nature of Ladinaje

Within a Honduran, and to a large extent Central American context, the classificatory designation ladino has been favored over mestizo during the late colonial period. Yet like the term mestizo, ladino has a long history and has been embedded with different meanings at different points in history. According to Manuel Alvar, the Spanish Crown first utilized this label to classify those subjects who learned the official languages of the kingdom or the known Vulgar Latin from which romance languages evolved. This term was also used to refer to the language spoken by Sephardic Jews. With the standardization of the Spanish language and the colonization of the Spanish Americas, ladino began to signify an Indian who could speak the Castilian language. The same was true for most Central American provinces although its meaning was slightly modified in the 17th century to also signify a native who
had adopted Spanish or western customs (150). I agree with Alvar that ladino was and continues to be used in some Central American countries - especially in Guatemala - to describe a westernized Indian, but the term ladino is much more complex and varied, especially in Honduras, during the latter half of the colonial period. As I have indicated above, it is common to find numerous official documents of the 17th and 18th century that refer to mulattoes and pardos with the term ladino. Often, mestizos and even a few Africans were also designated ladino. This was the case for Blacks known to speak the Spanish language, practice the Catholic faith and follow Spanish customs (Hernández 84). In other words, ladino was a socio-racial and socio-cultural category (as all colonial categories were) that encompassed most, if not all, groups who were not Indian or Spanish.

The level of miscegenation among the different groups was so extensive in Honduras that it appeared to have erased the phenotypic distinctions that existed in the early part of the colonial period. The original racial categories for racially mixed populations were no longer applied to same extent in the 18th century as they had previously been. Members of both secular and religious
authorities claimed that often times they were unable to
distinguish who was a pardo, mulatto, mestizo, sambo, etc.,
and as a result favored the term ladino because it covered
the entire gamut of socio-racial sectors (Lutz 74).
Furthermore, it is important to note that by the end of the
18th century, the Bourbon reforms had prohibited racial
qualifications in official documents (Vinson 290). The
number of known physical descriptions for a ladino (or at
least how they were perceived by others) is quite minimal,
but the few that we have (even though they were produced in
large part after the colonial period) demonstrate how this
category was very flexible and non-specific. In his 20th
century political treatise La enfermedad de Centroamérica,
intellectual and supporter of a Central American Union
Salvador Mendieta describes ladino as an individual

\[
de \text{color moreno, manifestando el color de su piel}
\]
\[
\text{mayor o menor intensidad de acuerdo a la cantidad de}
\]
\[
\text{sangre caucásica que portara; frecuentemente de}
\]
\[
\text{cabellera negra lisa, aunque no faltaba el tipo lanudo}
\]
\[
\text{o enroscado de origen africano; de cabeza redonda o}
\]
\[
\text{ligieramente oblonga, de frente alta y casi siempre de}
\]
\[
\text{ojos negros; de mejillas o labios gruesos; de estatura}
\]

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más baja que alta y de manos generalmente pequeñas (56). [who is dark-skinned, whose skin color manifests a greater or lesser intensity (meaning darker) depending on the amount of Caucasian blood he or she had; frequently has straight black hair, although African wooly or curly hair was not uncommon; has a round or slightly oblong head, a high forehead and almost always black eyes; with thick cheeks or lips; generally of a shorter rather than taller height and whose hands are generally small.] (My translation)

It is evident from Mendieta’s description why most Hondurans fit the depiction of a ladino. This description homogenizes the different racial groups, but if we carefully consider the references Mendieta makes to the thickness of the lips and texture of the hair of certain ladinos – attributes commonly associated with the Black race – then some ladinos have African traits. Census records of this period also corroborate this trend for classifying mixed raced populations as ladino.

Beginning in the mid 1770s, Honduran officials created more comprehensive reports of the character of the Honduran population. These census records were a product of the
employment of more systematic methods of enumerating individuals. Special commissioners were hired to travel to the different jurisdictions and undertake this task (Newson 302). While this seemed to have solved to an extent the reliance on incomplete local records that had been previously used, this method was still problematic because not all individuals were counted. Moreover, the racial classification of those who were tallied was based on simple human observance, and as archives indicate, were not specific in differentiating mixed race groups. This is not surprising given the fact that records expressed that the emphasis was on the number of Indians and not the precise designation of other populations from whom tribute was not collected. Following the 1776 decree from the Crown, which ordered all Spanish overseas territories to draw up individual censuses, special commissioners were used a year later for the first time in Honduras. This population record of 1777 indicated that a total of 90,044 individuals inhabited the province Honduras. They were distributed according to the following classifications: 5,338 Spaniards, 47,455 Ladinos, 36,647 Indians and 604 Blacks (Newson 303). The census suggests that Ladinos were the majority group, and that Spaniards and Africans made up a
small percentage of the entire population (See Table 1). The numbers for Ladinos are in line with the increasing rate in miscegenation of this period, but 604 Blacks is an underestimation given the information I provided above of the slave markets within Central America. Also, that same year Commander González Fermidor reported that of 1,343 individuals living in the entire establishment of Omoa, about 1,000 were Black slaves, with most being born in Africa (Cáceres-Gómez, “Slavery and Social Differentiation” 132). If a single establishment has over 1.5 times the number of negros presented in the 1777 census, then it is undeniable that this number is extremely unreliable. 28

Table 1: Socio-racial Distribution in Honduras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1777 Census</th>
<th>1791 Census</th>
<th>1801 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Españoles</td>
<td>5,338 (5.92%)</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>8,463 (6.63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladinos</td>
<td>47,455 (52.70%)</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>80,008 (62.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indios</td>
<td>36,647 (40.69%)</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>34,669 (27.16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negros</td>
<td>604 (.60%)</td>
<td>No record</td>
<td>4,500 (3.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90,044</td>
<td>96,421</td>
<td>127,640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 In 1700, the governor of Honduras indicated that in the town of Trujillo there were anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 thousand Black Caribs with an additional 2,000 in the Bay Islands (AGCA A1.22.4 Leg 2644 exp 22118). These figures serve to further question the census estimate of 604 Blacks.
Bishop Cadiñanos compiled another major census of Honduras in 1791. He collected invaluable data over the course of 1.5 years and provided an estimate of 93,501 inhabitants in a total of 35 parishes. A careful count of all figures he provided for each individual parish reveal a sum of 96,421 individuals.\textsuperscript{29} Nonetheless, unlike the census of 1777, this demographical record does not provide any information of the racial composition of the Honduran people.

The next comprehensive demographical record with a socio-racial distribution is the census levied by the Intendant Governor Ramón Anguiano in 1801 and sent to the Spanish Crown in 1804.\textsuperscript{30} This document is often considered the most complete census of the colonial period because it provides the total number of inhabitants and families by race and marital status. It also gives figures for the total population of Indians and tributaries, a distinction that previous population registers had not made. Nevertheless, according to this census, the 127,640

\textsuperscript{29} All calculations are deduced from the facsimile copy of Cadiñanos report included in Vallejo's Primer anuario estadístico, p. 103-118. My estimates coincide with those of Linda Newson, p. 305.

\textsuperscript{30} A facsimile copy of Anguiano's census, included in Vallejo's Primer anuario estadístico, was utilized to compute these numbers. All quotes, information and page numbers derive from this copy, p. 119-135.
inhabitants were distributed according to the following classifications: 8,463 Spaniards, 80,008 Ladinos, 36,647 Indians and 4,500 Blacks (see Table 1). A comparison of the population breakdown in 1801 and 1777 indicates that with the exception of the Indian group there was an increase in the number of Blacks, Spaniards and Ladinos, with the latter showing the greatest growth in terms of number and percentage. Hernández argues that this large increase in Ladinos was the result of the continuous immigration of Indians and Ladinos that clearly put these communities in contact and favored the process of ladinaje (85). This claim is more than valid, but I believe that a 68% increase in number over 14 years is also probably due to a greater inclusion of mulattoes and pardos who were in large part not accounted for in official government documents (Martínez-Castillo, El paternalismo 7).

The 1801 figures are by no means complete. First of all, they do not include the different tribal groups found in and around La Taguzgalpa who had yet to be conquered or subjugated by the Spanish Crown. According to Anguiano’s rough estimates, approximately 88,000 individuals lived in the Eastern region of Honduras with the majority being the Mosquito-sambos. In addition to 60,000 Mosquito-sambos,
Anguiano believed that approximately 16,000 Xicaques and 12,000 Payas lived in this area (131). As I indicated above during my discussion of the history of La Taguzgalpa, Honduras did not obtain control of this territory until the mid 19th century, but what is interesting to note about Anguiano’s estimates is that they suggest that miscegenation was also quite common in La Taguzgalpa and that the origin of most of its people is African – a fact that had great implications at the time of defining national identity and delimiting who was included and excluded in the construction of Honduras as a nation. The coastal region was and continues to be defined as the Black region, and it is very likely that this ideology influenced the placement of all “negros” in Trujillo (See Table 2). Again I reiterate that records demonstrate otherwise. But this 1801 distribution certainly was at the root of the strong Anti-black and anti-coastal sentiment that developed in Honduras. I limit my discussion of this topic to these few sentences because it is further elaborated in the next two chapters.
Table 2: 1801 Socio-racial Distributions According to Jurisdictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gracias</th>
<th>Olancho</th>
<th>Tegucigalpa</th>
<th>Trujillo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Español</td>
<td>1,167</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladino</td>
<td>12,837</td>
<td>6,001</td>
<td>13,325</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tributario</td>
<td>18,218</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>2,516</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographical Richness in Parish Records

Ecclesiastical records generally reflect a greater concern for the use of precise racial designations than most government documents of the late colonial period. Parish documents such as a baptismal, marriage and death records contain very rich demographical information from which one can analyze the type of relationships that were established among the different populations and the process of mestizaje that has shaped all of Latin America. Yet like any document, church registers are also constructions and cannot be considered infallible. Their content, especially racial classifications, was subject to the subjectivity of clerics and scribes. In addition, the number of documents produced and their completeness depended on each priest recording every baptism, marriage or burial. Some ecclesiasts were more meticulous and efficient than others, but one should also take into account that the production and survival of church archives depend on the location of...
the depositories that housed them (Lutz, 81-82). Despite these possible limitations, colonial clerical documents attest to the diverse racial composition of people because in Church spaces, unlike secular ones, all are included and usually accounted for as well.

All of these factors were evident to me in my search and analysis of Honduran parish registers. I travelled extensively throughout the country to the towns that were most heavily populated during the colonial period where I was able to acquire some documentation primarily from the 18th and 19th centuries. It is no surprise that most texts date from these two centuries because it was during this time that the province of Honduras experienced the most growth, and as previously mentioned, document collection was more systematic by then. The number and types of church records I was able survey were few (See Table 3) for most have either disappeared or are severely damaged. Nonetheless, these few surviving texts provide invaluable information as to what nomenclature was used by Church officials to classify their parishioners in addition to shedding light into who was classified as ladino. Lastly, these records clearly demonstrate the participation of the African in the constitution of Honduran society, culture
and identity. This is particularly true of baptismal books, on which I focus here.

Table 3: Surviving Ecclesiastical Documentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Francisco Morazán</th>
<th>Department of Lempira</th>
<th>Department of Olancho</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tegucigalpa</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gracias, Lempira</strong></td>
<td><strong>Catacamas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Baptismal records: 3 volumes (1808)</td>
<td>• Baptismal records: 3 volumes (1803-1821)</td>
<td>• Baptismal records: 4 volumes (from 1743)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Death records: 2 volumes (1727, 1789)</td>
<td>• Books of cofradías: 2 volumes (1736, 1781)</td>
<td>• Marriage records: 1 volume (1818-1823)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comayagüela</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Juticalpa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Death records: 1 volume (1771-1801)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Baptismal records: 1 volume (1810-1824)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As summarized in Table 4, at least four different socio-racial categories appear in all baptismal certificates. Those christened in Catacamas were categorized as Spaniard, Indian, Ladino, Mulatto, Tributary or pardo; in Juticalpa they were grouped under the terms

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Spaniard, Ladino, Mulatto, Tributary or pardo; Spaniard, Resident Indian estate laborer, Mulatto and mestizo were used in Gracias; and in Tegucigalpa, clerics used the same categories as those in Juticalpa. The racial diversity of the Honduran population is certainly apparent in these church records, but these documents also suggest that most individuals who were baptized were of African descent. Approximately 2,480 children were baptized from 1743 to 1821 in Catacamas. Of this total number, 2,308 persons were described as mulato, pardo or ladino and only 172 as español or tributario. These numbers indicate that close to 93% of those born during these years shared a common African past. I argue this because in 614 out 617 baptismal records, all individuals labeled as ladino or pardo ladino were products of freed mulatto parents. The other three records do not include racial descriptions for the parents of the offspring, but it safe to say that they too had African blood. The racial makeup of the inhabitants of Juticalpa is similar to the citizens of Catacamas because, of 1,070 baptisms that took place between 1810 and 1821, about 987 were of ladinos, pardos or mulatos. These three terms were used interchangeably, and the parents of those classified ladino were either freed pardos or freed
mulatos. The significance of the details pertaining to ladinos extends beyond these two towns because they give us a more concrete idea of the racial composition of the ladino population. In other words, if we take into account the evidence provided in these sacramental certificates and apply it to census records, then the racial origin of most ladinos could well be African.

The records for the city of Gracias are a bit more varied than those of Juticalpa or Catacamas, but they too indicate that most children born in this region were black. From 1803 to 1821 around 1,242 infants were christened in Gracias, with 879 of those being described as mulato (71%). The percentage of Afro-descendants in this jurisdiction is less than either Catacamas or Juticalpa, but it is still the majority among the four identified groups. The records for Tegucigalpa are not included because the number of folios that were readable is insignificant. Overall, these baptismal records reflect the interracial contact that occurred between the populations that settled in Honduras. They also indicate a true coexistence and formation of social bonds among diverse people because, although I do not discuss the element of godparents, these spiritual
parents were not always of the same racial make-up as their godchildren.

Table 4: Racial Classifications in Baptismal Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catacamas</th>
<th>Juticalpa</th>
<th>Gracias(^{31})</th>
<th>Tegucigalpa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Español</td>
<td>Español</td>
<td>Español</td>
<td>Español</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulato</td>
<td>Mulato</td>
<td>Mulato</td>
<td>Mulato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardo</td>
<td>Pardo</td>
<td>Mestizo</td>
<td>Pardo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladino</td>
<td>Ladino</td>
<td>Indio laborio</td>
<td>Ladino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tributario</td>
<td>Tributario</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tributario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Just as the process of restoration served to remove the layers or veils of grime from the painting “The Christ of the Souls in purgatory,” much of the documentation surveyed in this chapter discredits the dominant belief in a primarily Spanish and indigenous past. The first wave of interracial contact was indeed most common between these two groups, but the introduction of African and Afro-descendant slaves to work in silver deposits, agricultural activities and in domestic services led to a greater degree of biological and cultural miscegenation. Spaces of separation became almost non-existent as uniform and mixed

\(^{31}\) Although none of the individuals who were baptized in Gracias were identified as ladino, it is important to note that this term did appear twice to designate the race of the parents of two mulatto children.
groups migrated in and out of public and private spaces. The same was true for racial and cultural epithets that were used to differentiate individuals and specify the heritage of each individual. Terms for racially mixed populations were most affected by this because they were used interchangeably, and by the mid 17th century were less frequent in government records and encompassed under the umbrella designation “ladino.”

The role of Africans and Afro-descendants in the formation of Honduran society and culture is undeniable. Even in discussions during the Courts of Cádiz in 1812, Hondurans and the documents they produced verified the overwhelming number of Blacks. Intendant Tornos indicated in his testimony before the different representatives in Cádiz that over 60% of the Honduran population descended from Africans (Dym, From sovereign villages 119). His estimate was based on the percentages provided in the 1801 census. Curiously, it is this overwhelming use of ladino and the dearth of other more precise classifications that affected the way Hondurans perceived themselves and constructed their identity. Ladino was resignified often after the independence of Honduras from Spain and was
consciously utilized to deny the African presence prevalent during Honduras’s colonial period.
Chapter 3: The Embryonic Stages of the Honduran Nation and the Rise of Racial Scientific Discourse (1821-1875)

Since the idea of Honduras as a nation was conceived, numerous processes and decisions were carried out by political and intellectual leaders in order to make the conceptual abstraction of nation plausible and necessary to all communities. As illustrated in the previous chapter, part of the colonial legacy was primarily a racially and culturally-diverse, illiterate, and poor population, and a small intelligentsia and elite class that became very familiar with contemporary intellectual, political and scientific currents prevalent in Europe and the United States. In line with the ideals of Republican liberalism, the latter group proclaimed judicial equality for all its inhabitants, but also established a very narrow definition of a Honduran citizen – a literate, property-owning male – which excluded most of the population from gaining any type of political or economic power. Moreover, the ruling minority promoted a homogenizing discourse while maintaining heterogeneous categories and hierarchies through exclusionary practices.

This chapter focuses on some of the specificities of the first 55 years of Honduras’s nation-building project
and its relation to the evolution and the shaping of the concepts of race and space. I present some of the most influential political and intellectual leaders of this period and explain the principles behind the type of State and national identity they sought to articulate. I also discuss the local, national and transnational contexts under which the nation was formed and the reasons for the limited and delayed success in carrying out essential unifying projects. All these details are tied to the larger issue of how a sector of society used race and space to construct a modern Honduras and, in the process, constituted and destabilized these concepts. The particular case of Honduras questions a priori definitions of race and nation and demonstrates that neither concept has been constant nor is universal.\(^{32}\)

**Formative Periods of Nation and Race**

In *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, historian Nancy Appelbaum identifies four critical periods in the formation of Latin American nation-states. In those periods

\(^{32}\) I draw this conclusion from Appelbaum’s introduction to *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*. In this text she demonstrates the inextricable relationship between race and nation, but limits her research to Mexico, Brazil and other South American nations that have consistently been studied. My intention is to include Honduras as another case study in this discussion of polity and race.
the nature and meaning of nation as well as race, given that both are mutually constitutive, were shaped and transformed. Although Honduras does not follow the exact same trajectory as other nations, the periodization that she utilizes provides a functional framework for discussing the distinct moments in which diverse and often overlapping contradictory ideologies shaped this country and its identity. In what follows, I will use Appelbaum’s periodization but will be making the necessary modifications to fit the particular history of Honduras.

The first period (1824 – 1875) was one where liberal leaders were faced with the challenge of unifying diverse colonial communities under the abstraction of nation and of making the once colonial subjects into Honduran citizens. As part of this formative moment, there were numerous attempts at restructuring the society and at edifying those considered uncivilized. In addition, the nation amassed additional territory and these acquisitions revived an anti-Indian and anti-black sentiment among the elite.¹³ The second period (1876 – 1910) was one where Honduras began to

¹³ In this dissertation I will limit myself to discussing only the first three “critical periods” in a Honduran context because the modern period goes beyond the limits I have set in this dissertation. In the modern period one can assume nation building is well underway. This dissertation analyzes the formative periods and thus will only discuss the first three formative periods.
emerge out of the political and economic disarray that had typified it and one where the establishment of a strong, centralized government became an official project. Furthermore, it was at this moment that scientific conceptions of race were utilized to legitimate both the immigration of favorable races and the racial and cultural homogenization of the “less desirable masses.” The rise of the scientific racism that characterized the late 19th and early 20th century was carried well into the 1920s and 1930s. But what set this period apart (third critical period) from the two previous ones was that Honduran intellectuals began to repudiate, to an extent, the previously dominant theory that hybrids were degenerate and began to stress the benefits of mestizaje. It is during this period that the conception of citizenship was expanded and when Honduras was constructed as a primarily “mestizo” nation.

On September 15, 1821, the province of Honduras signed its declaration of independence from Spain. This act symbolized a break from Spanish colonial rule and a transfer of power to a small Creole elite class who initiated a lengthy and arduous project of solidifying the newly formed Nation-State. This project did not gain
strength and did not achieve many of its goals until the last two decades of the 19th century. In 1822, Honduras -- along with the rest of the Central American provinces -- joined the newly declared Mexican Empire of Iturbide. A year later this empire was dissolved, and after that Honduras became part of the Federal Republic of Central America until 1838. It was not until this year that Honduras became an independent State, but political leaders hoped for the reconstitution of a Central American Union and as a result vacillated between a commitment to a Central American union and an autonomous territory. Furthermore, during the subsequent decades, Honduras was characterized by political anarchy and rebellions as individuals continued to demonstrate loyalty to their political parties, regions and communities rather than a centralized Republican government. Some departments and municipalities even aligned themselves with other Central Americans States or threatened to cease from the Honduran State.  

34 Despite these obstacles, influential leaders and intellectuals were able to establish laws and policies in

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34 See Barahona’s “Honduras: el estado fragmentado” for a detailed discussion on how the authorities of the department of Tegucigalpa and the municipalities of Goascorán and Santa Rosa, among others, sought the support of other Central American States in an effort to separate themselves from Honduras.
their efforts to consolidate the Nation-State. They used the symbolic nature of language to create or give form to the numerous ideas and elements essential to the formation of nation and identity. Language played a significant role in the construction of Honduran identity.

But what were the particular measures taken during the first period, described above, to form the Honduran State? And who were some of the key players in the construction of the State? As the fundamental and underlying framework of any government, the creation of the first written constitution in 1825 was one of the most essential political steps taken. This decree substituted at every political and social level the colonial nomenclature for a Republican one. The old Indian reductions and communities, the Spanish towns, the alcaldía mayores, parishes, colonial delegations and sub-delegations were transformed into departments, municipalities, districts and hamlets. In addition, the 1825 constitution specified that the French Republic model would be the basis for the first of numerous territorial, judicial and political reorganizations. The terrain was divided into the following seven departments and their corresponding parishes: Comayagua, Tegucigalpa, Gracias, Santa Barbara, Yoro, Olancho and Choluteca
By 1834, the seven departments were reduced to 4 (Santa Barbara, Tegucigalpa, Olancho and San Pedro). Three of the previously created departments were annexed to the other four: Gracias to Santa Barbara, Choluteca to Tegucigalpa, Yoro to Olancho and Gracias to the newly created department of San Pedro Sula (Vallejo 1). Since then, these political divisions have been altered several times.

The principal consequence of this restructuring and modern nomenclature was the resignification of the territorial space and the upsurge of new judicial and political referents in the local administration (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 129). But, there is another effect that has been seldom considered and that is relevant to the study of Honduran identity: The establishment of new administrative, geographical, political and symbolic points of reference that contributed to the ruptures in the collective memory and identity of numerous populations who—although they had been forced to accept the spatial and political boundaries established by the colonial powers—had learned to live under these conditions for the previous 300 years. In other words, during the 19th century, Honduran populations went through a second form of
fragmentation--the first being during the colonial period--for they had to become accustomed to the newly constitutive political, social and territorial boundaries. Moreover, the nomenclature may have changed, but the hierarchies, relations of powers and racialized ideas of progress were still present, although in a more naturalized form.  

The Honduran State was projected as the aggregate of diverse constructed regions or departments, but they, along with its inhabitants, were not all considered equal. The social existence of previously unrecognized racial groups was acknowledged and legitimated by the State. Nonetheless, the indigenous, more so than African descendants, continued to have no political voice (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 98-99). Moreover, as part of this paradoxical discussion of sameness and difference within Honduras, the territorial boundaries and the relations among them were framed in racial and hierarchical terms. For example, at the time of unifying all regions, intellectuals argued that those regions where indigenous and black communities were most prevalent were backward in relation to the more modern and “whiter” regions (Appelbaum 10; Chambers 32). Consequently,

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35 I owe to Appelbaum the concept of racialized ideas of progress. See Race and Nation in Modern Latin America, p. 10-11.
they had to be molded into citizens before being politically integrated. This form of racialized differentiation continued well into the 20th century, and acquired further legitimation with the dissemination and acceptance of racial scientific ideas, travel narratives of explorers who described in detail the populations of lands that were for the most part uninhabited, the incorporation of the northeastern region and the development of the Caribbean and Pacific Coasts.  

As part of the formation of an autonomous nation, influential leaders and intellectuals also put forward projects to develop a capitalist agriculture oriented at the international market. One of those was José Cecilio del Valle, a rich Creole and a prior member of the colonial regime, whose economic views were strongly influenced by French Enlightenment and mercantilist ideals. One of the first things del Valle proposed in his writings was the development of sustainable agriculture that would do away with subsistence farming, prevalent throughout Honduras at

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36 Both Nancy Appelbaum and Dario Euraque have cogently argued that regions that have been marked off as black and Indian, such as the Caribbean coast of Honduras, have been labeled backward in relation to more modern, whiter regions and have not been considered fully part of the nation. I believe that the northeastern part of Honduras should also be included in this discussion of regions considered uncivilized and separate from the rest of the country.
the time. In addition, del Valle emphasized capital formation, scientific progress, technological development and the establishment of permanent settlements and ports in uninhabited areas, all of which would be achieved with the immigration of foreign workers, especially those from Europe (Barahona, *Pueblos indígenas* 251-253). Although foreign immigration and investment was quite limited during the first half of the 19th century, there were a few successful projects in the two coasts more so than the interior of the country. One example was the establishment of the free port of Amapala on the island of Tigre off the shore of the Gulf of Fonseca. This region remained almost entirely uninhabited until about 1838. According to American diplomat Ephraim George Squier some enterprising merchants considered the favorable climate and conditions of this territory suitable for a free port. Consequently, these merchants obtained the required permits from the government of Honduras and established the free port of Amapala (*Notes*, 96-97). Squier argued that with the increase in population and the economic success of these merchants, the free port of Amapala was not only by the 1850s the most significant point in the Gulf, but it would become the most important port in the Pacific between San
Francisco and Valparaiso (Notes 97). Nevertheless, this prediction never became a reality and the State did not become a land of foreigners; all of which resulted in continuous measures to homogenize the diverse populations.

To assure social and economic progress, Creole elites sought to create a homogenous society: secular, civilized, racially and culturally uniform and united. In other words, the colonial cultural and (pre)racial categories that had determined the structure of society for hundreds of years had to either disappear or be resignified through the use of language. All Hondurans had to be molded into civil citizens through a series of education and hygiene projects that would improve their conditions (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 146). It is no surprise that for many intellectuals education was the way to achieve cultural and racial homogeneity. Those intellectuals – including Jose del Valle, mentioned above – had strong ties to the French intellectual milieu and were familiar with the ancient and widely accepted theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics. By this time period, the theory was associated with French biologist Lamarck and his notion of transmutation. According to the theory of acquired characteristics it was assumed that permanent changes and
improvements to an individual or group could be effected, over time, through social and environmental engineering (Stepan, *Hour of Eugenics* 24-25).

Children of all racial groups, including those of blacks, were allowed to enter grade school for the first time in 1821. But, the form that education took under the State and the principles behind it were not known until del Valle elaborated his ideas on public education and proposed an environmentalist approach for turning the masses into citizens. In del Valle’s works on public education he argues that schools should be established in cities or villages, ranches, out in the country and even in jails where children or men who are at the intellectual level of a child are to be found. The models to follow were the Hazelwood schools in England, which utilized the Lancasterian system of education. The teachers had to teach reading and writing, the fundamental ideas of the arts and sciences, and above all represent the nation, for he or she was responsible for the formation of citizens and the future of the homeland. Lastly, the locale itself was to be clean, attractive, the model of hygiene and conducive to learning (Pérez-Cadolso, 112-114). It is apparent that for del Valle the initial goal was to provide all men with
these services, and given that he was fully aware of the lack of qualified educators and economic resources, especially in remote areas and indigenous communities, proposed a system of education (the Lancasterian) where advanced students served as mentors for beginners.\(^{37}\)

*Indios* were considered the largest impediment to the advancement of the State and became the primary targets of these civilizing and assimilating efforts. At that time the Indian communities were the second largest group in terms of population after the *ladino* – a term that during the second critical period in Honduras was stripped of any pre-racial meaning or erroneously considered a synonym for *mestizo*. Barahona makes an important point, although he is not explicit in his explanation, by arguing that what lay behind these actions was the Creole intellectuals’ desire for the “*indio*” to stop being one and accept the institutionalized identity of citizen (*Pueblos indígenas* 143). But what did it mean for the Indian to change his or her identity to that of a citizen? Let us remember that during the colonial period “*indio*” was a fiscal, administrative and census category in as much as an Indian

\(^{37}\) For a more detailed description of del Valle’s thoughts on the use of the Lancasterian system of education and his relation with English philosophers who advocated this form of education, see Miriam Willford’s text, *Jeremy Bentham on Spanish America*. 121
“was one who lived in an Indian community and paid tribute in labour or goods” (Wade, Race and Ethnicity 28). Because the Indian communities had certain autonomy, the Creole elites sought to eliminate the colonial category of “indio” which provided them with a different legal position from the rest of society. Nevertheless, the initial objectives to educate the natives were to be modified because many indigenous populations either rebelled against any type of State-initiated project or the geography impeded many from being reached; these initial homogenizing goals were not only inapplicable to the specific realities in Honduras, but also contradictory and fictitious in large part.

The paradoxical nature of Republican liberalism in Honduras became more apparent with many of the approaches that ensued. Despite having initially proclaimed equality for all, in 1829, del Valle suggested that not all racial groups were equal when he indicated that not all were capable of being owners, teachers, traders, priests, men with access to power; that some were made to perform those professions, but the Indian was not one of them. This led del Valle to propose that all members of the indigenous communities be induced to become artisans, dependents or assistants of others who possessed existing trades.
According to him, this form of direct intervention from the State would facilitate the integration of the Indian in the postcolonial socioeconomic system and Hispanicize them in the process (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 145-146). The exposure to a new environment and to others, non-Indians, was believed to result in the improvement of the indigenous people’s poor condition, and more importantly, their “dis-Indianization.” It is common to reduce or describe processes such as these as part of the phenomenon of acculturation, but what occurred in Honduras (and in numerous Latin American nations) is clearly a deculturation of the indio. On a more extreme level, it was also suggested that in certain cases the only means of progress of the Indian was through what British Thomas Malthus called “moral restraint,” which meant the teaching of sexual abstinence. In other words, the Indian’s reproduction should be controlled by the State (Pérez Cadalso, 114-115). Overall, most of the approaches for integrating the indigenous communities to society were clearly based on an environmentalist ideology of human improvement that can be traced to ancient antiquity.\(^{38}\) Yet,

\(^{38}\) See chapter 1 for a discussion on how the theory of acquired inheritance can be traced to Hippocrates and Aristotle.
what is important to note, and is reflected by the examples that I have given, is that the same environmentalist discourse that provided Honduran intellectuals with arguments for the possibilities of human change and equality, also served as a double edged sword to assert that the environment Indians (and Blacks) inhabited for over three hundred years had ingrained in them traits that made them inferior to other groups.

**Honduran Constitutions, Nationhood and Racialized Citizenship**

The Federal Republic of Central America was dissolved in 1838 after only fifteen years of existence. Despite the failure of a lasting union, the sense of shared history and the hope for eventual reunification persisted for many of the original States, but perhaps none more so than for Honduras. This Central-Americanist vocation is reflected in its several, yet unsuccessful, attempts at a new federal republic, a careful avoidance of the use of the term independent republic or nation and the absence of icons and symbols necessary for the construction of the State. In 1842 and 1848, Honduras in conjunction with El Salvador and Nicaragua, initiated a campaign to induce the other two States, Guatemala and Costa Rica, to rejoin the Central
American union and adopt a new charter that would bind them to support each other, while assuring each that no State would interfere in the internal affairs of another. However, the inability to create a document that clearly defined the relative powers of each State and satisfied the demands of all political leaders resulted in its failure (Mazzoni, 22-24; Squier, The States of Central America 257). In 1852, a union was proposed amongst Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua under the name “National Representation of Central America,” but it too was short lived and led to more discord among the five original states (Squier, The States of Central America 257).

Like the other territories, Honduras was left with the unusual and precarious position of having to exercise for the first time the powers of distinct sovereignties, but unlike the other States, it adhered to the belief of a Central American union well into the early 20th century. In his text, Un pueblo en busca de símbolos nacionales, economic anthropologist, Roberto Mazzoni, demonstrates how Honduras’s strong devotion to a Central American Federation is evident at a linguistic level in its early constitutions. For example, in Honduras’s first written law as a separate territory from the rest of Central America,
dated January 11, 1839, there is a continuous use of the words “Estado de Honduras” [State of Honduras] and an explicit declaration in Article 2 of Chapter 1, that Honduras “será uno de los federados de Centro América, cuando acuerde con los otros Estados el pacto que los deban unir” [shall be one of the federates of Central America when Honduras and the other States agree on a decree that will unify them], but such an accord was never materialized (Mazzoni 25, Constitución de 1839).\(^{39}\) It was not until the constitution of 1865 that Honduras stopped the use of the term State and began to refer to itself as a “República soberana, libre e independiente” [sovereign, free and independent republic]. The constitutions of 1880 and 1894 finally described Honduras as a nation. Yet, this did not deter many of the leaders from emphasizing in those same constitutions the need to keep the Central-Americanist spirit alive. In Article 111 of the 1865 and Article 1 of the 1890 decrees, respectively, the following was expressed: "La presente Constitución no obsta para que concurra Honduras a la formación de un Gobierno Nacional con las otras Secciones de Centro América; o a la de un

\(^{39}\) Complete constitutions can be found in cervantesvirtual.com. All quotes come from this website.
pacto federativo, si aquél no pudiese tener efecto” [The present constitution does not prevent Honduras from partaking in the formation of a national government with the other sections of Central America; or a federative pact, if the other cannot take effect] and “Honduras es un estado disgregado de la República de Centro América. En consecuencia, reconoce como una necesidad primordial volver a la unión con las demás secciones de la República disuelta...” [Honduras is a state disintegrated from the Central American Republic. Consequently, it recognizes the primordial need to return to the union with the rest of the sections of the dissolved Republic...]. The examples I have provided demonstrate how the use of a particular terminology to describe Honduras is what delayed its concretization and what led to an unstable identity – something that continues to plague the country and its citizens up to this day.

One of the most significant effects of Honduras’s strong vacillation between becoming an independent nation and reconstituting a Central American Republic was a delayed production of many of the shared symbols that legitimate the nation in the eyes of its people. Mazzoni convincingly argues that the change in terminology from the
state of Honduras to the Republic of Honduras or nation was to a large extent void of meaning for it was not only born, but was for many decades, without its own flag, national anthem or national symbols and still made use of those that had been established by the Central American provinces in 1823 (27). It was not until 1866 that Honduras created its own flag, but it was undoubtedly unionist in nature because in the center of the flag five stars are depicted to represent the five states that made up the Central American Union. Furthermore, it did not create a national shield until 1935 or mint its own currency, the lempira, until the late 1920s. That is not to say that there was no discussion or attempt at creating its own currency as early as 1869. The congressional decree of that year expressed the need for a national coin to accomplish all commercial transactions and to present itself as a legitimate country before other nations (Mazzoni, 28-32). But what Mazzoni does not stress is that symbols such as a national coin not only have an economic value in society, but also a symbolic one, because they are what help build the identity of a

40 According to Congressional decree 7, dated February 17, 1866, the flag of the Republic of Honduras will consist of two horizontal outer blue bands and one inner white band as in the time of the Central American Federation. It will also include 5 blue stars in the center of the white band (published in the Boletín legislativo, número 4; Vallejo 518).
nation. In other words, identity is symbolically linked to all icons discussed here.

Part of the process of establishing identity includes the defining of the concept of citizenship. It is a created status that provides individuals with right and duties, and a symbolic expression of being part of a polity. Thus, it is important to analyze the conceptualization of Honduran citizenship and to trace the modifications it underwent. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the debate regarding the applicability of the Republican notion of universal male citizenship and suffrage to mixed, Indian and black communities was extant since 1810 when representatives of the provinces in the Americas and Spain gathered at the Courts in Cadiz to draft the Spanish Constitution of 1812. The law had granted citizenship to all indigenous and mestizo adult males who were financially independent, but did not confer to those with African ancestry (those who were free blacks or mulattos) automatic citizenship (Constitución de Cádiz, articles 18-22). But, to what extent did the independent States follow these same policies of citizenship during their initial period of nationhood? Did race play an important role and were the

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41 See cervantesvirtual.com
social and political rights of its entire people recognized? The Central American Federation and Honduras, specifically, proclaimed a governmental system based on the judicial equality, but much of its legislature was both inclusive and exclusive at the same time. As indicated by historian, Jordana Dym, the constitutions clearly did systematize the enfranchisement of different racial communities, including Blacks, by abolishing slavery and expressed a rejection of definitions of citizenship that “predicated on continent of origin in favor of place of birth and naturalization” (From Sovereign Villages 205). However, a detailed analysis of Honduran law allows us to discern the development of narrow delineations of “citizen” and provides us with a more nuanced reflection, one where we are able to argue that the State’s definition of citizenship was based on both pre-racial ideals of the previous centuries and current conceptions of race.\footnote{In “Del mestizaje a la diversidad étnica y cultural: la contribución del movimiento indígena y negro de Honduras,” Marvin Barahona makes a similar argument and demonstrates how the Honduran state used its influence to bestow upon or deny rights to anyone who was not a part of the dominant population, but unlike me, he does not formulate his argument around the conceptions of race in the 19th century.}

Moreover, we can begin to understand how citizenship is
tied to the characterization of both nation and its identity.

In order to understand the rationale for the exclusionary element of Honduran legislature we must begin with article 14 of the Federal Constitution of 1824. This constitution recognizes as citizens those males who had been born or naturalized in one of the States of the Republic, who were married, were at least 18 years of age and who had a useful profession or had a known form of subsistence (Constitución de 1824). On the surface this constitution may appear just given the absence of any reference, and therefore apparent partiality, to any caste or pre-racial classification and the lack of a precise definition for form of subsistence. Despite the vague nature of these provisions, the majority of the Central American (and Honduran in particular) population – Indian, Black and mixed communities – still did not meet the criteria for citizenship, and thus were not entitled to any political right. The same elite faction continued to dominate and the other “races” were the subordinates as they had been during the colonial period. I have indicated that there is an “absence” or an invisibility of a racial allusion, but is that really the case? Drawing from
academic Richard Dryer’s studies on whiteness, sociologist Steve Garner argues that given the dominance of Western European thought over the last five centuries, whiteness does not need to be demarcated or mentioned (34-35). Whiteness is the position from which judgments are made, against which difference is created, and “rendered invisible under the weight of accumulated privileges” (Garner 35) as is the case in Honduras with the specification of an ideologically “white” criteria for citizenship.

As a member of the Central American Federation, Honduras’s 1825 constitution follows the same philosophy found in article 14 of the Federation of 1824. Since then, legislators used this legal principal as the basis of citizenship, but continued to nuance its initial criteria and add requirements for citizenship with every new constitution. Beginning with the first post-federal union legislature of 1839, the State continued to recognize as nationals those eighteen and older, but incorporated the following conditions: property and well-known and respected employment. Moreover, it clearly specified that citizenship also predicated on moral and physical capability and proper conduct (Constitución de 1839, articles 9-11). The
ownership of assets or property as a precondition is not surprising given that it is something that can be traced to antiquity and the classical economic theory\(^{43}\), but one that merits further understanding and that should be circumscribed within the debate surrounding race and differentiation. According to Cheryl Harris, in “Whiteness as Property,” race and property are two deeply interrelated concepts because different forms of property and property rights are racially contingent and have been historically and legally associated with whiteness (1725-1727). In addition, Harris claims that property is linked to morality for property was believed to lead to virtuous behavior (1735-1736).\(^{44}\) Thus, by defining citizenship in terms of property, Honduran leaders are not only characterizing citizenship as “white” and morally superior, but also utilizing the highest law of the State to legitimate such an exclusionary principle.

Like the ownership of property, the provisions of moral and physical capability and conduct are clearly

\(^{43}\) See Goldberg’s “Modernity, Race and Morality” in Race Critical Theories, p 291.

\(^{44}\) By 1865, Honduran leaders explicitly reiterated such ideal when they included in its constitution that citizens were those who had “propiedad que les asegure un modo de vivir honesta y decentemente” [property that assured them of an honest and decent way of life]. See Chapter 5, article 13 of the 1865 constitution.
interrelated with race. Given that after the period of
discovery, morality was defined “in terms of stocks or
breeds of humans [race in the modern sense]” (Wade, Race
and Ethnicity 9), and non-European groups were considered
to be morally and usually aesthetically inferior⁴⁵, we can
also argue that although legislators make no direct
reference to race, they certainly describe the ideal
qualities of citizens in implicitly racial terms. Creole
elites masked their utilization of the colonial system of
differentiation known as calidad and sought to build their
nation in terms of whiteness. Although the eugenics
movement did not manifest itself until the late 19th
century with the development of the banana industry and the
large influx of non-white immigrants (Chambers 34), I argue
that its beginnings can and should be traced to the period
in which constitutions were first drafted. The inclusion of
regulations that denied citizenship to those physically
challenged, mentally ill and socially corrupt – meaning
alcoholic, violent, violent or characterized by other
social problems –did not only become the basis of the
ideology of eugenics in Honduras, but these social ills

⁴⁵ Ibid. p 293-294.
were also associated with the inherent nature of Blacks, Indians and *castas*.

With the approval of the 1848 constitution, the age limit increased to twenty-one and required those wishing to be granted the rights of citizens to be heads of household and to be able to read and write or have a higher education degree in the arts and sciences. In addition, it was included in article 9 of the constitution that beginning in 1860 no Honduran had the rights of citizens if he did not know how to read and write and have basic math skills. Lastly, further requirements for holding any type of political post were specified. No real changes were made to both the constitution decreed in 1865 and 1873, with the exception of the addition of laws that included requirements for naturalized citizens. In all, the regulations related to citizenship indicate that most of the Honduran population was not granted the rights of citizens or a political voice. The indigenous, women, illiterates, the poor – all of whom composed over 95 percent of the entire population – were completely excluded from participating in the construction of the nation.
(Barahona, “Honduras” 7). It is precisely this inability to recognize the social and political rights of the majority of the Honduran population that resulted in a lack of support for all nationalistic projects and a delayed optimal level of national consciousness and unity.

**Through the Traveler’s Eyes: Geographical and Racial Impediments to Civilization and Nationhood**

One of the first comprehensive geographical relations of Honduras during the 19th century is E.G. Squier’s 1855 travel log, *Notes on Central America: Particularly the States of Honduras and San Salvador*. In this narrative, the American diplomat and explorer describes how Honduras’s territory was diverse, fertile and full of resources that could provide economic gains, but also composed of areas that were either primarily uninhabited, except for the nomadic “savage” tribes (Payas, Xicaques and Mosquitos), or lacking communication due to the limited technological advancements and infrastructure. According to Squier these are some of the realities that impeded the Honduran State

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46 According to the 1881 census (the first official demographical count carried out in Honduras after its independence), only 17,976 of a total 307,289 inhabitants were considered by the State “ciudadanos elegibles” [eligible citizens]. In addition, the 1887 census indicated that 274,292 of 331,917 inhabitants were illiterate, meaning 95% of the entire population (See Vallejo p 147). Although Barahona does not specify how he arrived at the figure of 95%, it is evident that he utilized these censuses to arrive at such percentage.
from reaching its economic and social potential. This travel account depicts the paradoxical nature of the Honduran geography, rich in resources but underdeveloped, and it reflects the same concerns that State officials have had since independence. In addition, to understand the type of nation that leaders sought to construct, we must take into account travel narratives, such as this one, that were direct results of the State’s policies to promote immigration and relations with other nations. American and, to a lesser extent, European travel descriptions influenced future reports that Honduran explorers and officials generated regarding many of the territories they began to inhabit and the nomadic groups that eventually became part of the national population.

Travel writing is a well-known product of the exploration and colonization of many regions within Honduras. As indicated in chapter 1, the earliest documented description that we have of Honduras and its inhabitants is Christopher Columbus’s encounter with a trading canoe off the coast of the mainland and his subsequent landing on the Eastern coastal region during his fourth voyage in 1502. Since then, Spanish conquistadors, priests, explorers and royal officials have created written
reports of the geographical places they located and the people they encountered in an effort to possess these lands and its resources, establish their superiority over the native populations and integrate these regions into the overall territory of the Spanish Crown. In the 16th century, Bernal Díaz del Castillo (*Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*), Friar Bartolomé de las Casas (*Historia de las Indias*), Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo (*La Historia general de las Indias*) and royal cosmographer, Juan López de Velasco (*Geografía y descripción universal de las Indias*) include in some of their works, first-hand geographical and demographical descriptions of key regions within Honduras. In the 17th century, Fray Antonio de Remasal also provides important accounts in his *Historia general de las Indias occidentales*. In 1674, Friar Fernando Espino writes his *Relación verdadera de la reducción de los indios infieles de la provincia de la Taguisgalpa llamados Xicaques*, the first work solely dedicated to the Northeast region of Honduras. By the 18th and early 19th centuries, more systemic and complete reports were created, including that of Bishop Fray Fernando de Cadiñanos in 1791 and Intendent Governor, Ramón de Anguiano in 1801, both of which have been extensively discussed in the previous
chapter. I note these texts because they precede 19th century American travel narratives. In addition, it is important to emphasize that the more contemporary works are part of a larger corpus, a long trajectory of narratives that reflect an economic, hegemonic and integrative interest.

Most of the motivations and discourses of travel writers during the 19th century remained the same, but the wave of explorers beginning in the 1840s was comprised mainly of American men who were in search of potential economic ventures. This should come of no surprise for both Honduran and American leaders supported many of these geographical surveys. As literary critic Justin Edwards has illustrated in Exotic Journeys: Exploring the Erotics of U.S. Travel Literature, travel narrative emerged as one of the most prevalent literary genres in the U.S. during the 19th century; it was a popular mode of entertainment, but

47 During this time period British travel narratives of the coast and eastern region of Honduras also began to emerge. Among those are the texts of diplomats, George Byam and Thomas Young, both of whom resided on the coastal sections that were under the control of the British Empire. Inasmuch as these accounts did not directly influence the ideologies of Honduran officials, I will limit my discussion to primarily American narratives. See Franklin D Parker’s Travels in Central America for a reproduction of Byam and Young’s travel account.

48 See A.M. Metwalli’s “Americans Abroad: The Popular Art of Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century” for a more detailed
more importantly was a genre that dovetailed with American growth and imperialism that began in the 1840s with the political project of Manifest Destiny (5-6). Indeed, travel narratives should be placed alongside discourses of imperialism\(^4^9\), but my focus is not the function of 19th century American travel writing as an instrument for US expansion in Honduras. Every explorer explicitly expresses his or her expansionist motivations and apparent superiority from the onset of their narratives. What is of chief interest is the type of geographical, racial and demographic descriptions and assessments these explorers made and the relationship amongst these portrayals, natural history and current scientific racial ideas. Through a set of examples, I suggest how their modes and discourses of representation laid the foundation for what became a "nationalistic race" during and after the Liberal Reform Period.

Barahona correctly argues that the approach and rhetoric that State officials employed to portray the discussion of the popularity surrounding travel writing in the United States.

\(^{49}\) In addition to Justin Edwards, critics like Sara Mills, Mary Louise Pratt and Douglas Ivison have also written extensively on the relation between travel literature and the creation or maintaining of imperialist projects.
eastern coastal region of Honduras after the government obtained control of the Mosquitia region in 1860, was the same one that Squier and other American travelers had previously used. In addition, he suggests that a “nationalistic ethnology”\(^5\) was derived and constituted, in large part, by these same reports (Pueblos indígenas, 156-157). These narratives resulted in renewed conquest and civilizing projects, a greater endorsement for foreign immigration and legislature that clearly demonstrated a consciousness of race. But Barahona fails to argue that if the reports of both State officials and American explorers are mirror images, then the origins of this “nationalistic ethnology” include the travel narratives of these foreigners. Moreover, 19th century travel and official reports are part of a larger corpus of works that reflect the same hegemonic discourses and have existed since the colonial period; they were composed first and were the sources of inspiration for the initial intents to incorporate the Northeastern section of Honduras. In addition, in his analysis of these accounts he fails to

\(^5\) I prefer to use the term “nationalistic race” (as I have done so above) rather than “etnología nacionalista” (nationalistic ethnology), given that ethnicity is a mid-twentieth century construct and therefore less appropriate. Nationalistic race is also more in line with my discussion of the different definitions of race.
mention how these narratives were essential to the construction of a national identity based on the differentiation and racialization of locations and populations.

According to E.G. Squier, a country’s “geographical and topographical features” have always had a formative influence on the make-up and level of civilization of its populations. People who have settled either in the interior or the Pacific coast are in general more numerous and civilized than those along the Atlantic coast because their physical circumstances – cooler climate, richer soil and easier access to resources – have facilitated their development (Notes, 21-22). The same was true for Honduras as most settlements were found in the “more generally delightful” and salubrious interior of the State while the Caribbean coastal area remained scarcely inhabited, except for the “squalid Indians” that had not been reduced despite numerous efforts (Notes, 23-26). The hot and unhealthy climate is what deterred many Spaniards and Hondurans from forming permanent abodes along the Atlantic and what prevented the Indians, especially the Mosquito-sambos, from improving their “racial” nature.
The Mosquito-sambos are a mixed-race tribe that has resided along the marshes and lagoons of the northeast coast of Honduras since the 17th century. Their racial composition is the result of the intermixing of escaped slaves “who were driven ashore not far from Cape Gracias” early in the 17th century and the Indians who inhabited that area. Since then, the Mosquito-sambos’ Black racial element “was augmented from time to time by runaway slaves (cimarrones) from the Spanish settlement, and by the slaves brought from Jamaica by the planters who attempted to establish themselves on the coast during the early part of the last [18th] century” (Squier, Notes 208). Consequently, they are of all shades of color, from the copper of the Indian to the dark hue of the negro, their hair being more or less woolly... They are, in general, well proportioned and active, but more capable of undergoing privations than the fatigue of hard labor...Their fondness for liquor is excessive, and from this they suffer great calamities, for, having once commenced to drink, they go on till they fall down in a helpless state of intoxication, and lie exposed to the heavy dews or pouring rain. Their bodies are
wasted by fearful disorders, which eventually carry them off: this is one cause of the gradual decrease of population. They do not appear to have any idea of a Supreme Being...Their children are often interesting, and the nearer the child is in blood to Indians, the handsomer and clearer becomes the skin (Squier, Notes 210-211).

Although Squier is not a scientist, his description of the physical features of the Mosquito-sambos and the assessment he makes of their character, demonstrates that he was fully aware of the scientific ideas that were popular during that period. Squier suggests that this population’s deficient moral nature and aesthetically unpleasant physicality is directly correlated to their “inferior” racial make up and the environment in which they originated. Nevertheless, Squier also makes clear differentiations among the Mosquito-sambos when he argues that a sambo who is closer “in blood” to an Indian then an African, as indicated by his or her lighter complexion, is more aesthetically pleasing than those who are not. It is evident that Squier’s descriptive practices work to validate differentiation and hierarchy among races where those with a “lighter” countenance are superior in beauty and conduct.
than those who are darker, meaning those whose blood is primarily African.

Often citing the writings of Thomas Young, an official of a British colonization project in Honduras, Squier provides a more favorable description of the Indians he encounters when he traveled inland and away from the Mosquito-sambo settlements. The native groups include the Payas, Xicaques and Tawankas, all of which lived in the elevated mountains, north of Olancho, which divided Honduran from British territories. The Paya are described as follows:

[they have] long black hair hanging over their shoulders, very broad faces, small eyes, with a peculiar sadness and docility, which prepossesses the beholder in their favor...they are short but remarkably strong, and capable of carrying heavy burdens over the rocky passes of their steep mountains without appearing to suffer much fatigue. Their character for faith and honesty stands high; but, like all other savage tribes, they have a great fondness for spirituous liquors...In character they are mild and inoffensive...They are industrious, and skillful in manufacturing from their wild cotton a sort of cloak
called *kinkoora*, which, being dyed according to some device, and the down of birds interwoven in the fabric, has a very pleasing appearance…[Their] house is thatched in a very neat manner with swallow-tail leaf to about four feet from the ground, so that the rain, however violent, does not trouble them. They are noted for cleanliness (Squier, *Notes* 204-207).

It is safe to posit that Squier’s portrayal of the Paya echo many physiognomic theories related to features such as the eyes, face and hair. For example, he seems to share Swiss physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater’s view that small eyes are linked to the melancholic temperament, that they usually indicate sorrow or at least “capable of suffering much” (388).\(^{51}\) Squier also emphasizes the Payas’ dark hair and broad face as a way to suggest that they possess limited intellectual capabilities because both features denote a “certain lack of intelligence” (Lavater 340). However, such facial characteristics can also signify positive qualities such as “orderliness,” strength and good hygiene (Lavater 340). This is most reflected by Squier’s affirmations that the Payas are strong, they live in a very

\(^{51}\) All excerpts from Lavater’s *Physiognomische Fragmente zue Beförderung der Menschenkenntnibund Menschenliebe* are quoted from Thomas Holcroft’s translation, *Essays on Physiognomy*, 3rd edition. All page numbers that appear in the text come from this translation.
“neat” habitat and are known for their “cleanliness.”

Having said that, it is essential to reiterate that this form of physiognomic description in America can and should be traced to Columbus’s initial description of the first Amerindians he encounters. It is Columbus who opened this discursive space in Latin America.

Although Squier admires some of the characteristics of the Paya Indians and considers them to be superior to the Mosquito-sambos, in his eyes, they are still savages and inferior to other indigenous groups. Among those are the Tawanka Indians, whom he describes as “generally a finer race of men” because unlike the Paya, they are able to communicate, to “speak with great ease” (Notes 205). The Tawanka also possess qualities such as kindness, faithfulness and skillfulness when it comes to labor, but lack the knowledge to correctly assess the value of the objects they produce. Squier illustrates this point when he narrates that the Tawanka “will sell a dory or pitpan for one axe and a machete, or two iron pots, and so on, notwithstanding the immense time which they expend in making them” (Squier, Notes 206).

I have indicated that Squier’s descriptions of the different tribes reiterate the “science” of physiognomy,
but to further understand his racial hierarchy and overall views regarding race, we must take into account the particular American scientific milieu to which he belonged to. It has been well documented that Squier maintained regular correspondence with many members of the American School – “a disparate group of craniologists, ethnographers and proslavery writers who argued for polygenesis, or separate creations of human beings in different geographical zones with different ancient histories” (Hartman-Strom 411). Members of the American School also believed that since different races, with diverse physical characteristics, existed, they felt it was their “obligation to settle their rank among these races” (Agassiz 142). As such, it was determined that Europeans, Indians and Blacks were distinct races and that the European race was superior to the other two, and the Black race should occupy the lowest rank (Gould, 96-97). Thus, it is no coincidence that Squier described the differences among the tribes, ranked them, and indicated that their racial distinctions were created and reinforced by their geographical location. Undoubtedly, race and space mutually constituted each other.
As a supporter of the America School, Squier views the Black race as the most debased. But how can we explain what may seem as a contradictory assessment of the Black Caribs of the coast of Honduras? As in his characterization of the Mosquito-sambos, Squier emphasizes the Black Caribs’ “negro blood,” “mercurial nature” and indicates that they “cannot be considered a handsome race” (Notes 214). Nonetheless, Squier also suggests that unlike the Mosquito sambos, the Black Caribs are

civilized in their habits, living in well-constructed huts, which are kept clean and comfortable… intelligent, faithful… and, more over, expert in the use of the axe, and with some knowledge of the building of the roads and bridges, they must prove of the greatest service in the future development of the vast resources of the proposed railway between the seas (Notes, 214-215).

The reason for such contrast is that Squier also endorsed the American School’s view on racial hybridity. Most of the pioneers of the school believed that inasmuch as Africans and Whites were different races – let us remember that at this time slavery was still legal and acceptable in the United States – they should not interbreed because they
produced inferior offspring and such biological mixture will result in the eventual extinction of both races (Hartman-Strom 411; Gould 98). This theory was extended to the miscegenation among all races. In the case of Honduras, this included the Mosquito-sambos, the “half-breeds” of two debased races. That is the reason why Squier argues that there can be no admixture of widely-separated families, or of superior with inferior races … [for] the offspring of such combinations or amalgamations are not only generally deficient in physical constitution, in intellect, and in moral restraint, but to a degree which often contrasts unfavorably with any of the original stocks (Notes, 54-55).

Historian Hartman-Strong indicates that Squier’s characterization of the Mosquito sambos certainly reflects the American School’s fear of racial amalgamation, but she makes two additional interesting points. The first one is that Squier’s descriptions were used to invalidate the British claim to the northeastern territory by portraying British influence in Honduras as both a political and moral disaster. They “had allowed, even encouraged, a dreadful degree of race mixing among indigenous Indians, ex-slaves from Jamaica and Belize, and lower orders of whites along
the Atlantic coast of Central America” (Hartman Strom 424). In addition, Hartman argues that Squier emphasizes the Black element of the Mosquito-sambo racial make-up as a way to delegitimize this tribe’s claim to the territory and facilitate US occupation and entitlement. Inasmuch as the sambos were not “pure” Indians and more African they should not be considered as natives, but “interlopers” of that region of Honduras (425). With the Mosquito-sambo race out of the way, Squier believed that the construction of the inter-oceanic railroad could be successfully accomplished.

All of the coastal groups on the Atlantic coast of Honduras struck Squier as lacking in civilization and as major impediments to the development of a State with the resources necessary to progress. But what was his view on the other indigenous groups that lived in and around the major cities and settlements? Although Squier did consider the Indian race superior to the Black race, he perceived indigenous groups as obstacles to the country’s development. Thus, he proposed as a solution to Honduras’s

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52 Although my focus does not include fictional texts, it is important to note that Squier, under the pseudonym of Samuel Bard, published the novel Waikna: Adventures on the Mosquito Shore. This work, according to Hartman-Strom, is valuable in that it provides and creates various racial typologies of the different Mosquito tribes. He also explicitly expressed the American’s School obsession with the importance of maintaining racial purity (430-431).
“racial problem” the introduction of a large number of European immigrants who would ideally over time counterbalance the large populations of inferior races (Notes 218). In addition, Squier suggests that U.S. influence and involvement in the country – and I argue, that he considered this best possible answer to their developmental issues – would provide “trade, efficient labor systems, an international transportation network” (Hartman-Strom 406), and an optimal racial ideology essential to Honduras’s future success.

William V. Wells, a diplomat and contemporary of Squier, also believed that the Honduran State was a potential colony. In his travel narrative, Explorations and Adventures in Honduras, he indicates that the discovery of gold in California and the successful expansion westward were the driving forces in the exploration of the Honduran region of Olancho. In the past centuries, Olancho was one of the most successful gold-bearing areas, and many American explorers believed that there were many deposits that had not yet been exhausted or found (xii). Wells narrates that in 1854 he left the U.S. for Honduras with the hope of obtaining “certain mining and commercial privileges from the government of Honduras” (25). He and
other concerned parties were confident about successfully carrying out negotiations with Honduran leaders because during this time period the Honduran government was very interested in establishing foreign relations with the U.S. and in attracting American immigrants to the country. Wells and others were never able to find the numerous deposits of gold they had hoped, but his opinions on race and miscegenation helped shape the views of many Honduran leaders and intellectuals on those same topics.

Wells makes it a point to argue throughout his travel narrative that the Black, Indian and mixed-races are a threat and the greatest impediment to civilization and progress. He articulates his first opinions of the Honduran population when he reaches Tegucigalpa, the largest and most important city of the State. There, Wells indicates that the population had grown to 12,000 inhabitants, half of whom were either mestizos or mulattoes, and the remaining half was divided among “whites, negroes, quadroons and Indians” with the pure whites being the minority (186). His deep concern for the minute number of whites and the continuous amalgamation amongst the races was so great that he considered it
the greatest misfortune that could have befallen the
country. [Furthermore,] the mixture of the offshoots
of the white, negro and Indian have entailed upon the
country a race ranging in hue from chocolate to cream-
color. An occasional white may be found among the
descendants of the old aristocratic Spanish families,
who have jealously avoided intermarrying with the
Indians or blacks; but these instances are rare, and,
with the actual numerical increase of the others, they
seem to regard the eventual extermination of the white
race with a resigned despondency (196–197).

According to Wells, it is precisely these realities that
have resulted in chaos and altered what he considered the
natural order. There is no clear distinction among the
races and thus no precise hierarchy. In addition, he
describes how Blacks have gained much ascendancy in
Honduras, refused at times “to employ themselves where
manual labor is required” and have caused free Blacks
servants who accompany many foreigners to “fall into
indolent habits...and quit their employers” (198).
Nevertheless, he believed that the introduction of a
superior American race would offset the increasing numbers
of blacks, restore order and “open the way to civilization and progress” (556-557).

Although Wells provides very few physiognomic descriptions of the populations he encounters, his travel narrative is still quite significant. First of all, his text is one of the few complete works of the mid 19th century that continues to make use of specific racial epithets to describe the Honduran population. Wells also provides us with invaluable demographical information that clearly indicates that a large segment of the population of the interior of the State was of African ancestry, a fact that political officials reinterpreted or masked beginning with the Liberal Reform Period. The idea of a predominantly “Black” coastline was a concern, but the possibility of an African-descendant majority in the interior of the country was a far greater threat. Utilizing Squier’s 1855 estimate of 350,000 inhabitants (554), Wells provides the following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Population number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negroes and Mulattoes</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladinos</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53 See page 48 of Squier’s Notes on Central America.
Wells’ enumeration of the Honduran population was the first complete census since 1801, and it took another 24 years before the State carried out its first official census in 1881. That is not to say that different departments did not carry out their own population tally or that Congress never ordered one before 1881 as demonstrated by the 1834 census of the department of Gracias. According to the demographical information Wells provides, 40% of the Honduran population was either Black or mulatto and 17.1% ladino, a classificatory term he never defines. But, if we take into account the parish records of the previous chapter that indicate that a ladino may well have a percentage of African blood, then over 57% of the entire population may well have been of African descent. The percentage may have been even greater since Wells did not take into account the number of Mosquito-sambos living in Honduras.

Although I will not delve into a discussion as to the specifics of these departmental registers, what is important to note is that from those I have surveyed,

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54 According to José María Cacho’s Resumen estadístico, orográfico e histórico del departamento de Gracias, the population of Gracias was composed of 12,667 Indians and 17,350 ladinos for a total of 30,017 inhabitants. At that time Cacho was the secretary of state of Honduras and the commissioner of the census that had been ordered by Congress.
dating from 1830 to 1860, I have found that officials either reduced the multi-racial makeup of their populations to ladino and Indian or did not include the category of race as part of their local censuses. Records pertaining to the department of Tegucigalpa and Gracias do often include a racial classification of its people — they were categorized as either ladino or indio — while those of the departments of Olancho and Santa Barbara do not identify the race of their populations. While we do not have documentation as to why certain departments did and others did not decide to include race in their registers, and the information that has survived is often incomplete, these records are significant in that they attest to the prevalence of a homogenizing discourse, of a continuous process of obscuring the actual racial composition of Honduras.

The Incorporation of Northeast Regions and the Neo-Colonial Policy

Hondurans were clearly influenced by the arguments and ideological principles that both Squier and Wells provided in their travel narratives. Those that were specifically related or applicable to the northeastern and coastal

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55 Dario Euraque provided copies of these reports to me on November 3, 2011.
regions had a more immediate impact given that Honduras recovered the Bay Islands and the Mosquitia from Great Britain in 1859 as part of the Wyke-Cruz Treaty. The recuperation of these territories required Honduran leaders to execute numerous measures that facilitated the assimilation, homogenization and control of the “savage” tribes without hindering the progress of the State. This included the establishment of reductions as in the Colonial period, the promotion of foreign immigration and the issuing of legislature that called for the Castilianisation and edification of all the sylvan populations.

Many were involved in the efforts to colonize and integrate the different native tribes of the northeastern region of Honduras, but none more so than the Catalan Jesuit, Manuel de Jesús Subirana. On October of 1856, Subirana arrived on the coast of Honduras with the intention of joining the Honduran clergy and working to Christianize the “indios selváticos” [sylvan Indians] that had resisted the authorities’ control for centuries (Garrido 68). After Subirana received approval from the

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56 According to Honduran legislation, the groups considered “indios selváticos” included the Xicaques, Payas, Tawankas, Mosquito-sambos and the Caribs or Garífuna. These groups were for the most part the most difficult to reduce and a good number of them had or continued to maintain relations with the English (Herranz 177).
Bishop of Honduras and support from the State, which considered his missionary goals in line with the government’s discourse of civilization and progress, he left for the coast of Honduras where the fruits of his efforts were immediate.

In *Estado, sociedad y lenguaje: la política lingüística en Honduras*, Herranz argues that in eight years of missionary work, Subirana was able to create, organize and carry out what he called a neo-colonial policy with the different sylvan tribes (178–182). What Herranz meant by a neo-colonial policy was that Subirana’s approach to these populations did not differ much from those applied by missionaries during the Colonial Period. In essence, what Subirana sought to do was to evangelize and provide the different tribes with basic agricultural skills and much needed schools. In a report submitted to the Minister of State Relations in 1858 regarding the tribes in the Department of Yoro, Subirana details the process he undertook to conquer and reduce the 2,127 indigenous men and women from the Olancho and Yoro region. Subirana indicates that when he arrived at a village of Indians he first catechized, baptized and instructed them in how to live a moral life. After that, he made sure that the
natives paid any debts they may have had, but if they did not have any, Subirana left them under the care of a “citizen” who provided them with agricultural work and the tools necessary to accomplish such labor so that they might have a source of food. In this report Subirana also recommends that hermitages be constructed in haciendas contiguous to their inhabitants so that the local priest may be able to gather and instruct all of them in the Catholic faith. This gradually ensured the formation of permanent establishment (Alvarado-García, Legislación indigenista 69-71).

Both religious and secular officials considered the work that Subirana was able to accomplish in Olancho and Yoro meritorious. By November of 1859, the Jesuit priest had Christianized 5,022 sylvan Indians: 150 Tawankas, 600 Payas and 4,272 Xicaques and had begun to establish schools in different villages (Alvarado-García, Legislación indigenista 72-75). Subirana’s reports and suggestions also had an effect on the State’s efforts to strengthen its control over the Mosquitia and its population. Herranz argues that Subirana’s previous success coupled with the friendships he was able to develop with the two current presidents allowed him to influence much of the legislature
that the State issued in the 1860s (178). For example, the 1861 presidential decree called for the governor of the Mosquitia, José Lamorte, to perform the following:

To inspire in the sylvan Indians the liking for farming, agriculture and the other Arts necessary to the sustenance and maintenance of life; insist that the tribes form settlements so that they may gradually become accustomed to the routines of daily life; Make sure that in these settlements hermitages are erected for the celebration of Christian faith, in which they should be instructed; insist on the immediate catechization of every individual who up to this date had not adopted the religion; to establish, as soon as possible, schools where the native tribes may receive basic Catholic teachings; and to assure the observance of the regulations issued by Subirana in order to protect the interests of the Indians (Alvarado-García, Legislación indigenista 19-20).

We can clearly see that many of the governor’s specified responsibilities are the exact same suggestions Subirana had previously presented in his 1858 report. Moreover, this law specifically indicates that the governor must observe the regulations that the Jesuit priest had created to
defend the sylvan Indians from cruelty and unfair
treatment. After this presidential order, other decrees
considered favorable to the native populations were issued,
including the naming of administrators for the tribes, the
establishment of schools, and the granting of certain land
to the Xicaque Indians in 1864 (Herranz 178). By the end of
1864, the year in which Subirana passed away, over 33
villages were established and over 9,000 Indigenous and
African men and women were baptized (Herranz 180).

After Subirana’s death, State authorities no longer
subscribed to the “pro-indigenous” ideology and language
that characterized his reports. Government officials
continued to promote the exploration and Christianization
of the Mosquitia, but the main objectives were to
nationalize the area and instill in the sylvan tribes the
ideas of civilization and progress through education,
beginning with the Castilian language. This is most
reflected in the main articles of the 1868 decree in which
the Mosquitia was designated one of the departments of the

57 See Subirana’s November 4, 1859 letter directed to the Minister
of Relations for a detailed transcription of the “Reglamento del Padre
Subirana.” Alvarado-García includes a copy of this letter in
Legislación indigenista, p.72-74.
State. Unlike the 1861 law, this decree did not include the observance of Subirana’s regulations or the protection of the Indians’ interests (Alvarado-García, Legislación indigenista 30-32). In addition, as Barahona has observed in his analysis of this law, there is an evident resurgence of the representations of the Indian and African race as inferior, lacking in reason and unworthy of self-governance, political rights or citizenship (“Imagen y percepción” 20). This leads me to suggest that it is no coincidence that the requirements for citizenship had become stricter (as demonstrated by the analysis of the constitutions I have made in this chapter) at around this same time.

The language employed in State reports reproduces many of the dominant discourses regarding the inferior nature of the Mosquitia tribes. For instance, in José Lamorte’s first official account of his experience with the Mosquito-sambos, he often uses the qualifying adjectives “savage”

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58 By 1887, the Mosquitia had become part of the department of Colón. This department encompassed most of the territory of the Caribbean coast. See Barahona’s Evolución histórica de la identidad nacional, p. 243.

59 See also the decree for the improvement of the Xicaques titled “Ordenanzas para la dirección y mejoramiento de las tribus Xicaques.” This law is included in Alvarado-García’s Legislacion indigenista, p. 35-37.
and “rebellious”. Lamorte indicates that the Mosquito-sambos are a defiant race, unwilling to recognize him or the State as its superiors despite his labors (Oqueli, 146-147). Like Lamorte, the government commissioner, Melquidesec Zuñiga, also provides a disapproving description of this tribe when he argues that the Mosquito-sambos are the laziest race that nature has ever produced and affirms that it was imperative to civilize these tribes to ensure their continued existence, and more importantly, the progress of the State (Barahona, “Imagen y percepción” 20-21). With this purpose in mind, a special commission was set up in 1882, but the end result was unsuccessful and their written expositions were characterized by the same dominant racial scientific concepts of the time period (Herranz 170). Nevertheless, this ideological construction of a savage and uncivilized man by the 1870s was also employed to qualify the Garifuna population and, in general, all African descendants. The “other” was not just the wild Indian, but also the “negro” who was considered a greater threat to the Republican ideals of civilization and progress.

Without a doubt, the incorporation of the Caribbean coastal region to the Honduran State fomented the
resurgence of a plurality of discourses about race and its place in Honduran identity. Also, these discourses were intimately connected to regional identities and interwoven with the images of modernity and economic progress or backwardness and deterioration. Thus, during the next few decades political leaders and intellectuals defined Honduras’s racial, cultural and national identity, in large part, through the inclusion of the interior of the State and the rejection of the racially and culturally inferior Caribbean Coast.

**Conclusions**

Following Honduras’s independence from Spanish rule and a disbanded Central American Federation, the small Creole elite class enacted a series of practices aimed at the creation of a homogenous and modern republic and the ideological elimination of the racial and cultural diversity of its population. While most Honduran political leaders and intellectuals did not initially resort to explicitly racial concepts in defining the State and its citizens, many of the written constitutions, proposed civilizing projects and Hispanicization strategies described the ideal characteristics of both in implicitly
racial terms. The qualities of property ownership, moral and physical beauty, literacy, hygiene and individual autonomy had been traditionally associated with whiteness, European culture, masculinity and a superior race. Thus, those that did not conform to this ideal – the majority of the indigenous and African or African-descendant populations – were not only excluded from directly participating in nation building projects, but were also denied any political power.

The first few decades of independence were also the period in which we saw the onset of racial categorization based on scientific discourses, in the modern sense. This was most evident after the incorporation of the Caribbean coast to Honduras’s overall territory and the surge of travel narratives and official State reports that it produced. In these texts, writers employed hereditary, physiognomic and environmental theories to describe the racial and cultural differentiations among the “savage” and “inferior” tribes they encountered. These scientific premises also served as justification for defining Honduran identity in opposition to this geographical location and its people. The irony of such political action is that although the Coast always existed in the periphery at an
ideological level, this region became the center of economic gain from the late 19th century to the mid 20th century. Overall, this chapter corroborates one of Peter Wade’s arguments regarding race and nation: racial differentiation and classification operates through both cultural and biological principles (“Afterword” 271-275). The following chapter will delve further into this argument as part of my exploration of the details and implications of the State-promoted ideologies of ladinaje and mestizaje in Honduras.
Chapter 4: A Return To The Past, The Science of Race and The Elaboration of An Indo-Hispanic Identity (1876-1936)

The latter decades of the 19th and the early 20th century were a period in which Honduran leaders implemented nation and identity-building projects previously proposed during the Republican Era. To achieve economic development and social advancement, State officials and intellectuals promoted foreign investment and European and North American immigration into the country. In addition, they adopted Eurocentric civilizing principles and procedures founded on contemporary scientific theories pertaining to race and human improvement. At a symbolic level, intellectuals also began to create a national Honduran imaginary by elaborating an “official history” based on a common Indo-Hispanic past.

This chapter illustrates the different ideologies and processes that were enacted to form at a discursive level a racially and culturally uniform nation. I focus, in particular, on the cultural, political and socio-scientific reasoning for the celebration of what I describe as inclusionary and exclusionary discourses of ladinaje and mestizaje. I detail the Hispanicization and environmental strategies elaborated by the State to correct the racial
and cultural composition of Indian and Black populations who were considered a threat to the integrity of a homogenous national image. I also discuss the transformation of two icons from Honduras’s past into symbolic capital\textsuperscript{60} – the pre-Colombian Mayan city of Copan and the cacique Lempira – and their relation to the debate on Honduran identity. Overall, this section of the dissertation attests to the complexities of the Honduran nation building era and the continuous search for a national identity.

**The Liberal Reform Period And the Surge of the Banana Industry**

The creation of the nation did not become an official project until the Liberal Reform Period (1876 -1883). Led by the economic and political strategies of President Marco Aurelio Soto and Minister of Public Instruction, Ramón Rosa, Honduran leaders sought to establish a strong central government that would eliminate localism, incorporate the country into the international market, legitimate the Nation-State and create a homogenous national image of Honduras. In order to accomplish these objectives,

\textsuperscript{60} My use of term is based on Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization of symbolic capital in his 1979 text, *La Distinction*. 169
political officials and intellectuals elaborated a symbolic language that facilitated the feeling of a common origin and the formation of bonds among members of the population. Leaders also initiated an aggressive recovery and reconstruction of the past, which included the creation of national heroes and icons and the establishment of centralized archival depositories such as the National Library and National Archives (Varela-Osorio 148-149). One of the first State-sponsored projects of this reform period was the transfer of all historical documents preserved in various depositories in the city of Comayagua – the center of colonial power – to the newly created and organized National Archives in Tegucigalpa. On August 27th, 1880, Ramón Rosa delivered a speech commemorating the opening of the National Archives and Library in which he emphasized the importance of history, archives and traditions in defining and solidifying a nation (Barahona, Honduras en el siglo XX 39). This oration served as a call to intellectuals and leaders to elaborate an “official national history” based on a careful selection and compilation of Pre-colonial, Colonial and Republican narratives and events that helped to define Honduran identity. It is precisely at this moment – as part of the
recuperation of history - that figures from Honduras’s historical past such as Copán and Lempira became more widely known and recognized for the first time as national symbols.

As part of the efforts to build a modern and developed State, the liberal government of Marco Aurelio Soto actively promoted foreign investment and immigration from Europe and the United States. Although these measures were endorsed since independence from Spain by prior governments, beginning in the mid 1860s, the State began to establish a series of favorable immigration laws for those coming into the country. The expectation was that immigrants would help in developing the export economy (Chambers 19). For example, in 1866, the State approved a new regulation that granted property ownership free of tax to all foreigners who worked the land for five years and allowed them to introduce tools, machinery or instruments necessary to establish their own businesses without having to pay any custom fees (Amaya, Los árabes y palestinos 32-33). Two years later, this measure was supplemented by the October 26, 1868 memorandum from the Department of Colonization, which provided a formal document to issue letters of inhabitance to immigrants who wished to settle
in Honduras (Vallejo 517-518). During Soto’s administration, the President ratified a new law in 1877 — *Ley sobre agricultura* [Agriculture Law] — where he officially placed all matters regarding agriculture under the jurisdiction of the State and presented a more elaborate version of the privileges granted in 1866 (Vallejo 518-520). The 1880 constitution served to support these measures by specifying that the State would do everything possible to stimulate foreign investment, colonize previously abandoned areas and integrate Honduras into the world economy (Chambers 24). Consequently, the country further opened its doors during the next few decades with the approval of the 1895 and 1905 immigration laws and the economic boom of the banana trade. It is important to note that while the Honduran government and numerous intellectuals contemplated the possible economic benefits of foreign immigration and investment, they did not fully consider the cultural baggage of these groups and the effect they would have on both the country’s overall population composition and identity.

The liberal agriculture policies served as an impetus for the development of the Honduran Caribbean region and the international fruit industry. At the beginning of the
mid 19th century the cultivation of bananas in Honduras was in large part limited to the Bay Islands, but with the promulgation of new immigration laws, the country saw an increase in banana production in the North Coast of Honduras. Independent growers, mainly from the region of Olancho, began to sell their product to North American merchants who imported bananas into the United States. Local control of this industry lasted for about four decades as US investors began to establish themselves in the area and form what became the three most dominant multinational fruit companies: the Cuyamel Fruit Company, the Vaccaro Brothers (later known as the Standard Fruit and Steamship Company) and United Fruit Company. The large economic revenues from these businesses did not necessarily benefit the country or its citizens because most it did not remain in Honduras, but rather made its way back to the US where investors had set up their headquarters. Nevertheless, these three companies were able to attract and acquire as part of their labor force numerous Hondurans from various parts of the country - including the Garifuna people - and immigrants from different parts of the world who hoped to take advantage of the competitive wages (Chambers 26-29).
Until the late 1920s all regulations pertaining to immigration matters were free of any language that seemed to privilege or limit any racial group from entering the country. Amaya makes a valid point in indicating that during this period, State officials were under the erroneous assumption that these favorable laws would exclusively attract Europeans and US immigrants, and thus did not make a conscious effort to include restrictions in any of their laws until the 1929 migratory law (Los árabes y palestinos 36). One of the main reasons for the creation of a new law that established a clear hierarchy among different racial groups was the State’s lack of success in attracting those classified as white. Census records indicate that only a small percentage of the total number of immigrants was of US or European nationality. In addition, after the 1895 immigration law was issued, the country began to see Asian, Middle Eastern and West Indian populations settling in or close to the coastal region of Honduras, all of whom were considered by the Creole elites “less desirable” races and a threat to the ideals of progress and civilization (Amaya, Los árabes y palestinos 31-38). Another motive for the new legislature was the resentment that the ruling class developed as the banana
companies began to expand their interests into other economic sectors, including communication, banking and the production of numerous products. For example, Chambers indicates that the Standard Fruit Company established the Banco Atlántida, monopolized the production of sugar with its Honduras Sugar and Distilling Company, and made beer and other types of refreshments through the Compañía Industrial Ceibeña (31).

It is well known that the economic decline of the Ottoman Empire and the numerous ongoing wars in the Middle East were two of the most salient reasons for the immigration of Palestinians to Latin American in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But, what was the reasoning for their immigration to Honduras during this period? At the moment of greatest expansion by the banana companies, this group began to enter the country and eventually settle primarily in the city of La Ceiba and San Pedro Sula. Most Palestinians were educated Christian merchants from the Bethlehem-Jerusalem area in search of economic opportunities who initially did not have any intention of forming permanent settlements in Honduras. They produced

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61 For a detailed historical explanation of the conditions in the Ottoman Empire during this time, see Foroohar's “Palestinians in Central America.”
religious items and other forms of souvenirs that were sold to pilgrims and Catholics throughout Central America (Foroohar 7-9). In Honduras, Palestinians began as peddlers selling religious icons, agricultural tools and household goods until they became the dominant suppliers in the region (Foroohar 11; Amaya, Los árabes y palestinos 56-57). The economic boom and surge of regional markets resulting from the banana production allowed them to gain control of the commercial system in the North coast and to branch out into new lines of trade and small scale industries, especially textile and clothing manufacturing (Foroorhar 11). Palestinians were one of the most economically powerful immigrant groups, but as I will later explain in more detail, this success is what led Honduran elites to reject them and enact a series of discriminatory policies against them.
Table 1: Number and Percentage of Hondurans vs. Foreign Immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hondurans</th>
<th>Foreign Immigrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>306,262 (99.7%)</td>
<td>1,027 (.3%)</td>
<td>307,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>325,750 (98.1%)</td>
<td>6,167 (1.9%)</td>
<td>331,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>392,856 (98.5%)</td>
<td>6,021 (1.5%)</td>
<td>398,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>666,097 (95%)</td>
<td>34,714 (5%)</td>
<td>700,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>811,904 (95%)</td>
<td>42,280 (5%)</td>
<td>854,184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Nationalities of Foreign Immigrant Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Belizean</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Guatemalan</th>
<th>Jamaican</th>
<th>Nicaraguan</th>
<th>Other European</th>
<th>Palestinian</th>
<th>Salvadorian</th>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>185 (3%)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>1 (.02%)</td>
<td>1,033 (16.8%)</td>
<td>2,060 (33.4%)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>610 (9.9%)</td>
<td>219 (3.6%)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>2,000 (32.4%)</td>
<td>945 (2.7%)</td>
<td>6,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>2,160 (6.2%)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>195 (.56%)</td>
<td>4,196 (12.1%)</td>
<td>8,358 (24.1%)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>3,162 (9.1%)</td>
<td>1,348 (3.9%)</td>
<td>131 (.38%)</td>
<td>13,452 (38.8%)</td>
<td>945 (2.7%)</td>
<td>34,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,313 (3.1%)</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>269 (.64%)</td>
<td>2,921 (6.9%)</td>
<td>7,885 (18.6%)</td>
<td>930 (2.2%)</td>
<td>5,907 (14%)</td>
<td>1,478 (3.5%)</td>
<td>198 (.47%)</td>
<td>18,522 (43.8%)</td>
<td>569 (1.3%)</td>
<td>42,280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1901, 1910 and 1916 census were not included as part of this analysis because they do not provide any statistical information regarding the nationality and race of the different populations or do not make a differentiation among nationals and foreigners.
We can see in table 1 that from 1887 to 1930, there is a clear increase in the number of immigrants that settled in Honduras. But the increase, in terms of the overall population percentage is quite minimal. Furthermore, as Amaya has indicated, most immigrants did not come from the United States or European countries, but rather from the contiguous Central American countries, especially El Salvador and Guatemala. In fact, since 1887, these two countries have made up over 60% of the entire foreign population in Honduras. Palestinians and Turks (who were in actuality Palestinians, but were categorized as such because many carried Ottoman passports) made up over 3% of the population in 1926, but less than 2% in 1930 (Foroohar 7). In terms of the number of West Indians who settled in the country, it is more difficult to gauge due to the limited documentation. Before 1930, demographical information did not include a separate category for any of the West Indian countries or a “West Indian” classification and often times not all West Indians were included because many only entered as temporary workers (Chambers 20). What we do have is the category of English, which may or may not encompass both “white” and “black” populations. In his analysis of British West Indian immigration documentation,
including national censuses, Chambers estimates that there were about 1,033 documented West Indian immigrants on the North Coast in 1887, 3,673 in 1926 and 4,215 in 1930 (21). If we take into account the estimates Chambers presents and the information that I have provided in tables 1 and 2, it appears that he has included the number of English immigrants as part of the overall number of West Indians who settled in the North Coast of Honduras. Although Chambers does not fully explain how he arrives at these numbers or question the sources he utilizes, the underlying assumption that the English category may encompass West Indians may well be correct given that many Black West Indians made a point to emphasize their status as English nationals in an effort to differentiate themselves from the Black Garifuna population whom they considered to be inferior.

The Creole Response to Foreign Immigration & Race

The economic development of the Caribbean coastal region further fomented the ideological debate pertaining to race and national identity that first surfaced in the 1860s with the incorporation of the Northeast region to the overall territory of the country. State officials and
members of the liberal intelligentsia had always favored Western notions regarding European superiority, but the arrival of “less desirable” races coupled with the development of new scientific ideas resulted in a widespread anti Afro-descendant sentiment. By the late 19th century, Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* and Francis Galton’s *Heredity Genius*, the founding text of eugenics, had made their way to Latin America and the ideologies known as Darwinism, Social Darwinism and Eugenics had been adopted in some form or another by much of the intellectual class. These scientific principles not only questioned Lamarck’s notion of the inheritance of acquired characters by indicating that physical and mental variations were the results of hereditary material, but also planted the seeds for racist formulations based on the idea that the “race plasma” of certain groups – meaning that of the European race – was fitter and therefore superior to that of other degenerative populations. These weaker groups included those of hybrid racial composition (Stepan 22-27). Thus, it is no surprise that Honduran nation-builders enacted a series of strategies that reflected a rejection of many of the newly immigrated populations. But none were targeted more so than the Black
West Indians who many Hondurans feared might biologically and culturally mix with the rest of the Honduran population. In addition, and I believe this was a greater concern, the Black West Indian presence resulted in a re-evaluation of the country’s own heterogeneous racial composition, its own African heritage.

Throughout most of the 19th century, the State sought to create a racially and culturally homogenous population. But, as explained in the previous chapter, it was not successful in accomplishing such an objective for most of the century. This changed during the Liberal Reform Period when the State employed the problematic and complex term “ladino” to classify the majority of its population. This was obviously not the first time that this term was utilized for it had also been used during the colonial era. Unlike the previous period in which the meaning of ladino was varied and ambiguous, in the 1880s, the authorities delimited its definition. In 1887, officials carrying out

63 In chapter 2, I explained how the term “ladino” has been accorded various meanings at different time periods and in different contexts. In the case of Central America, it was initially used to describe an Indian who spoke Castilian and who had adopted Spanish customs. Beginning in the late 18th century it was used interchangeably with the term mestizo, and used to classify any individual who was not Spanish or Indian; it made no distinction among individuals of different castas because a ladino could be a mulatto, pardo, mestizo or even African. In other words, the term ladino would encompass many different races (Hernández 84-90).
the census of that year were instructed by State officials to make no distinction among individuals who were racially mixed and to categorize them as ladino (Euraque, “La construcción del mestizaje” 78). The term ladino was racially neutralized so as to erase the heterogeneity of the Honduran populations inherited from the Colonial Period, and to ideologically remove the black element of the racial composition of Honduras. In fact, the 1887 census suggests that the Honduran population did not include any blacks because out of 331,917 inhabitants, 263,045 were classified as ladino and 68,872 as indigenous (Vallejo 151). Nevertheless, it is important to note that these figures did not include many of the “savage” populations of the Yoro and Mosquito region whose racial composition, like that of the West Indians, included African ancestry.

**The Return of the Maya**

Another important component of the nation-forming project was the elaboration of a foundational language that provided all Hondurans with a shared origin and unified them under the conceptual abstraction of nation. As part of this undertaking, State officials and intellectuals began a
series of discussions to determine the time period to which they wanted to trace their history. Like most Latin American nations, Hondurans looked to their pre-Colombian past, colonial years and recent republican independence era for heroes and icons that would represent and in the process construct the nation. They found in the city of San José de Copán, vestiges of one of the greatest civilizations that had existed in its territory before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors.

Largely unknown and well hidden in the extreme western part of the Republic of Honduras for many centuries after its disintegration, the ruins of the Mayan empire are situated in a valley within the city of San José de Copán. It was not until 1576 that Diego de García Palacios first discovered this ancient Maya city. As the official magistrate of the Audiencia of Guatemala, García Palacios wrote a detailed report to King Phillip II of Spain describing what he had seen. But as a result of the lack of interest in this part of Honduras and the difficult terrain that impeded explorers from reaching the city, the value of Copán was not stressed until the time of nation building. As socio-cultural anthropologist Mortensen cogently argues in "Structural Complexity and Social Conflict in Managing
the Past at Copán, Honduras," Copán is situated on the margins of the territorial state, but was and continues to be at the center of the cultural patrimony and recent tourism initiatives in Honduras (258).

Similarly to what occurred in other Latin American nations, Honduran intellectuals and leaders of the late 19th century sought to trace their roots to a glorious pre-Columbian past and to describe the nation they were creating as a continuation of the Maya civilization that flourished before the conquest of the territory. Barahona argues that this historical jump from the Liberal Reform Period to the pre-Hispanic past was a symbolic elimination of Spanish predominance in Central America for over 300 years. In addition, a Mesoamerican past was quite appealing to Hondurans, for the Maya had settled in the Copán region and had established an empire that was believed to have embodied the Republican ideals of “progress” and “civilization” that Hondurans desired for the Nation-State. The greatness of Copán was a feat of the Maya civilization, a testimony of the material work that had flourished on Honduran soil before the arrival of the Spanish. Such a vision justified the State’s efforts to conserve and restore the ruins of Copán, initiate the excavation of
other archeological sites and appropriate this civilization as part of Honduras’s rich history (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 162). It is important to note that the Maya civilization to which Hondurans traced their origins was an idealized one, a constructed Mesoamerican society. Escoto makes a convincing argument when he indicates that two versions of the Maya exist in the collective imaginary of Honduras. The first kind is “the real” or historical Copán that Hondurans were not able to experience - and thus have no knowledge of - and the second is the constructed Copán of the late 19th century that gave birth to the land: a form of pre-Hispanic Camelot that was gifted with justice, production and wise and intellectual leaders (9). In other words, the Copán that Hondurans revere today is the space that has been embedded with symbolic capital and value.

Linking the present to the past is not a phenomenon particular to the official formulation of a national identity. It is a continuous process and a common practice of numerous cultures in different time periods. The Maya of the Copán region were no exception. As rulers during Copán’s classic period (c. 628-822) they commissioned

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See chapters 1 and 2 of David Lowenthal’s The Past Is A Foreign Country and Norman Yoffee’s introduction to Negotiating the Past in the Past.
elaborate structures that not only commemorated their reign, but also communicated and legitimated their authority by forming ties with those that came before them. For instance, archaeologist Claude-Francois Baudez argues that the 13th Mayan ruler (18 Rabbit) authorized the construction of Stela C to celebrate his ascension (28). Through a symbolic reading of this stela, Baudez demonstrates how the two figures depicted on this stela – 18 Rabbit, the 13th Mayan ruler, on the east side and Smoke Jaguar, the 12th Mayan ruler, on the west side (see figure 1 and 2) – emulate the movement of the sun from east to west. Similar to the rising sun in the east, the new ruler is given authority by the previous king that has passed away or set like the sun in the west (32-35). The quintessential model of how Mayan leaders created ties to their predecessors is the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Temple 26 (see figure 3). Commissioned by 18 Rabbit and completed by the 15th ruler, Smoke Shell, this large structure measures about 21 meters long and has a total of 2200 glyphs that according to Maya specialists depict the former kings who made up the royal line and narrate some of the

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65 Other two-figured stelae that also serve to commemorate and legitimate the ascension of the new ruler are Stela M and N. See Baudez’s *Maya Sculpture of Copan*.
most important events of the Maya empire in Copán (Fash, Scribes, Warriors and Kings 143-145). More specifically, the glyphs highlight the distinguished life of the 12th monarch, Smoke Jaguar, whose accomplishments included the creations of many of the statues and structures still found today.

The importance of history for this dynasty is quite evident, but why is the figure of Smoke Jaguar emphasized? Fash indicates that Smoke Shell revived the memory of Smoke Jaguar in an effort to restore the Mayan ruling order during a time in which it had lost control of many of its subjects after the humiliating death of the 13th king. 18 Rabbit was beheaded by a leader of a fiefdom that was
originally subservient to Copán, and since then, the empire was in a precarious situation (Scribes, Warriors and Kings 145-146). These are only a few examples of how the same pre-Columbian society that Honduran leaders looked to in order to validate the new nation also utilized the past to legitimate their rule.

Legislation had placed the ruins of Copán under the protection of the State in 1845, but it was not until the end of the century that this archaeological site began to acquire special governmental attention. In fact, in the early 1840s there was even an attempt, albeit unsuccessful, to sell the ruins of Copán to the English architect and artist Frederick Catherwood and American explorer and diplomat John Lloyd Stephens, both of whom were pivotal in the rediscovery of the Maya civilization and had published extensively on their travels to Maya cities in Central America and Mexico (Earle 142). Historian Rebecca Earle emphasizes this account and others that also demonstrate an explicit interest from the international community in Copán, to argue that the State’s ensuing response to officially protect and claim Copán as part of the national patrimony was in part due to the international attention demonstrated during this period (142-143). In other words,
the region’s acquired international stature and scientific importance, is what led Copán to become a great source of pride for Honduran citizens.

Honduran leaders began to demonstrate interest in rebuilding Copán as early as 1874. During this year, President Ponciano Leiva ordered a formal report of the current condition of the ruins and the probabilities of restoration. Nevertheless, the State did not take any formal action until 1889 when it signed its first contract with the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology of the United States to begin the restoration of this site with the hope of developing a national museum where many of the cultural remains of the Maya empire were to be exhibited. In 1891, a new contract allowed the Peabody Museum to carry out excavations for a total of 10 years beginning in 1892. This same contract guaranteed the Peabody Museum the right to half of the total artifacts found during the excavations. (It is important to note that the case of Copán is only one of many instances in which Latin America’s cultural patrimony has been sacked or at least been exposed to such risk. America in the colonial period was the territory from which natural resources were extracted and pillaged and now is the land from which
cultural monuments and artifacts are stolen.) Nevertheless, this part of the contract was obviously unfavorable to Honduras and seen as a threat to the protection and conservation of the ruins. Thus, the contract was suspended in 1895 (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 162-163).

The notion of archaeological cultural patrimony at the State level was now in existence, but the lack of resources to restore Copán allowed the Peabody Museum to propose a new contract in 1900 to excavate in the region. This led to a legislative debate regarding the ruins of Copán that took place on the floor of the National Congress in March 20, 1900. The issues of discussion were the possible benefits and detriments of a contract with the Peabody Museum that would oversee the study and restoration of the various monuments, structures and sculptures that were found in Copán. Some representatives expressed their support for a contract because they felt that Honduras lacked the knowledge and resources of the United States, but most felt that Hondurans should be at the forefront of this project because the ruins were an important part of its cultural patrimony, of its heritage. I emphasize this debate because it turned into a discussion of the importance of history and the elements that constitute it, of the need to recover
historical artifacts because they are what link the population of today with those of the past. As part of this dialogue, the role that Copán would have in defining national identity was also discussed (Barahona, Honduras en el siglo XX 38-42). Representative Miguel Oquelí Bustillo expresses this nationalistic sentiment in the following words:

¿Cómo haremos nosotros, o cómo harán las generaciones venideras para eslabonar nuestro pasado con nuestro presente, si, llevándose Byron Gordon nuestras Ruinas, se rompen los anillos, se rompen los eslabones de nuestra Historia Moderna? Un pueblo sin historia, señores diputados, es como un hombre sin memoria, próximo a la imbécilidad (quoted in Barahona, Honduras en el siglo XX 40)

[What will we do, or what will the future generations do to link our past with our present, if by Byron Gordon taking our Ruins, the rings are broken, the links of our Modern History broken? A people without history, members of Parliament, are similar to a man without memory, very close to idiocy] (My translation)
At the end, Honduran leaders entered in agreement with the Peabody Museum, but also ratified new legislation that prohibited the export of any archeological remains (Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo XX* 42). Nevertheless, this newly renewed interest and understanding of the importance of Copán did not result, at that particular time, in the elaboration of an official discourse that advocated a Maya national identity (Barahona, *Pueblos indígenas* 165) or initiated the official “Mayanization” of Honduras. That is not to say that the ancient civilization that thrived in Copán was not seen as a central element of Honduran history or that it did become one of the most significant, if not the most important, national symbol. In addition, it is important to emphasize that the cultural value attributed to Copán was part of a strategic plan to celebrate the Indian of the distant past and negate the contemporary existence of indigenous groups.

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66 According to Euraque, the ideological project of Mayanization began with the dictatorship of General Tiburcio Carías Andino. In addition, this process was linked to, among other factors, certain elements of North American archaeology and the banana industry, together with Ladino elites. Mayanization emphasizes the official rescue of an ancestral legacy for the purpose of constructing a national identity, while ignoring the lived realities of ancient and contemporary indigenous peoples of Honduras. See Euraque’s *Conversaciones históricas con el mestizaje y su identidad nacional en Honduras*, p. 37-65.
According to Appelbaum’s periodization of the formation of Latin American Nation-States, the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s were eras in which numerous States reevaluated some of the economic, ideological and political measures carried out during the late 19th century. This was the time period of the Mexican Revolution, Cuban Independence and other significant historical events that resulted in the appearance of various populist projects and a more inclusive conception of citizenship and national identity. This change in the way Nation-States defined their people was in part due to the production and promotion of the ideology of *mestizaje* as a national myth and the rejection of European and North American assertions of the racial inferiority of Latin American hybrids. At the same time, some intellectuals endorsed *indigenismo*, a philosophy that exalted the “pure” Indian and promoted the indigenous figure as the basis for a national identity and imaginary. Nevertheless, promoters of both ideologies were concerned with turning Indians into citizens through education and modernization (Appelbaum, 7-8). In conjunction with the development of the “cult of *mestizaje*” was the articulation of eugenic and medical practices that sought the
improvement of the race by linking a salubrious environment to racial health (Stepan, 84-95).

In the case of Honduras, the State endorsed the mestizo as representative of the nation, while promoting two strategies for the improvement of its populations: the introduction of schooling missions and foreign immigration (Chambers, 35-36). Also, the promotion of mestizaje coincided with the omission of a Black presence from Honduras’s history and territory, and the veneration and appropriation of the 16th century cacique Lempira as part of the national symbolic capital. Lempira had become more widely known and recognized for the first time with the publication of José María Cacho’s *Resumen estadístico, corográfico e histórico del departamento de Gracias* in 1855,67 Guatemalan historian, Jose Milla y Vidaurre’s *Historia de Centroamérica* in 1879 and José Cisneros’s epic poem, “Lempira” In 1899.68

67 Cacho was an intellectual and the General Minister of the Honduran government during the late 1820s and again in the early 1850s. Although he wrote this work in 1834, part of his text was not published until March of 1855 in *La Gaceta de Honduras*, number 7. See Rómulo Durón’s *Honduras literaria: escritores en prosa*, p. 155-166.

68 José Cisneros was a prolific writer and Minister of Foreign Affairs. In his poem “A Lempira,” (1866) Cisneros details Lempira’s heroic death in an effort to incorporate this figure as part of the national corpus - national literature - Honduras was in need of. See Rómulo Durón’s *Honduras literaria: colección de escritos en prosa y verso*, p. 117-126.
The Mythification of Lempira and its Relation to the Discourse of Mestizaje

Before the late 19th century’s construction of an official history, Lempira and the Lenca rebellion he led in the 16th century were largely unknown. Using archival documentation, the historian Martínez-Castillo indicates that all of the conquistadors of Honduras who lived in the 1530s and 1540s – whether it be in official reports, letters directed to the King or to the Council of the Indies in Seville, or other forms of documentation in which they narrated how they served the Crown during the conquest and colonization of this territory – make reference to an
indigenous uprising in the Province of Gracias a Dios and its respective pacification, but do not provide a detailed description of this account. All conquistadors narrate the rebellion in the same manner: they mention it, but they omit any reference to the numbers of indigenous rebels who participated in this uprising and to their leader, Lempira (9). A century after the death of Lempira and the end of the rebellions throughout Gracias, Lempira’s story appeared in Antonio de Herrera y Tordesilla’s 1626 Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Océano. In this, his most important work, Herrera provides us with more in depth information about the conquest of Honduras that was not present in the official reports of the conquistadors. He discusses the details of the battles that occurred in Gracias: the number of men in Lempira’s army, the number of days the rebellions lasted, the age and some physical aspects of Lempira, and indicates that Lempira died by treachery because he could not be defeated otherwise. This is the version of Lempira

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69 Antonio Herrera de Tordesillas was the Spanish Crown’s first official chronicler of the Indies. As chronicler, his duty was to collect colonial documentation and create a text that narrated the most important events of the conquest of America.
that until this day is disseminated and that lives in the memories of all Hondurans.

Although Herrera creates a detailed account of the betrayal and death of Lempira, voids or gaps exists in his narrative. For example, the chronicler completely omits the names of Lempira’s betrayers - the parliamentarian who was supposed to have faced Lempira head-on and the soldier who shot and killed him while he hid himself and therefore was undetected by the cacique.\(^70\) Nevertheless, these details missing from the official history coupled with the near-invincibility of Lempira are what facilitated the mythification of this figure during the 19th and 20th centuries and the utilization of Lempira as not only an exemplary hero, but also an answer to the challenging question of national identity (Lunardi 6).

It is of no surprise that when the country composed its national anthem in 1915 – an important symbol of

\(^{70}\) “Meritos y servicios: Rodrigo Ruiz [Merits and services: Rodrigo Ruiz],” a judicial document of the colonial period (1558) that Castillo-Martinez recently found in the archives of Seville, disproves this version of Lempira’s death. The testimonies given by individuals who witnessed Lempira’s death, saw Captain Rodrigo Ruiz arrive with Lempira’s head, or heard of how Ramirez had killed Lempira and the testimony of Rodrigo Ruiz himself indicates that Lempira died while facing Ruiz in battle. There was no betrayal or heroic death to speak of, according to the documentation. This document also provides us with additional information regarding Lempira and the conquest of Honduras that we did not have prior to its discovery.
Honduran identity — Lempira’s “heroic death” was included.

The third verse says:

Era inútil que el indio tu amado se aprestara a la lucha con ira, porque envuelto en su sangre Lempira, en la noche profunda se hundió; Y de la épica hazaña, en memoria, La leyenda tan sólo ha guardado de un sepulcro el lugar ignorado y el severo perfil de un peñón.

It was useless that your beloved Indian rushed into the fight with ire, because, covered with his blood, Lempira, in the deep night he sank. And of the heroic deed, in memory, the legend alone has kept a sepulcher in a forgotten place, and the severe profile of a mountain peak.\textsuperscript{71}

It is interesting to note that the anthem itself indicates that despite Lempira’s “heroic deed,” much has been forgotten about him since his death. However, the fact that an entire verse of the anthem is dedicated to this indigenous leader attests to the importance of this icon in the process of nation building. Moreover, it is worth emphasizing that Lempira is the only historical and autochthonous figure included in the entire national song.

Lempira was most utilized during Honduras’s period of intense nationalism. As indicated above, the incorporation of the country into the international market and the acquiring of foreign investments were necessary to its economic development, but with these came a strong alien

\textsuperscript{71} This translation of the Honduran national anthem is included in the following website: http://www.nationalanthems.info/hn.txt
presence and the immigration (although initially State-supported) of individuals from distinct nationalities and racial groups – British, Americans, Black West Indians and Palestinians. Foreign presence, and more precisely the financial success of some of those groups, resulted in a strong nationalistic rhetoric and the appearance of multiple representations of the autochthonous that promoted national pride and served to differentiate the “true” Hondurans from the “Others.” were Two groups that Hondurans defined themselves in opposition to were the Palestinians and Black West Indians. The success that Palestinians and Black West Indians demonstrated in the textile and the banana industry, respectively, was perceived as a threat to the interests of both the elite and working class of Honduras. Furthermore, this fear led to the creation of strict migratory laws, described above, that limited their entry into the country and resulted in a series of unjustified monetary fines of up to 5,000 lempiras on their businesses (Amaya, Los árabes y palestinos 35-40). Overall,

72 Among those who expressed a strong nationalistic and anti-black sentiment were literary intellectuals Froilán Turcios and Paulino Valladares. Both published numerous articles in newspapers such as El Tiempo and Foro Hondureño on the problems that the less-desirable races were causing in the North coast and country in general. See Dario Euraque’s “The Banana Enclave, Nationalism and Mestizaje in Honduras” in Identity and Struggle At the Margins of the Nation-State for a detailed explanation of some of the writings of these two important intellectuals.
these manifestations of distrust by Hondurans considering themselves mestizo—mixture of Indian and Spanish—are further proof that identity is constituted, partially, by repressing what threatens it and in relation to what it is not (Laclau 1990 and Derrida 1981 qtd. in Hall, Question of Cultural Identity 5).

In addition to Lempira being linked to a strong nationalistic sentiment and the need for autochthonous symbols, the veneration of this figure coincided with the celebration of an “Indo-Hispanic” mestizaje that was prevalent in Honduras during the 1920s and 1930s. Historian Dario Euraque indicates that as part of the nation-building project and the establishment of Honduran identity, elite intellectuals began to propose that the country’s racial make-up was the result of the biological and cultural mixture of two races— the indigenous and the Spanish (Conversaciones con el mestizaje 33-35; “Free Pardos and Mulattos” 100). This was most reflected in the censuses of 1930s and 1940s where the majority of the population was classified under the racialized term mestizo.

The 1930 census is a clear manifestation of the State’s second official efforts to homogenize its population. The first occurred in 1887 with the census of
that year in which the majority of the population was grouped under the then racially and culturally neutralized classificatory term *ladino*. Unlike its first attempt, its second was clearly through the use of a “racialized” label and a particular form of mestizaje promoted by the elite class. Nonetheless, before the 1920s there is no real evidence of a veneration of the mestizo as representative of the nation’s identity (Centeno-García 98; Euraque, *Conversaciones* 80). Official population registers between 1887 and 1930 that include information pertaining to race indicate that before 1930, *mestizo* was utilized only twice: 1895 and 1910. The census of 1895 is a unique record in that it is the only document to include 31 different descriptors for race (Davidson, *Honduras: Territorial Structure* 1a-2a). In addition, we can extrapolate from this census that by this period, the definition of racial identity encompassed a series of characteristics including skin color, national origin, tribal group and geographical location. Like the 1895 census, the 1910 population count clearly reflects the use of a heterogeneous racial nomenclature, but unlike the previous one, delimited its definition of race to classificatory terms that were common during the late Colonial Period or to skin color referents.
This was the norm for every subsequent census that included race as part of its record (See Chart 1).

The 1910 census was the last official population record to include more than 5 descriptors for race and to utilize mestizo as a racial category until 1930. It is significant that the term mestizo was included in this census, as was the case in 1895, because we can trace the roots of what became the Indo-Hispanic rhetoric to these particular points. Nonetheless, the classification of ladino, and not mestizo, continued to dominate the censuses in terms of both use and number. For example, as Centeno-García has indicated in his analysis of the 1910 record, only 9.5% of the population was classified as mestizo, while 61.1% (the majority) was categorized as ladino (98). Since then, mestizo disappeared from the ensuing census records and reappeared twenty years later as the dominant classificatory term. In 1930, 86.19% of the population was classified as mestizo while 0% was labeled as ladino. In fact, the category of ladino was not utilized in this census or any after 1916. Chambers argues that by the early 20th century, ladino had become synonymous with mestizo—an individual of Spanish and Indian ancestry—and as a result often used interchangeably. He also makes it a point
to indicate that *ladino* was sometimes applied to a Hispanicized Indian (34). If such is the case, then it can be argued that the transition from a predominantly *ladino* to *mestizo* identity was possible not only due to the dissemination of an official "Indo-Hispanic" discourse, but also because the notion of a *mestizo* national identity was already part of the Honduran imaginary. The elasticity of the definition of *ladino* is what also made this possible.

Table 3: Racial Classification by Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1887</th>
<th>1895</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ladino • Indígena</td>
<td>• Amarillo • Blanco • Caribe • Caucasiano • Centroamericano • Hicaque</td>
<td>• Ladino • Mulato • Indio • Blanco • Negro • Mestizo</td>
<td>• Ladino • Indio</td>
<td>• Indio • Mestizo • Blanco • Amarillo • Negro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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73 This table includes only the national censuses that include racial classifications. I have omitted the following years: 1881, 1901, 1905 and 1927 because they do not include statistics related to race.

74 See Vallejo’s *Primer anuario estadístico*, p. 151.

75 In *Honduras: Territorial Structure and Statistic Census of 1895*, William Davidson indicates that 31 different terms were utilized for race in the census of 1895. The racial classificatory terms include: Amarillo(a), Americano(a), Blanco(a), Caribe, Caucasiano(a), Centro-Americano(a), Cobriso(a), Español(a), Hicaca, Hicaque, Hispano-Americano(a), Indígeno(a), Indio(a), Ladino(a), Mestizo(a), Misto(a), Moreno(a), Mulato(a), Negro(a), Palla, Paya, Sajon(a), Sambo(a), Selvatico(a), Sumo(a), Trigueño(a), Ycaca, Ycaquez, Yndije, Yndio(a), y Zambo(a).

76 See Centeno-García’s *Genes y músculos negros*, p. 96.

77 See Centeno-García’s *Genes y músculos negros*, p. 98.

78 See *Resumen del Censo General de Población de 1930*, p. 31.
But, what is the relationship between the construction of a mestizo Honduran population and the figure of Lempira? And to what extent did the “Indo-Hispanic” mestizaje discourse extend to all sectors of society? Euraque indicates that given that the elite and intellectual class was politically and economically too weak to reject or challenge any form of foreign capital, they sought to reaffirm their dominance at an ideological level by claiming “national unity based on a homogenous Honduran mestizo race” (“Free Pardos and Mulattoes” 100). As part of the establishment of a mestizo identity, Honduran intellectuals actively promulgated a romanticized and nationalistic Lempira, one who embodied the ideals of autonomy and sovereignty and one who was to represent a domesticated version of the “other race” – meaning Indian—that made up Honduran society. Moreover, they drew on the strong anti-black sentiment that was widespread since the Colonial Period, but that was in full force during the early 20th century as a result of the immigration of West
Indian blacks and the important role that the Garifuna community played as a source of labor in the fruit companies. Many non-black laborers saw these two groups as a threat to their employment and economic opportunities, similarly to the way that elites perceived Palestinian-Arabs immigrants. The Garifuna and West Indian populations, more so than the Palestinian-Arab groups, were considered and targeted as a racial danger to the mestizo “blood” of the nation (Euraque, “Threat of Blackness” 231).

Numerous exclusionary measures were taken in an effort to reject blackness and prevent those of African descent from mixing with mestizos at every level. One was the introduction of different bills that sought to prevent any further immigration of blacks, to terminate their employment and to eventually deport those laborers that had worked and lived in the country since the late 19th century. Another measure was the circulation of the iconography of Lempira in various forms. For example, in the 1920s leaflets that identified Hondurans as “sons of the invincible Lempira” were distributed among banana laborers in an effort to strengthen the idea of an Indo-Hispanic nation among them, and to diminish the importance of the Black presence in the North Coast (Euraque, “Threat
of Blackness” 231). By promoting an icon that is clearly Indian, all blackness – including that of the Garifuna who according to State law were Hondurans – was rejected and denied any recognition in the current and past history of the country. Moreover, all populations associated with blackness were excluded from becoming a participatory element of identity.

During this period, Lempira – as representative of “Honduraness” – also became the image of the national currency. In response to the lack of a uniform monetary system and the various foreign currencies that circulated throughout the country, in 1926 Congress created an assembly, composed of the most important senators of the time, which determined the name and the image of the national coin. According to Act 89, which recorded all the proceedings of the April 3rd, 1926 session, there was much debate as to what the national coin should be named. Initially, it was proposed that the Honduran currency should be named after Francisco Morazán for he was considered to be the symbol of independence and liberty. Although this proposition was well received, the members of the assembly agreed that the national coin should be given a name that synthesized Honduran autonomy with its historic
past. Lempira was favored over Morazán because Lempira was an exemplary warrior and hero who fought against the mighty Spanish invader and defended the autonomy of the territory that became Honduras (Barahona, Pueblos indígenas 234). According to Euraque, such a decision to call the currency the “lempira” and to use indigenous imagery was unprecedented (Euraque, “Threat of Blackness” 232), but if we take into account the circumstances under which this occurred, it is not too surprising to see how and why the Honduran government brought to the forefront this forgotten Indian leader of the 16th century.

1926 was the year in which Honduras adopted Lempira as its newly named currency, and 1931 marked the first year in which its coinage began to circulate with a visual representation of this indigenous figure (Rápalo Flores 140). But this was not the only time that the State appropriated this figure as statues were erected in his honor, neighborhoods, streets and public avenues of different cities were named after him and national celebrations commemorating Lempira’s achievements were initiated. These presentist representations and practices that did not exist during most of the Republican Era were to serve as visual referents for Honduras of what
constituted their heritage and, thus, their national identity.

**Monumentalization and Corporeality of Lempira**

In 1935, July 20th was established as the national day of Lempira; as part of this day, a series of celebrations and multiple re-enactments of battles that occurred between Spaniards and Lencas at the time of the conquest were performed throughout the country. One of these festivities of which we have a written account included a march, an essay contest and the dramatization of Lempira’s death at an elementary school (Martínez, *Homenaje al Cacique Lempira* 7). Rituals such as these are extremely important for they put a community in contact with its past. Moreover, by reenacting Lempira’s “original” death almost four hundred years after it took place – which in this case may or may not have occurred as described by Antonio de Herrera – this dramatization takes on an immemorial and immortal aspect that converts it into reality (Foster 53, qtd. in Rápalo Flores 138).

Festivities such as the one mentioned above were part of the ongoing political project to rescue this Lenca figure, to forge and inculcate national pride in the
Honduran youth, and as indicated above, part of the prevailing Indo-Hispanic discourse of *mestizaje*. They also served to educate the indigenous and *mestizo* populations spread throughout the country while incorporating them into the nation through the use of a figure they could identify with. Education projects were proposed by the State from the onset of independence from Spain, and despite the limited success of some of these undertakings, they did not fully materialize until the establishment of *misiones escolares* in the mid 1910s. These schooling missions were employed by the State to combat the supposed racial inferiority that plagued a large sector of the population and to further disindianize its native populations. Through these projects many Indians learned to read and write, learned the importance of civic education and were exposed to new literature that recreated Honduras’s history to fit its constructed identity (Martínez, *Homenaje al Cacique Lempira* 43). Barahona mentions Felix Salgado’s *Elementos de historia de Honduras* as a prime example of one of the many circulating manuals that reconstructed the official history from the perspective of the State and negated the contemporary existence of indigenous populations. According to these manuals, Indians were only part of a distant past.
because they had been completely decimated, or had biologically mixed with the conquistadors during the conquest and colonization of Honduras (Pueblos indígenas, 193-195).

Since the notion of soft inheritance was accepted in Honduras, it was believed that if a population could not conform at a genetic level to the mestizo national image, they could do so at a cultural level through education projects such as the misiones escolares (Chambers 33). The dominance of neo-Lamarckian ideals is not surprising because if the Honduran government had supported a strict innatist ideology it would have condemned the nation to a perpetual inferiority. In addition, since the late 19th century, some of the presidents: Francisco Bertrad, Francisco Bográn, Alberto Membreno and Vicente Mejia Colindres had studied medicine and more than likely had been exposed to the scientific discourses pertaining to race and the advantages of the implementation of corrective measures based on the idea of soft inheritance. Nevertheless, these same political leaders envisioned and promoted – while continuously supporting an

79 My argument is based in part on Peter Wade’s own assessment of Latin American nations with a predominantly mixed racial nature. See Race, Nature and Culture, p.66.
environmentalist approach – the miscegenation of Europeans and Indians

A monument that holds up a bronze bust of the cacique with his feather-decorated headgear and his quiver full of arrows was erected in April of 1941 in the central plaza of the town of Erandique (Lunardi 21). This bust is extremely valuable to the construction of Honduran identity because it allows citizens to have a visual and tangible referent of the hero. In addition, the monument itself conveys to all those who live and pass by the center of town – a physical, social, and metaphorical space that, since the Colonial Period, has been the site for public debate about issues pertaining to cultural identity citizenship and governance (Low 32) – the ideals and virtues that Lempira was made to embody. The territory where this statue was erected, which purposely was named after him, is quite significant for it is the site that Hondurans believe Lempira to have inhabited and died, and thus associate Lempira with it. In other words, at a symbolic level, this space is of great importance, for although it may have gone through a series of transformations since the 16th century, it still holds the memory of Lempira. This geographical territory also provided the inspiration for many studies and publications
works that are also essential to the construction of national identity. One of these works is Lunardi’s 1943 study of the foundation of the department of Lempira. In this particular text, Lunardi further monumentalizes the figure of Lempira and describes in detail the bronze bust mentioned above. In his text, Lunardi emphasizes Lempira’s heroic deeds and their significance to the nation, and concludes that Lempira’s memory will continue to be worthy of being evoked by all Hondurans.

Five years prior to the construction of the bust in Erandique, a memorial in honor of Lempira was built in one of the plazas of the coastal city of San Pedro Sula (see figure 5). Although this monument is not situated in a territory where Lempira is believed to have lived, nor has it received the same amount of attention as the one constructed in 1941, it is equally significant and its origin is unlike any other statue. It is the space where every July 20th – national day of Lempira – celebrations are carried out and where individuals of all ages come together as a community to honor this national symbol. Such unification is a manifestation of the strong identitary ties the people of San Pedro have developed with Lempira since the erection of this monument by Palestinian-Arabs,
one of the ethnic groups who were subject to racial intolerance since the early 20th century. The State or the nationalist intellectuals did not create this 1936 figure, but rather Arab-Palestinians who were providing the city with a gift as a way to reduce the anti-Palestinian sentiment. The inscription in the plaque reads: “La comunidad palestina rinde homenaje al valiente e inmortal guerrero, el gran cacique Lempira al cumplirse el IV centenario de su muerte” [The Palestinian community pays homage to the brave and immortal warrior, the great cacique Lempira in remembrance of the fourth centennial of his death] (see figure 6). The appropriation of Lempira by this group is an evident expression of their efforts to integrate themselves within the nation by directly participating in the fashioning of Lempira as a figure (symbolic capital) representative of Honduran identity. Moreover, we can argue that through the edification of this symbolic space of negotiation - the monument and the value attributed to it - there is an evident resignification of this icon, for it now was made to embrace one of the populations it was initially utilized to exclude.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{80} Despite their intent to integrate themselves into the nation and its identitary projects, Palestinians continued to be viewed by nationals as others and as unpatriotic. In\textit{ Patrios Lares}, Ortega
Immigration and Mixed-blood Eugenics

The environmentalist stance that many Hondurans had adopted with respect to racial improvement was often combined with the endorsement of European immigration. As Barahona has indicated, the 1920s and 1930s were also the period in which the ideology of miscegenation between Indians or Honduran peasants and Anglo-Saxons was promoted by both government and intellectual leaders (Pueblos indígenas 198). Racial improvement through immigration was

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indicates that during the unveiling of this statue the consensus among the masses was that the Lempira monument was void of any true patriotism because Palestinians did not have Lempira in their hearts.
certainly not a new concept, but what is particular to these two decades, is that this form of eugenics was based on scientific conceptions and findings of blood. Honduran racial identity was now not only tied, but also defined in terms of blood. As a result, we begin to see the circulation of a series of newspaper articles, medical journals and pamphlets of propaganda that relied more on tropes of blood than descriptions of skin color, hair or physical characteristics to discuss the future Honduran race.

As part of the State’s continuous efforts to encourage European immigration and miscegenation, the Hungarian explorer, H.F. Komor published in 1930 one of the most comprehensive descriptions of three northeast Honduran territories. In Viaje por los departamentos de El Paraíso, Olancho y Yoro, Komor provides a record of his observations of the population’s “degenerate” racial makeup and the lack of development in those three regions. He also includes a series of newspaper articles, written by many influential leaders, which strongly call for the creation of a new and superior Honduran race that would form the basis of Honduran nationality (Barahona, Evolución histórica 262–263). What sets these texts apart from prior pamphlets of
propaganda regarding miscegenation is the reference to other nations who had successful eugenic projects and the use of a symbolic language that attributed to blood a greater importance in defining racial makeup.

One of the articles that Komor includes in his work is that of vice-president Rafael Díaz-Chavez who curiously was believed to be mulato. In this editorial piece, dated May 2, 1930, Díaz-Chavez discusses Argentina’s ability to construct itself as a primarily “white” and European nation to encourage Honduran leaders to employ the same eugenic projects Argentinians had successfully carried out in their nation. According to Díaz-Chávez, the immigration of purely white Europeans was one of the most important procedures for they possessed the blood most prepared, meaning superior, to modify the beauty, character and moral and intellectual disposition of Hondurans (Komor 5-6). Although the vice-president, like many others, agreed with European and American scientists who viewed racial miscegenation as degenerative, he could not promote such innatist ideology given the makeup of the Honduran population. Thus, it was important for Díaz-Chávez to promote a softer form of

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81 See Dario Euraque’s “The Banana Enclave, Nationalism and Mestizaje in Honduras” in Identity and Struggle At the Margins of the Nation-State.
eugenics based on the notion of telegony that was current in scientific circles since the 19th century. According to the theory of telegony, the reproduction between a male and a female influenced not only the offspring that she had with him, but also every other offspring the female may have with subsequent males (Wade, Race & Nature 60). Díaz-Chávez endorsed miscegenation with the hope that white European immigrants would procreate with native women and shape their future reproductive capacity. Like Díaz-Chávez, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Rubén Clara-Vega and the Secretary of the Office of Immigration and Colonization – the office that prohibited the immigration of those classified as undesirable races in the 1929 immigration law – also supported the colonization and settlement of the nation by strong, healthy and good races. The Secretary of the Office of Immigration and Colonization legitimated such advocacy by arguing that European whites were the holders of plenary or pure form of blood that could facilitate racial change (Komor 19).

Various members of the Honduran intellectual milieu also published articles in favor of European immigration. Similarly to government officials, intellectuals based many of their arguments on the relation between race and blood.
Among those was Miguel R. Núñez, whose writings were dominated by a language replete with tropes of blood. In a 1930 newspaper piece of La Opinión, Núñez discusses how wars, prolonged political feuds and hundreds of years of colonization had left the nation in a state of disarray and greatly depopulated. He indicates that all of these occurrences played a role in what he describes as “una larga sangría ha aniquilado sus cédulas [la nación] y necesita sangre, sangre, pero sangre pura y llena de glóbulos rojos, de vitaminas, para operar la reconstitución nacional” [“a lengthy bleeding that has destroyed the nation’s cells, which now needs blood, blood that is pure and full of red blood cells and vitamins to reconstitute the nation”]. By comparing the nation to a physical body and using blood imagery to symbolically bestow life on this otherwise “imagined” entity, Núñez undoubtedly attributes to blood the ability to restructure a nation. Núñez makes it clear that the pure blood he is referring to is that of white Europeans, and legitimates his argument by reflecting on the success that Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, above all, had with eugenic movements largely based on European immigration (Komor 22).
All of the writers Komor includes make use of a language pertaining to blood, race and the relation that exists between these two concepts, but none more so than dental surgeon and cabinet member of the Mejía-Colindres administration, Juan José Fernández. In the newspaper known as La Nueva Era, this government official expressed his concern for the racial makeup of the country and urges leaders to focus on that particular matter. Like the writers previously mentioned, he too calls for a new Honduran race made up of a mix between Europeans and natives. Nevertheless, the rhetoric Fernández uses is one that resembles the colonizing discourse where the superior being — although he says superior blood — dominates the weaker one. For example, Fernández advocates the creation of a new “raza hondureña que tenga la vivacidad innata del indio y la capacidad civil del europeo: que predomine en el tipo de raza, la sangre más rica en los glóbulos rojos de la europea, a la del criollo menos fuerte y menos pura” [“Honduran race that possesses the Indian’s innate vivacity and European’s civil capacity: that in this [new] type of race the richest blood found in European blood cells dominate over the weaker and less pure blood of the creoles”]. The reason for the emphasis on the superiority
of European blood is that Fernández believed that the physiognomic and moral character of the future Honduran race depended on the success of such “scientific” action. In other words, by promoting telegony, Fernández envisions the future Honduran population as being strong, patriotic and complete in addition to having “[piel] color blanca, los ojos azules y las facciones correctas del europeo” [“white skin, blue eyes and the correct features of the European”] (Komor 23).

Honduras’s own medical association and the literature it began to circulate in 1930 further supported this form of eugenics. After many young physicians returned to Honduras from their studies in Guatemala, they, with the support of other intellectuals, established the nation’s first medical association in 1929. The purpose was to disseminate many of the newest scientific theories that were known and utilized throughout the world to improve the well being of their populations (Vidal, 1-2). This dream was materialized the following year when the first edition of the Honduran Medical Journal (Revista Médica Hondureña) was published in Tegucigalpa. Not surprisingly, one of the first published articles in this journal dealt with the topic of eugenics. In the journal’s second number, Dr.
Salvador Paredes includes a review of a paper presented by Dr. Arión at the Universidad Central about the importance of eugenics. In this review, Paredes begins by summarizing Arión’s discussion of the evolution of eugenics since the time of the Greeks and describing how in different time periods the notion of human improvement was very common and necessary. Paredes goes on to explain that Arión’s historical introduction to eugenics was followed by a call for immigration and hygiene projects in order to stall the degeneration of the superior races. He then ends by urging Hondurans to follow the teachings of Arión so that they too can improve the condition and makeup of their citizens (28-30).

As I have indicated, during the first few decades of the 20th century, most Honduran presidents and government officials were physicians or were connected to the medical domain in some respect. It is also quite obvious, that they were aware of new scientific discoveries related to the classification of human blood that provided a new language for describing race and identity. In 1901, Austrian scientist, Karl Landsteiner discovered what we now know as the ABO blood group system. Shortly thereafter, the distribution patterns of these blood types among distinct
populations were the subject of study, and the results of this analysis served as the basis for defining race. It was not the sole or initial period in which race was defined in scientific terms or in which it was equated to blood, but it was the first time that racial difference was explained by the existence of distinct blood groups and their compositional variation. In his analysis of race and eugenics in France during the 1930s, William H. Schneider cogently argues that because these discoveries were perceived as more “clear-cut” and “scientifically-sound,” they served to further legitimate the belief in racial variation and racial hierarchy (“Eugenics, Race and Blood” 208-229). I argue the same for the Honduran context given the language and ideological underpinnings of the literature I have presented. Without a doubt, the notion of eugenics and other scientific racial ideas, especially those pertaining to blood, played an important role in the construction of Honduras’s racial and national identity.

**Conclusions**

Nations are constructions, “imagined communities” that are unified on the basis of what they believe to be a common history, shared cultural characteristics and heroes
from their past. Honduras was no exception, as nationalistic officials, intellectuals and members of different populations actively worked to recuperate and reinterpret many elements of their history and to formulate a national identity. Beginning with the Liberal Reform Period, these leaders resorted to a symbolic language and complex political and social practices in order to unify the people under a culturally and racially homogeneous image. In the late 19th century, the State attempted to categorize the majority of its population under the term *ladino*, which at that moment had been stripped of any racial connotation. In the 20th century, there was shift from the promotion of a primarily *ladino* to *mestizo* nation. As I’ve indicated in this chapter, the celebration of an Indo-Hispanic *mestizaje* was partly due to the need for a more inclusive definition of identity and in part was a manifestation of the economic and racial threat that immigrants presented for many Hondurans. Directly tied to the elaboration of a national identity and history was also the appropriation and veneration of the Maya civilization and the cacique Lempira and the rejection of an African presence in the history and racial makeup of Honduras.
Even though the ideology of *mestizaje* may serve to promote “inclusiveness,” the particular case of Honduras is a clear example of how this ideology can also be utilized to exclude those who do not fit the proposed *mestizo* image. I have demonstrated how *mestizaje* was used to not only mask the cultural and racial diversity of its population, but also to exclude Black and Indian groups from avenues of representation and the debate over national identity. Yet, the State continued to believe that while its indigenous populations could not conform at a genetic level to the national image it was promoting, they could do so at a cultural level through education. The government established schooling projects as an indication of the environmentalist or neo-Lamarckian approach it had adopted. The same did not hold true for those of African descent as the State took a more innatist position when debating the possibility of their racial improvement. According to late 19th and early 20th scientific theories and discoveries on the etiology of race and human improvement (eugenics), the European, white “race plasma” should not mix with that of these two groups because Blacks and Indians only diluted its “superior” composition. Honduran intellectuals endorsed those scientific theories and used them to legitimate their
rejection of Black populations, and in large part, their ideological representation of the Northeast region as being outside the territorial, cultural and racial bounds of the nation. This exclusionary practice is most reflected in the census count of 1930: out of 21,092 Hondurans identified as negros, only 43 were in the department of Tegucigalpa, 572 in el Paraíso, 6 in Choluteca, 10 in Valle, 0 in Olancho, 1 in Comayagua, 416 in Yoro, 11 in Santa Barbara 2,619 in Cortes, 5,042 in Atlántida, 8,733 in Colón, 3,631 in the Bay Islands (Census of 1930, 54-202). These details were used to argue that, given most Blacks were outside the constructed limits of the nation, the African and African-descent presence was almost non-existent in Honduras.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most Hondurans were subject to both inclusionary and exclusionary ideologies and procedures. The designations of these processes and ideas may be particular to these periods, but the underlying dialectical relation of who is included and who is excluded or who is inferior and who is superior is one that still characterizes and afflicts the nation of Honduras till this day.
CONCLUSION

Honduras is not now nor has it ever been a homogenous population. From a simple observation of people in their everyday life, it is undeniable that it is a nation composed of various races and cultures. Yet the majority of citizens identify with a common Indo-Hispanic heritage. In its embryonic stage, this project naively began by perceiving the colonial era as an epoch of fragmentations and that of post-Independence as one of unification when in reality, and in the particular case of Honduras, both periods are a combination of dialectical processes of integration and separation as well as discourses of sameness and difference. Through a chronological and etiological analysis of the evolution of Honduran national identity, I have attempted to identify many of those practices. In doing so, I have demonstrated that Honduran identity and nationhood varied over time; it was often reconstituted in an effort to adapt to ever-changing social and political realities. In addition, I argued that Honduran national identity has been constructed in racial and spatial terms. Parallel to this, definitions of race and space have been shaped by national identity formation.
The terms identity, race, space, and nation are widely used, but seldom nuanced, when discussing nationhood. It is not a new idea to propose that these terms are sometimes decontextualized or erroneously perceived as universal and stable. Scholars such as Peter Wade, Nancy Appelbaum, Thomas Holt, among others, have discussed these issues in much of their scholarship. What is original in this project is the use of the concepts of identity, race, and space within a Honduran context to demonstrate the intimate interplay among them.

The history of Honduran identity begins with the colonial period. From the time of colonization many of the seeds that determined the course of identity were planted, with the most important being the unfolding of the process of mestizaje or ladinaje as commonly referred to in Honduras. With interchange generated by the same colonial system that sought to segregate them, Spaniards, Indians and Africans, found spaces of contact in the different environments they were forced to work. The degree of miscegenation in the silver mines, large estates, and to a lesser extent, cattle farms, was so high that by the 18th century, over 60% of the entire population was of mixed origin. Primary records reveal that the racial
configuration of this hybrid group was largely African and Afro-descendant. But this *afromestizaje* was erased by the practices and discourses of *ladinaje* that were employed at the time of constructing Honduran identity. *Ladino*, initially defined as an ambiguous socio-racial category, became in the late 19th century a neutralizing term used by the State to erase the racial and cultural heterogeneity of the Honduran populations, especially its Afro elements. The census of 1887 clearly reflects this phenomenon because all citizens who were not Indian were identified as *ladino*. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1920s, the classification of *ladino* fell into disuse and was substituted by the racialized label of mestizo, which was clearly defined as an individual of Spanish and Indian ancestry. The ideological *ladinización* and *mestizaje* of society were two of the determining elements of Honduran national identity.

The idea of Honduras as nation was conceived shortly after Independence from Spain and a disbanded Central American Federation. Using Nancy Appelbaum’s historical periodization of nation building in Latin America as a springboard, I have attempted to establish three critical periods in the construction of the Honduran nation and its identity. In the process I have identified some of the
overlapping and contradictory ideologies that shaped the practices of identity formation. The first period, which I delimited to the years 1824 to 1875, is one where State officials and intellectuals defined Honduran citizenship along racial lines and promoted homogeneity while still maintaining hierarchies, although in more naturalized forms. Discourses of difference and hegemony have always existed, but beginning in the 19th century, they were often combined with moral and pseudo-racial theories to legitimate the dominion of a small ruling class.

I identified the Liberal Reform Era of Honduras and the 30 years that ensued as the second critical period. It was during this short span of time that most homogenizing and unifying nation-building projects were implemented and that a symbolic language, which gave form and meaning to the newly constructed nation, was created. As indicated above, this was the period in which the ladino was constructed as the national image. At the same time, the State and intellectuals began to formulate the “official” history of Honduras by carefully selecting icons and narratives that helped to define the heritage of its citizens, and that embodied the modern notions of progress
and civilization. It was established that the origins of Hondurans were in the Ancient Mayan city of Copán.

The third, and perhaps most important period, comprises the 1920s and 1930s. At this time, the mestizo emerged as representative of the nation and the Indian Lempira was transformed into symbolic capital. A romanticized and domesticated Lempira was presented as an important indigenous element of mestizo identity. The figure of Lempira and the image of the mestizo were also the manifestations of a strong anti-immigrant and anti-black sentiment that reached its zenith in the 1920s. Many Hondurans perceived the immigration of racially “less desirable” groups — West Indian Blacks, Palestinians, and Garífunas — as an economic threat as well as a danger to Honduran racial composition, and by extension identity, of the Honduran people. Most immigrant groups, with the exception of Palestinians, arrived in Honduras to work in the banana companies and eventually settled in or close to the Caribbean coastal region of Honduras. The economic development of the coastal area further fomented ideological debates on race and national identity that first surfaced in the early 19th century. National identity
was now defined in opposition to the coast and its black inhabitants.

This project on the construction of Honduran identity is by no means exhaustive. Perhaps it might even be perceived as monolithic in the sense that it mainly focuses on the vision and theories of race, space, and identity outlined by the State and a small group of literati. Although I do not deny the importance of more popular or subaltern groups in the construction of national identity, I do not address or present projects of identity that emerged “from below” because of the scope of this particular project. Nation and identity are always gendered. Therefore, it is essential for future projects on Honduran national identity to discuss this relationship at length. There is still a great deal of investigation to be done and other sources that need to be taken into account, but I believe this project is a good starting point.
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