

National Identities in Central  
American in a Comparative  
Perspective: The Modern Public  
Sphere and the Celebration of  
Centennial of Central American  
Independence September 15, 1921

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**BY A. P. FUMERO-VARGAS**

**2005**

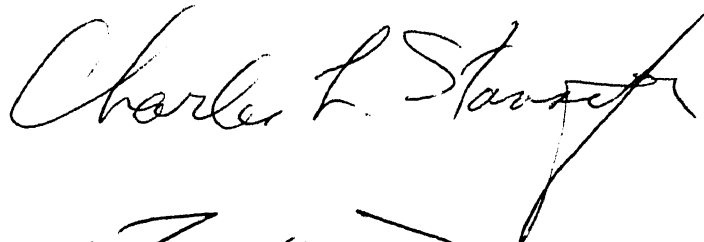


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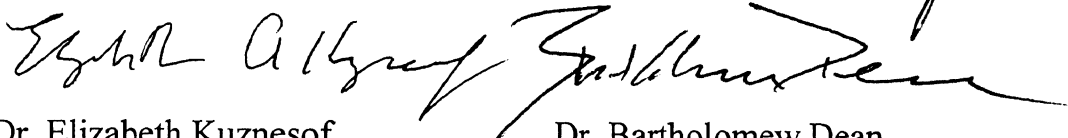
by  
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Submitted to the Department of History and the Faculty of the Graduate School  
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Doctor in Philosophy

Dr. Charles L. Stansifer  
Chair



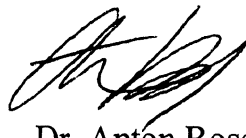
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## Abstract

In each of the Central American countries, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, the degree of development of the public sphere and political practices determined the way in which national identity discourses were elaborated, disseminated, and appropriated by society. The public sphere and political practices also shaped these discourses in each national culture, and in the long run they develop a democratic culture. Through the study of the public sphere and political practices, this study shows how collective action opened or widened spaces for popular participation and how it transformed the understanding of politics in the first decades of the twentieth century Central America.

This study analyzes national identity discourses, specifically those given during the Independence Day celebrations in Central America from 1870 to 1921. In addition, this study examines how diverse social actors approached national identity during the celebration of the centennial of Independence in September 15, 1921 to understand the role of celebrations and the alliances between political leaders and popular groups, and the function of intellectuals in the social organization. This approach provides a different way to examine the relationship between the Liberal state and its “citizens,” and how Central American society understood citizenship in the 1920s.

To Sofia, Manrique and José Daniel  
to Claudia  
With eternal gratitude for their love, example and support

...a people without the knowledge of their past history,  
origin and culture is like a tree without roots...  
Marcus Garvey

## Acknowledgements

...in this great future you can't forget your past...  
Bob Marley

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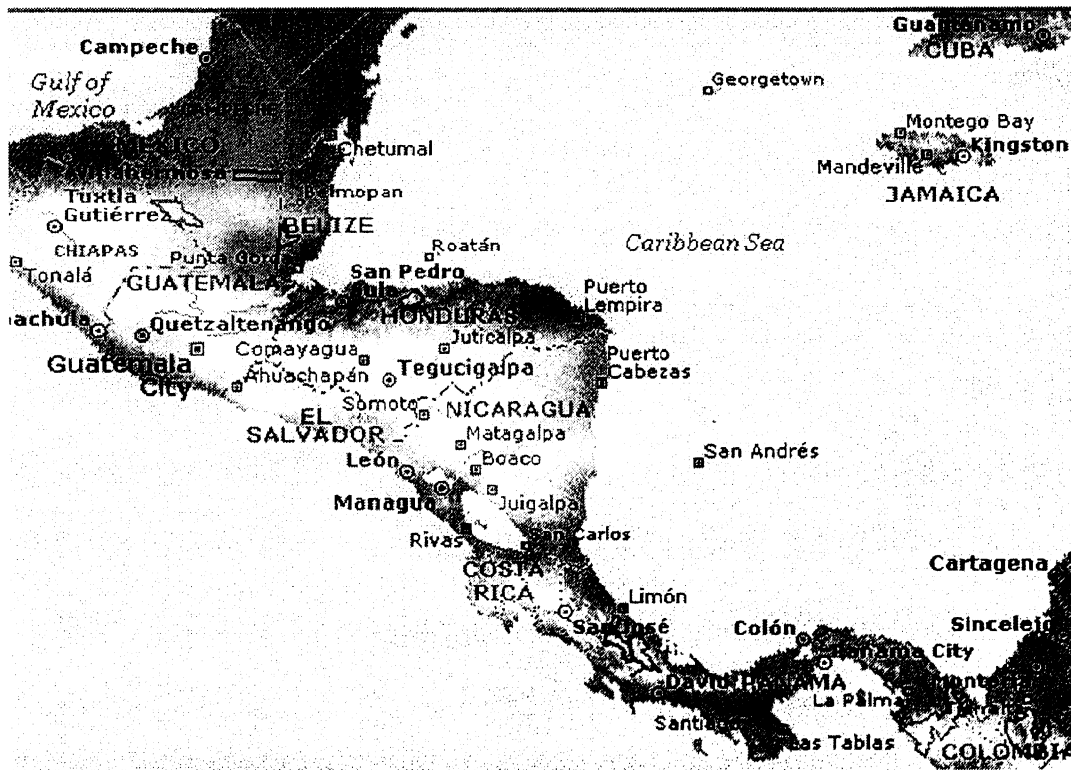
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Map 1  
Central America



## Introduction

In each of the Central American countries, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, the degree of development of the public sphere and political practices determined the way in which national identity discourses were elaborated, disseminated, and appropriated by society. The public sphere and political practices also shaped these discourses in each national culture, and in the long run they develop a democratic culture. The public sphere is understood as the place where private people come together as a public to debate their concerns. Even though I am aware that there are a multiplicity of publics and differentiated spheres, for the sake of this study I will refer to it in singular, as public sphere. Through the study of the public sphere and political practices, I will show how collective action opened or widened spaces for the participation of subalterns and how it transformed the understanding of politics in the first decades of twentieth century Central America. I will analyze national identity discourses, specifically those given during the Independence Day celebrations in Central America from 1870 to 1921, and how national identity was approached in the celebration of the centennial of Independence in September 15, 1921. I argue that the exclusion of vast majorities such as the indigenous people and Afro-Caribbean communities eroded the process. They were ignored discursively, notwithstanding these groups were at the same time active participants and spectators. The study of the celebrations of the centennial of Independence shows that democracy is also a spectacle and that the formation of participatory publics is an ongoing phenomenon.



New approaches, research, and a revision of the literature provide a different approach to the relationship amongst the Liberal state and its “citizens,” and how citizenship was treated in Central America. Different theories on cultural practices help to understand the role of celebrations and the alliances between political leaders and popular groups, and the function of intellectuals in the social organization.

For the purpose of this study, we will understand Central America in its classical definition, the five republics that belonged to the Captaincy General of Guatemala in the colonial period and achieved independence on September 15, 1821. Even though Chiapas and parts of Panama were included in the Captaincy, after independence, only five countries were formed, and those are the ones we will study. These countries are Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Therefore, this definition does not include Chiapas, Belize, or Panama.

Independence came smoothly to Central America after decades of turmoil in America and Europe.<sup>1</sup> The Napoleonic invasion of Spain undermined the power of the Crown overseas and promoted the reorganization of local politics in Spanish America. The Spanish Cortes de Cádiz (1811) worried about the self-governing American juntas, so the Cortes asked the American colonies to send representatives to work on a constitution. Central America sent two intellectuals and clergymen,

---

<sup>1</sup> See Leslie Bethell, *Central America since Independence* (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Julio César Pinto Soria, *Centroamérica, de la colonia al estado nacional, 1800-1840*, vol. no. 16 (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria de Guatemala, 1986). Miles L. Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America, 1680-1840* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, *Próceres de la independencia centroamericana*, 1. ed. (Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1972). Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, *Textos fundamentales de la independencia centroamericana*, 1. ed. (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1971).

Florencio del Castillo (Cartago, Costa Rica) and Antonio de Larrazábal (Guatemala). The idea of a constitution and a constitutional monarchy encouraged Spanish America to dream about independence.

In Central America, discomfort with some of the Spanish Crown's administrative appointees and mercantile policies inspired revolts. The first movement began in San Salvador in November 1811. A second one started in Nicaragua that same year and another in Tegucigalpa in 1812. A year later, a new rebellion occurred at the Belén convent (Guatemala) and one more started in San Salvador in 1814. After these rebellions there were no more acts seeking independence until 1821.

The same year that Mexico received its independence Central America received its independence via the Act of Guatemala signed on September 15, 1821. New worries arose. How was Central America to be organized? Central America constructed its identity inside local political communities within the social fabric and not within administrative divisions.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Central America was divided internally, and a set of post-Independence conflicts began as part of the state formation process. As Justin Wolfe argues it is possible to see post-Independence conflicts as part of the state formation process instead of taking the state as the locus of monopolized coercion and resource extraction. It is in these struggles that the

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of how political communities create identities see, Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra, *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica siglo XIX* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 188-97.

meaning and structure of the nation-states developed.<sup>3</sup> New venues opened, and from 1821 to 1823, Central America struggled over how to organize. In these foundational and organizational years, the five countries decided first to join the Mexican Empire and after that failed, they decided to organize as the United Provinces of Central America (also known as the Federation), an experiment that ended in 1838. Each new republic tried to end local divisions and to move on, while some attempted to revive the Federation but all of these efforts failed.

In 1921, a century of formal independence permitted reevaluation of the federation concept, and a need arose inside some groups to re-construct the region, political and socially. For that purpose, Central American political elites agreed to a meeting in December 1920, to discuss problems common to the region and to try to organize joint efforts in behalf of regional commerce, education, and politics. They agreed to hold the official celebration of the Centennial of Central American Independence in Guatemala on September 15, 1921. In addition, delegates agreed to hold a Federal Council meeting to create a new Federal Constitution by Independence Day.

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<sup>3</sup> Justin Wolfe, "Rising from the Ashes: Community, Ethnicity and Nation-State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua" (Ph.D., University of California, 1999), 27. For this interpretation of the state see, Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, et al. (Cambridge Cambridgehire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-91. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European states, AD 990-1992*, Rev. pbk. ed., *Studies in Social Discontinuity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992).

## Political Culture and Public Celebrations: The Centennial of the Central American Independence

Analysis of the public celebrations and entertainment furthers the comprehension of the cultural and political practices of a given society. These practices play an important role in the process of socialization because they facilitate the exchange of values and encourage nationalism which help to shape citizenship. In addition, the space provided by public celebrations and entertainment facilitates the creation and promotion of perceptions of social equality, as they teach citizens about institutions. For this reason, the study of the Centennial of the Independence of Central America in September 15, 1921, opens a window to understand political, social changes and culture in the 1920s. These years were ones of political openness and awakening sociopolitical consciousness that preceded violent transformations in the 1930s as we will study later. A period of change and sociopolitical calm had started by 1920, and public memory was reconstructed through new cultural practices and forms of citizenship. Therefore, new types of celebrations, commemorations, and representations began in Central America as centennials were celebrated throughout Latin America. Nevertheless, in the early 1930s, despite advances in regional intercommunication, all of the Central American countries but Costa Rica ended in dictatorships.

Public celebrations worked as communicators and promoted political consolidation.<sup>4</sup> Public celebrations recuperate, and renovate the meaning of

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<sup>4</sup> See Annick Lempérière, "Los dos centenarios de la independencia mexicana (1910-1921): de la historia patria a la antropología cultural," *Historia Mexicana* XLV, no. 2 (1995): 317-52. Mauricio



Independence through new discourses which give Independence a powerful symbolic meaning. The celebration of the Centennial opened spaces not granted to subalterns before, for example with the presentation of their concerns during official speeches, parades, demonstrations and conferences.

The celebration of the centennial of Independence is symbolically representative and so significant regionally as to help us evaluate the development of divergent discourses of nationhood. Central America held celebrations in almost every urban and rural setting. The centennial provided an opportunity for different social actors to elaborate or reproduce discourses of nationhood and identity in official and unofficial settings. In addition, it provided the possibility to re-evaluate the Central American union, the long-held dream of reconstructing the United Provinces of Central America. Throughout the region, I found discourses made by members of the working class, intellectuals and by the representatives of the State, among others. In this study I relate these discourses to politics and the development of the public sphere. A study that combines political and cultural issues can help explain why Costa Rica was the only country in Central America that developed stable democratic practices, expanding citizen participation and elections.<sup>5</sup> Such a

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Tenorio Trillo, "1910 Mexico City. Space and Nation in the City of the *Centenario*," in *Viva Mexico! Viva la Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16*, ed. William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> For a relation between elections and democracy in Central America see, Charles L. Stansifer, "Elections and Democracy in Central America: The Cases of Costa Rica and Nicaragua," in *Assessing Democracy in Latin America: A Tribute to Russell H. Fitzgibbon*, ed. Philip Kelly (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), 117-36. A discussion of contemporary democratic practices is found in John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Paths to Democracy and the Political Culture of Costa Rica, Mexico and Nicaragua," in *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, ed. Larry Jay Diamond (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1993), 107-38. John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, *Elections and Democracy in Central America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

study also helps to explain why the Central American union never became a reality. The Centennial is a specific event where political and cultural processes intersect in the short run. To identify and analyze these relations enables us to study the construction of national identity and political cultures in each of the Central American countries, and compare them.

The originality of this approach is that the five Central American countries are compared in order to determine regional and local tendencies that in the long run help explain differences in the development of political systems. To do so I incorporate two variables which have not been systematically used in the study of societies in Central America: the development of a public sphere and political practices that reflect the competition amongst groups, factions, and political parties.

### Theoretical approach

The confrontation of the nationalistic/nationhood discourses and the comparison of the development of the public sphere and political practices of each country help to determine the degree to which each national political culture contributed to the promotion of democratic values.<sup>6</sup> These representations of the past, or the mythical histories of nation building, are attached to national imagination.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the analysis of these representations in discourses and of the public sphere

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Mitchell A. Seligson and John A. Booth, *Elections and Democracy in Central America, revisited*, New & enl. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the relation of political culture and democracy see, Larry Jay Diamond, "Political Culture and Democracy," in *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, ed. Larry Jay Diamond (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1993), 1-33. For studies of elite based political culture in Latin America see, Larry Jay Diamond, ed., *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 3.

helps determine the way in which different actors, individual and collective, could make their views public. For the purpose of this research, discourses are not necessarily restricted to language,<sup>8</sup> or simply to a medium of communication, nor is there a dominant discourse. Discourses are seen as an aid to the understanding of society through the analysis of their relations. As argued by Foucault, discourses were not to show “that the mechanisms or processes of the language (langue) were entirely preserved in it; but rather to reveal, in the density of verbal performances, the diversity of possible levels of analysis.”<sup>9</sup>

Public sphere is a key concept to understand the opening of the democratic use of public reason in early 1920s Central America, explaining subalterns’ need to claim the public sphere to discuss, present and negotiate their concerns. This concept is defined by Habermas as

“...the sphere of private people coming together as a public: they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of the reason.”<sup>10</sup>

Participation in the public sphere helps subalterns to come together as a public creating *public fora*, where conditions for expression, association, and discussion are given. This participation generates a sense of equal opportunities among citizens.

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<sup>8</sup> Language is understood as a social practice, as a way of doing things. Linda A. Wood and Kroger Rolf O., *Doing Discourse Analysis. Methods for Studying Action in Talk and Text* (London-New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 27.

Unlike those studies that incorporate the study of the political culture as a variable for analysis and its relation with democratic practices focused on the political elite,<sup>11</sup> this study focuses on the participation of subalterns. In particular it focuses on how women and workers used the space opened during the celebration of the centennial of the Independence of Central America to discuss their concerns. This study centers on political culture at the level of subaltern participation in two different settings, the street and the institutionalized space. Study of the participation of subalterns in the public sphere helps to understand changes in the political culture, which are considered a variable to determine, “how and when a political system moves closer to or further from the perfect ideal of ‘democracy.’”<sup>12</sup>

## The Public Sphere, Democratic Practices and Hegemony

The model provided by Habermas is helpful for this study because it explains the formation of the public sphere, and how its creation allows agents to express and reaffirm their autonomy from the central power. Habermas defines the public sphere as an abstract and immaterial place that also has material expressions as those in texts (including printing, circulation and reception of ideas), and material spaces such as the ones studied, i.e. newspapers, conferences, plazas, theaters, halls and markets, spaces society shares where dialogue, conflict and negotiation take place.<sup>13</sup> This must

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<sup>11</sup> The classic study that represents this approach is Robert Alan Dahl, *Polyarchy; Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

<sup>12</sup> Diamond, "Political Culture and Democracy," 4.

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Liberating Power of Symbols: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). A discussion of the limitations of Habermas' model is found in Francois-Xavier Guerra y Annick Lempierre, "Introducción" in Francois-Xavier Guerra and Annick Lempériere, *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998), 8-11. Leonardo Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*

be taken into consideration to understand social interaction. Notwithstanding Habermas centered the creation of the public sphere in the bourgeois, rational, male property owner of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, we use the concept to include diverse social actors which include workers and women.

Avritzer argues that the transformation of the public space into a dialogical and interactive space, and the participation of social groups or movements construct democratic publics. For that reason, collective action is also a rational act of establishing common identities,<sup>14</sup> and the “role of social movements is to thematize identity difference by presenting it in public.”<sup>15</sup> Key arguments to understand the participation of subalterns during the celebrations will be discussed later.

Public sphere and political participation connect to create a legitimate political system by fostering deliberations, which produce democratic legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> It

“requires an understanding of the social facts currently affecting the possibilities for deliberation: cultural pluralism, which produces potentially deep and persistent moral conflicts; large social inequalities, which make it difficult for many to participate effectively in public decisions; and social complexity, which makes it necessary for us to revise our models of what constitutes a forum for deliberation to include large and dispersed public spheres.”<sup>17</sup>

The public sphere overcomes the elite-mass dichotomy by analyzing the political culture at the public level to understand democratization not exclusively as the institutionalized political competition, but as social practices in need of

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(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Steven Seidman, ed., *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 44.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>16</sup> James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy*, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 1, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 3.

institutionalization.<sup>18</sup> As stated by Alberto Melucci “the public space becomes the arena for the contested definition of what is political [...] Its chief function is to bring into open discussion the issues raised by social movements.”<sup>19</sup> For example, the proceedings of the Central American Workers Conference echoed a multiplicity of previous discussions/discourses that were made inside diverse workers’ and women’s organizations, unions or workshops. Workers demanded the institutionalization of their concerns.

Public debate of social issues and concerns creates societal consensus and helps to elucidate the relation between the public sphere and political practices, and allows the connection with three elements of public sphere: free expression and discussion, the formation of plural identities, and free association.<sup>20</sup> Hence, there is a link between modern political practices and the creation of public opinion, and both with new forms of sociability and socialization where literacy becomes a key element. It is in the written word that subalterns institutionalize their concerns, for example with the inclusion of their demands into the Federal Constitution of Central America in 1921.

To promote democratic practices there must be participatory publics. The formation of participatory publics involves four elements. The first element is the formation at the public level of mechanisms of face-to-face deliberations, free expression, and association. These mechanisms address specific elements in the

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<sup>18</sup> Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 221.

<sup>20</sup> Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 51.

dominant cultures by making them problematic issues for political discussion. The second element is the idea that social movements and voluntary associations address contentious issues in the political culture by introducing alternative practices at the public level. The third element involves the transformation of informal public opinion into a forum for public deliberation and administrative decision-making. Finally, in the fourth element, participatory publics bind their deliberations with the attempt to search for institutional formats capable of addressing at the institutional level the issues made contentious at the public level.<sup>21</sup> How does this relate to our study? Changes in social organization and in the public sphere promoted the participation of subalterns, in this case workers who discussed publicly their concerns and identities, and tried to change the system to make it more democratic by institutionalizing their demands into the legal system.

To understand the participation of subalterns in politics, hegemony and the construction of hegemonic discourses must be addressed. Hegemony is understood as a cultural rather than an imposed process. Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, and Perry Anderson define hegemony as a consensual or voluntary form of control, not because people agree to it, but because power is exercised or instituted through practices and beliefs and is a consequence of a process of negotiation and dialogue.<sup>22</sup> In this way, politicians and intellectuals sought to rely on cultural hegemony, that is

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>22</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notes*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: International Publishers, 1971), Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London: Fontana, 1981), Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Flamingo, 1983). See also Susan Kellogg, "Hegemony out of Conquest: The First Two Centuries of Spanish Rule in Central Mexico," *Radical History Review* 53 (1992): 29.

the set of values and cultural practices “accepted” by a society, usually associated with a politically dominant group,<sup>23</sup> and expressed through symbols of hierarchy. Gramsci is useful for approaching cultural production as an element of the human condition, and in elucidating the “intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities have their place within the general complex of social relations,”<sup>24</sup> as those found in early twentieth century Central America.

## Political Culture and Public Opinion

For the purpose of this research, political culture is understood as the symbolic popular practices and national values attached to the process of legitimation of power, which are learned, appropriated and internalized when participating in celebrations, commemorations and electoral processes.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, political culture consists of attitudes, norms, and beliefs shared widely by members of a social group. The understanding that individual and collective actors have of the institutions, practices and political groups that operate in a certain context, reflects the political culture. Some of the manifestations of political culture are duties and rights, language, and specific symbols of the existing political groups. Rituals and activities

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<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences on 'Spanish' Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 4, no. 1 (1995): 154. William Roseberry understands hegemony as a “common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting on a social order characterized by domination.” William Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation. Revolution and Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. G. M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Duke University Press, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notes*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> See Enrique Gil, *El Estado de fiesta. Feria, foro, corte y circo* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1991). Temma Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).



associated with the commemoration process, such as public entertainment, traditional games, “refrescos” (soiree), “retretas” (music in public spaces usually played by the military/state band), civic music, dances, luncheons and dinners, and “ovaciones” (meetings where politicians were acclaimed by the public in private, semi-private and public settings), among other manifestations, are analyzed to demonstrate the way in which popular sectors reproduce or recreate the symbols of the nation and exercise citizenship.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, political culture is not homogenous. It contains subcultures that is, diverse attitudes, norms, and values that frequently contrast and negotiate with each other. When analyzing it through the lens of cultural practices, political culture is part of the processes of negotiation and hegemonic control resultant from the transformation of social practices. Thus, legitimacy appears in the origin and the exercise of power.<sup>27</sup>

## Citizenship and Identity

The emergence of public opinion, new forms of sociability and mass culture are associated with the appearance of a modern national identity.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, citizens must feel they belong to an imagined community, a political society, and

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<sup>26</sup> For México see, William Beezley and David E. Lorey, eds., *¡Viva México! ¡Viva la Independencia! Celebrations of September 16* (Wilmington: SR, 2001). William Beezley, Cherryl E. Martin, and William E. French, eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance. Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in México* (Delaware: SR, 1994). Symbols are an exterior expression and arbitrary in its content, but rituals have the capacity to give specific contents. An interesting study of symbols and rites is in Pierre Bourdieu. *Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). Mijail Bajtin, *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento. El contexto de François Rabelais*. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> For a broader discussion see, Roger Chartier, *El mundo como representación. Historia cultural: entre práctica y representación* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of the creation of a public sphere in Latin America see Guerra and Lempérière, *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX*.

have the right to exercise citizenship.<sup>29</sup> Sociologist Alain Touraine considers that citizenship appeals to social integration, not only to the belief of belonging to a city, a national or a federal state, but to a community welded by a culture and a history within the formal nation-state borders.<sup>30</sup>

Scholars emphasize that identities are part of a complex social network and not only constructed by institutions (laws and social control for example), identities consist of the recognition of what is common, and the attempt to show publicly what is different.<sup>31</sup> Hence, there must be recognition of the conditions that help create or assume these identities. Identities cannot be studied only through what is evident, that is through institutionalized documents, but identities must be studied as part of a negotiation process that is observed through the civic participation of groups that are differentiated by region, class, age, gender, and ethnicity. Melucci suggests that identity is what people choose to be, how they define themselves and not only as a consequence of an intuitive capacity of mutual recognition, and in a meaningful dimension. Identity provides actors with the capacity of making sense of their being

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<sup>29</sup> Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983). Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). New nationalism and the invention of traditions are analyzed in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. For a critique of Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism see, Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, "Nationalism as a Practical System. Benedict Anderson's Theory of Nationalism from the Vantage Point of Spanish America," in *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America*, ed. Miguel Centeno and Fernando López (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism, Public Worlds*; v. 9 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Alain Touraine, *¿Qué es la democracia?* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995), 45.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Bartholomew Dean and Jerome M. Levi, *At the Risk of Being Heard: Identity, Indigenous Rights, and Postcolonial States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

together.<sup>32</sup> In addition, identity is also ascribed. As argued by Stuart Hall, cultural identities undergo constant transformation, “they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, identities are a cultural construct, and political identities are the way in which links and bonds amongst citizens and government are created, and the way to understand origin, nature, and attributes of the authorities and values that structure a group.<sup>34</sup>

This study focuses on politics in its double role: as a process of social domination and as a space where social agents negotiate their interests. This process has a symbolic dimension in which celebrations and rituals legitimate and destabilize power, and at the same time promote the construction of loyalties within the state or within interest groups. Therefore, civic celebrations are studied as a space of integration, insertion, participation, negotiation, differentiation, and exclusion of different sectors into the political life: young people, genders, ethnic minorities, and popular groups. In addition, celebrations play a significant role in the socialization

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<sup>32</sup> Alberto Melucci, 1943-, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge cultural social studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66.

<sup>33</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," *Framework* 36 (1989): 70.

<sup>34</sup> François-Xavier Guerra, "Las mutaciones de la identidad en la América hispánica," in *Inventando la nación. Iberoamérica. Siglo XIX*, ed. Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 186.

process, because they allow the exchange of patriotic values and feelings, as elements of political modernity reconfigure citizenship.<sup>35</sup>

To reach an understanding of the configuration of citizenship and identity in Central America this study analyzes the socio-political context of the celebrations of Independence Day. The analysis of the celebration of the centennial of Independence clarifies the way in which the popular sectors and diverse ethnic groups legitimate, support, accept, challenge, and ratify their governments and leaders in Central America. How were nationalistic and unionist ideals and values experienced by the popular sectors or workers? How were activities organized, based on class differences, gender or in terms of ethnicity? To what degree were such ideals contested in the context of the celebration of the Centennial? These are some of the questions posed.

## State of the Art

This section considers four different sets of studies. First, those that refer to the invention of the nation in Central America. Secondly, those that concerns urban culture, intellectuals, and the public sphere. Third, those that examine political practices, and finally research that tries to explain the different historical outcomes in the Central American isthmus.

Recent studies that emphasize the construction of nationhood have been limited to the analysis of a particular country in Central America. The partial

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<sup>35</sup> For the period studied, modernity is understood as the ideology where rationality is embodied in science, law, moral philosophy and art penetrated into daily life, social progress would be an inevitable outcome. Seidman, ed., *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader*, 2.

exception is Steven Palmer's dissertation that compares the invention of the nation-state in Guatemala and Costa Rica,<sup>36</sup> and an article by Víctor Hugo Acuña that studies the idea of the nation among artisans and urban workers in Central America during the liberal period. Acuña addresses how their worldview was embedded in the Liberal discourse.<sup>37</sup> In his dissertation, Palmer concludes that in Costa Rica by 1900, the foundations of nationalism were laid. In contrast, the problems of nationalism in Guatemala were still evident in 1900, since nationalism had become anchored in a failed Central American Union and "the Indian question" was not yet addressed. In his study, Acuña concludes that artisans and workers reproduced the ideological discourses of the Liberal state and provided the social base for the construction of "patriotism." Interestingly he proposes that workers represented their loyalties in hierarchical and concentric terms: first their nation-state, secondly Central America, third, Latin America.

In the current study, identity is seen as constructed at multiple levels where actors do not exclude or prioritize any of them. One of Acuña's conclusions needs to be studied more in depth: loyalty to the nation-state is more important than class solidarity. Our findings show that loyalty to the nation-state and class solidarity were not exclusive, but complementary and that identity formation could be made in a multiple way. Individuals have multiple identities, and sometimes they have an instrumental use of identity.

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<sup>36</sup> Steven Palmer, "A Liberal Discipline: Inventing Nations in Guatemala and Costa Rica, 1870-1900" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> Víctor Hugo Acuña, "Nación y clase obrera en Centroamérica (1870-1930)," in *El paso del cometa. Estado, política social y culturas populares en Costa Rica (1800-1950)*, ed. Iván Molina and Steven Palmer (San José: Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies-Editorial Porvenir, 1994).

Carlos Gregorio López Bernal,<sup>38</sup> David Díaz,<sup>39</sup> and Edgar Barrillas<sup>40</sup> conducted studies that provide insights to analyze the role of national heroes and commemorations in the creation of nationalism in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. Elizet Payne analyzes the construction of national identity in the Honduran coast through the lens of an enclave economy.<sup>41</sup> These studies provide a basis for understanding the importance of popular entertainment and the consolidation of a civic culture in Central America.

Urban culture, intellectual history and the development of the public sphere are themes that in Central America have not been explored in depth. An exception is the analysis by Michel Gobat of the transformation of power and identity of the Nicaraguan elites under United States intervention (1910-1934). In his analysis, Gobat examines the unusual political alliances Conservative oligarchs sought to forge with popular sectors and, at times, with revolutionary movements in the 1930s. He concludes that Conservatives' peculiar anti-bourgeois turn, and the polarization of elite identities more generally, resulted from perhaps the most unexpected outcome of the U.S. intervention: the way in which U.S. efforts to modernize elite political and economic practices inadvertently strengthened the power of non-elite groups,

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<sup>38</sup> Carlos Gregorio López Bernal, "El proyecto liberal de la nación en El Salvador: 1876-1932" (M.Sc., Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> David Díaz Arias, "La Fiesta de la Independencia en Costa Rica, 1821-1921" (Master, University of Costa Rica, 2001). David Díaz Arias, "Una fiesta del discurso: vocabulario político e identidad nacional en el discurso de las celebraciones de la Independencia de Costa Rica, 1848-1921," *Revista Estudios* 17 (2003): 73-104.

<sup>40</sup> Edgar Barillas, "Los héroes y las naciones. Un acercamiento al discurso sobre la nación," *Estudios* 1 (1994): 7-31.

<sup>41</sup> Elizet Payne, "Identidad y Nación: El caso de la costa norte e islas de la bahía en Honduras, 1876-1930," *Mesoamerica* 42 (2001).

particularly rural middle sectors.<sup>42</sup> I would add that they provided the opportunity to reformulate the national identity discourse as studied later through the analysis of the discourse given by Nicaraguan president Diego Manuel Chamorro on September 15, 1921 in Granada.

Recent research on intellectual history include studies on Alejandro Marure, the 1920s generation, civics and education and textbooks by several scholars in Guatemala.<sup>43</sup> For Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador Iván Molina has done extensive research on print culture and national identity.<sup>44</sup> These studies help to understand the role of intellectuals in the construction of national identity in Central America.

Dana G. Munro, a U.S. diplomat and academic in early twentieth century, was one of the first scholars to try to make sense of the differences in the political development of Central America when in 1918 he raised questions that later scholars examined.<sup>45</sup> First, Munro points out the impossibility of implanting institutions modeled from others outside the region because inadequate social development

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<sup>42</sup> Michel Gobat, "Against the Bourgeois Spirit: The Nicaraguan Elite under United States Imperialism, 1910-1934" (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Marta Casaus Arzú and Oscar Peláez Almengor, eds., *Historia Intelectual de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala-Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> Iván Molina Jiménez, "Cultura Impresa e identidad nacional en El Salvador a fines del siglo XIX. Una perspectiva comparativa," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 38 (2001). Iván Molina Jiménez, *El que quiera divertirse: libros y sociedad en Costa Rica (1750-1914)*, 1. ed., *Colección Nueva Historia* (San José/Heredia: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica-Editorial de la Universidad Nacional, 1995). Iván Molina Jiménez, "Impresiones de fin de siglo. La expansión de la cultura impresa en Costa Rica y Nicaragua (1880-1914)," in *La sonora libertad del viento. Sociedad y cultura en Costa Rica y Nicaragua (1821-1914)*, ed. Iván Molina and Patricia Fumero (México: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1997), 135-56.

<sup>45</sup> Dana G. Munro, *The Five Republics of Central America: Their Political and Economic Development and their Relation with the United States*, *Publications of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Economics and History*; v. 8 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918).

caused political upheaval. Secondly, he explains differences through a long historical tradition of insurgency that started after Independence in 1821, and where the State became the means to obtain personal wealth and respect. Munro argues that the impoverishment suffered by the elites in the nineteenth century forced them to compete with liberal professionals, artisans and workers for political power. Thirdly, Munro believes that the lack of accountability of the politicians caused political instability. Therefore, he concludes that the lack of competitive elections and democratic publics inhibited the possibility of democratization in these societies, essentializing democracy. Munro's work helps to understand the perception of Central American politics and practices and to wxplain recent debates related to the process of democratization.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, most of the presidents and dictators headed personalistic governments that sought to maintain themselves in power through the imposition of new forms of social organization and manipulation of "older" forms of social organization rather than to be unconditional allies of the economic elites in the region. This premise was a conclusion that underlined Thomas Karnes' early book on the Central American Federation.<sup>46</sup> Karnes concludes that the weakness of representative government in the region caused the failure of union because of the flaws in political development, and that the long history of dictatorships inhibited self-government. Finally, what he sees as the most relevant obstacle was the isolationism of Costa Rica. Some limitations in the study are present:

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas L. Karnes, *The Failure of Union. Central America 1824-1975*, Revised edition ed. (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1976).



there is no explanation of dictatorship other than political rivalries between factions, and social actors are studied only through the lens of political decisions and agreements. Karnes does not take into consideration cultural differences and the particularities of the formation of social opinion and national identity.

Scholars continue to have various explanations for the dissimilar political trajectories in the isthmus. One of the most influential explanations of the differentiated social and economic development emerges from the analysis of class structure based upon the nature of the agrarian class structure in Central America. Edelberto Torres-Rivas' classic study analyzes Central American societies through the specific process of integration into the world market at the turn of the twentieth century, and links the political instability of the region to the way the state and elites integrated into the world economy in the late nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Barrington Moore provides the theory for an approach that seeks to explain political phenomena within societies by emphasizing class relations to explain the formation of different kinds of regimes as nations modernize.<sup>48</sup> Torres-Rivas offers a twofold development: first,

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<sup>47</sup> The classic text was written by Edelberto Torres-Rivas, *Interpretación del desarrollo social centroamericano; procesos y estructuras de una sociedad dependiente* (Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1971). The English version is Edelberto Torres-Rivas, *History and Society in Central America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

<sup>48</sup> Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy; Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). A critique to the application of Moore's approach in Latin American context can be found in Michael Baud, "Barrington Moore in Latin America: Coffee, Power and Modernity," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 64 (1998): 113-21. Iván Molina Jiménez, "Ciclo electoral y políticas públicas en Costa Rica (1890-1948)," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 63, no. 3 (2001): 67-98. Frank Safford, "Applying Moore's Model to Latin America: Some Historians' Observations," in *Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America*, ed. Evelyne Huber Stephens and Frank Safford (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995). J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Class Relations and Democratization: A Reassessment of Barrington Moore's Model," in *The Other Mirror. Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America*, ed. Miguel Ángel Centeno and Fernando López (Princeton:

countries with low control over production and exports such as the enclave economies of Nicaragua and Honduras produced weak states. Secondly, countries in which local elites controlled cultivation and processing of crops and exports produced strong states. Nevertheless, these countries established different relations between the state and the population depending upon particular policies. New regional studies have challenged this traditional perspective.<sup>49</sup> Scholars such as Jeffery Paige try to demonstrate that the application of Moore's model to Central America does not explain the differences in twentieth-century politics in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.<sup>50</sup> Deborah Yashar finds similarities in Costa Rica and Guatemala and argues that in both countries Liberal reforms consolidated a form of authoritarianism, which structured the respective political economies for seventy years. She concludes that divergent paths of democratization differentiated both countries in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>51</sup> But these studies do not discuss participatory publics and political cultures as complementary to understand the divergent democratic path in Central America.

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Princeton University Press, 2001), 240-86. See also Jeffrey Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> For example, Euraque gives agency to the workers at the banana companies in the Honduran Caribbean. Therefore, he shows a differentiated social and political culture and agenda that cut across class lines. Darío Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Also see James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (New York: Verso, 1988). Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America*. Robert G. Williams, *States and Social Evolution: Coffee and the Rise of National Governments in Central America* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>50</sup> Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America*.

<sup>51</sup> Deborah J. Yashar, *Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reaction in Costa Rica and Guatemala, 1870s-1950s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Reforms, economy, and divergent political practices are a research topic for Central Americanists. Eric Ching argues that despite significant changes in the society and economy of El Salvador, the characteristic of the political system was a distinct continuity across time and space such that the authoritarian state was in place well before the military formally rose to power. Two of these changes were the rapid growth of the coffee industry in the late nineteenth century, and the coming to power of the military in 1931.<sup>52</sup> This study finds that despite the highly personalistic and authoritarian rule in early twentieth century El Salvador, the Meléndez-Quiñónez dynasty promoted popular participation and the formation of participatory publics. Fabrice Lehoucq and Iván Molina have an explanation for the differentiated political outcome in Costa Rica. Through analysis of the electoral practices in Costa Rica in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they argue that through the ballot box, urban and rural society shaped democratic practices.<sup>53</sup> Molina and Lehoucq's limitation is the absence of an analysis of the "popular" political culture. In addition, they do not explain how, elections became a symbolic celebration/spectacle of democracy. Other explanations stress the implementation of different types of political reforms. For example, Robert Holden, Darío Euraque, and Patricia Alvarenga argue that in Guatemala and El Salvador, "radical liberalism" led to a

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<sup>52</sup> Erik Kristofer Ching, "From Clientelism to Militarism: The State, Politics and Authoritarianism in El Salvador, 1840-1940" (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1997).

<sup>53</sup> Fabrice Edouard Lehoucq and Iván Molina Jiménez, *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also Molina Jiménez, "Ciclo electoral y políticas públicas en Costa Rica (1890-1948)."

centralized and militarized state apparatus, and to a highly polarized class structure.<sup>54</sup> In these countries disadvantaged actors responded by leading democratizing episodes, such as the one this study addresses, in which major political and socioeconomic issues were discussed. These episodes failed when the elites reacted and established military-authoritarian regimes, and by the turn of the twentieth century, the military group permitted, generally speaking, relationships between the coffee oligarchies in those countries and “their” governments, and sustained the exploitative labor relations on coffee plantations.<sup>55</sup>

In the need to clarify this differentiated development, new research emphasizes actors’ choices (path-dependent approach) to explain differences in the outcomes of liberal reform throughout Central America.<sup>56</sup> James Mahoney explains how the path-dependency approach emphasizes the way in which actors’ choices create institutions and structures, which in turn shape subsequent actor behaviors, which in turn lead to the development of new institutional and structural patterns.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See Robert H. Holden, "Constructing the Limits of State Violence in Central America: Towards a New Research Agenda," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28 (1996). Patricia Alvarenga, *Cultura y ética de la violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932* (San José: EDUCA, 1996).

<sup>55</sup> Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972*, 49-50.

<sup>56</sup> James Lee Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 11. Other studies that support their theories through “path-dependent” approach are Yashar, *Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reaction in Costa Rica and Guatemala, 1870s-1950s*. Fabrice Edouard Lehoucq, "The Origins of Democracy in Costa Rica in Comparative Perspective (Presidentialism)" (Ph.D., Duke University, 1992).

<sup>57</sup> “Institutions arise as mechanisms to reduce transaction costs. These can be formal or informal, can involve cultural norms or codified statutes, and can generate rules that people agree to respect, and in instance of violation imply sanctions. Rules and discipline enhance the opportunity cost of disrespect. And when people play by the same rules, they can bargain more easily, trade more, specialize and realize the promise of market diversification. Institutional rules compensate for the frictions latent to market societies and enable private contracting to occur where it otherwise would lag. They create mechanisms to resolve collective dilemmas and resolve them in contractual forms.” Jeremy Adelman, "Institutions, Property, and Economic Development in Latin America," in *The Other Mirror: Grand*

Consequently, this approach argues that decisions of a political actor in a critical juncture will establish new structures and institutions that would lead to enduring political regimes. One of the limitations of this approach is that it locks actors and countries into a particular path of development providing the actors with few options to change it while not stressing contingency or giving agency to subaltern groups. In addition it assumes that the goal of politics is stability. Mahoney explains Central American development during the liberal period, as a product of reformist agendas among countries, which he defines as radical liberalism, reformist liberalism and aborted liberalism. These differences in the political agenda echoed in society and in the way these governments tried to exercise control over their populations, notwithstanding that they pursued similar goals. Mahoney sees political power rooted not in an exercise of citizenship but in “control and influence over state institutions – including the presidency, agricultural agencies, and the military - and in the ability of the agrarian bourgeoisie to shape public policy by virtue of its substantial economic power.”<sup>58</sup> Even though Mahoney’s argument is reasonable, I argue that the power is also in the exercise of citizenship.

Research done in Central America in the past decades concentrates on the analysis of rural areas, and on the relations between class and ethnic groups. This study concentrates on the urban world, the public sphere, and political practices, and on how the development of the discourses of national identity played a basic role in

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*Theory Through The Lens Of Latin America*, ed. Miguel Angel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 31-32.

<sup>58</sup>Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America*, 36.

the configuration of the national culture in each country from 1870 to 1921. I reassess the political culture and evaluate to what extent rituals associated with civic celebrations and political practices are inclusive or exclusive, and to what degree they remodel behaviors, beliefs, and communities to try to answer a question that Dana G. Munro asked in 1918: why was the development of democracy so different in the region? Initially, in this study, citizenship in Central America is defined from each country's constitutions for practical reasons. Secondly, I will re-conceptualize the concept of citizenship based upon the different spaces in which those who are not legally considered citizens participated, providing a broader definition of citizenship that includes those who are participating as social agents. These spaces or fora are the media, national commemorations, and "plazas," among others. Therefore, the inclusion of popular culture as an element in the definition of citizenship counterbalances the limitations found in legal and institutional forms. Disclosing change of identities in Central America provides a better understanding of its differentiated historical outcomes.

Another objective of this study is to open new avenues to study the cultural origins of dictatorships, democracy, and revolution in Central America. It is important for us to promote communication and academic exchange between two different types of research that are normally separated: studies in social and political history, and the cultural and literary studies.

## Methodology

This study combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative methodology consists in processing statistical data from government sources such as “Memorias,” newspapers, reports, censuses and the like, that refer to the distribution of urban and rural population, literacy in urban and rural settings, ethnic distribution, and the importance of the capital city in demographic terms. In each country, official documents such as laws, decrees, and records from “Municipalidad”, “Policía”, “Fomento”, and “Gobernación” are examined. The creation of databases enables consideration of the growth of literacy, and social and workers organizations as an indicator of the expansion of the public sphere. Even though we acknowledge that literacy is not a determinant, it provides data that helps make sense of the institutional definition of citizenship and answers questions as to what percentage of the population is formally participating as citizens. This will allow comparison of qualitative data of informal participation and the reconfiguration of citizenship in these new spaces. For example, governments excluded women and ethnic groups from citizenship but discourses prove that they had new spaces to exteriorize their worldview and exercise their civic rights participating in the public discussion of their concerns, and when they supported, rejected or negotiated with politicians publicly.

Other issues are analyzed such as the distribution of state expenditures, the number, and type of newspapers, magazines, books, and “folletería” as well as public discourses, presidential messages during the celebration of Independence Day, travel accounts, biographies, and autobiographies published from 1870 to 1921. In addition,

I look for alternative discourses in the number and type of public and private associations and organizations created for the same period (clubs, academies, freemasons, workers' associations, etc...).

The creation of new databases provides a series of statistical indicators for the five Central American countries that allows comparison of the degree of importance of organizations in each of these societies which enabled its members to participate in the public sphere as an interest group. Although there is an imbalance in the collection of data due to differentiated information available for each country and the varying preservation, documentation is adequate for comparison. The comparative nature of this analysis helps determine how the development of a public sphere favored or was an obstacle to success in the promotion, negotiation and appropriation of a national identity.

The qualitative methodology consists of a chronological reconstruction of the discourses related to the national identities created from 1870 to 1921 to establish the trends. Specifically I examine speeches given by presidents on Independence Day, proceedings from the Central American Workers Conference, discourses, hymns and poetry reproduced in newspapers during the celebrations of the centennial of Independence in 1921. This reveals:

- a. The language political leaders of each country used.
- b. The main national symbols invoked in each discourse (heroes or specific events).
- c. The basic content in these discourses, for example the way in which these discourses characterize the nation in ethnic, gender, social and political terms.
- d. The contradictions present in them.
- e. The degree in which the first discourses changed or varied over time.



A close look at the discourses makes possible a comparison of the development of the national identity discourses in each country, and the region as a whole. The analysis of these discourses is a useful way to approach the formation of the public sphere because it solves the problem of positionality, “the ‘knowledge’ is never neutral, or objective, but a matter of the place from which one speaks, to whom, and for what purposes.”<sup>59</sup> Secondly, it is helpful to question texts and test verifiability and repeatability. It is also helpful to treat politics as creations of democratic publics, and permits one to see people involved in political practices as symbols by those who observe them since they stand for “ideologies, values, or moral stances and they become role models, benchmarks, or symbols of threat and evil.”<sup>60</sup>

The focus of this study is the public sphere and national identity construction in Central America. For that purpose, Chapter 1 examines the long dream of the Federation to explain contradictions in the construction of national identity in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua in the early 1920s. Through this chapter, the celebration of the Centennial of Central American Independence helps us to understand the conformation of the public sphere and the transformation of the understanding of politics.

Chapter 2 provides an example of the way in which workers and women used the public sphere during the Centennial and took advantage of the institutionalized

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<sup>59</sup> Chris Barker and Dariusz Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity* (London-New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 22.

<sup>60</sup> Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 2.

space provided by governments in Central America to address their concerns and present their identities publicly. I show how the presentation of workers' identity and concerns in the public sphere, in the context of the Centennial, promoted the integration of their demands into the institutionalized sphere, and into the Federal Constitution of Central America (1921). The negotiation of identities in the private sphere are not in the scope of this study.

Chapters 3-7 concentrate on the celebrations in individual countries. The official celebrations are examined to understand the role of the official celebrations of the Centennial of the Independence of Central America held in Guatemala City through September 1921. Chapter 4-7 focuses on the individual contexts in which the governments of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras celebrate the Centennial and suggests the importance of popular versus scholarly centered celebrations. I highlight differences in all countries and explain, depending on the national rhetoric, how some groups are privileged over others. Especially significant is the invisibility of large indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities. The only "minorities" considered were Palestinians and Syrians in Honduras, and Chinese in all the countries because of their impact on the economy. These chapters confirm the complexity of national identity because in the northern triangle officials and intellectuals promoted a two-fold identity, a national identity, and a Central American identity, while those in Nicaragua and Costa Rica emphasized nationalism.

Chapter 8 addresses issues of unionism and citizenship to show changes in the public sphere and the political culture in Central America and the increasing

participation of interest groups differentiated by class, gender, age, and ethnicity. I make an analysis of the Federal Constitution of 1921 and each country's individual constitutions to understand the construction of national identity in this institutionalized space. I argue that the political openness witnessed in late 1910s and early 1920s provided the opportunity for citizens to create certain democratic procedures.

Finally, a short epilogue demonstrates how in the end, after years of conflicts and repression, workers demands found their way into each country's laws and constitutions. In the appendices section some of the hymns, poems and prayers written during the period were transcribed.

## Chapter 1. Central America and the Dream of United Provinces of Central America on the Eve of the Centennial of Independence

To understand the historical processes taking place in Central America it is necessary to pay attention to nation-specific political developments. Each of the five countries was living through local and international political events that determined local celebration of the Centennial. For unionist ideology this was a moment to demand commitment to Francisco Morazán's (1792-1842) ideal of the "Patria Grande," that is the five Central American countries united in one big nation. Even though unionists gave highest priority to end the economic and political intervention of the U.S. and dictatorships in the area, they also demanded freedom of expression and association, and political participation for citizens. Unionists believed that the promotion of popular participation in politics would reinforce democracy. To end old political practices and culture, unionists favored the organization of a regional government where local politics and the army had to be accountable to a supranational entity. Many opposed the idea, some because of limitations on the power of individual states or the army, and others because of racist concerns due to the perceived negative consequences that the inclusion of the high percentage of indigenous population and Afro-Caribbean descendents would mean in political and economic terms. In sum, unionists wanted to transform the public space into a dialogical and interactive space and in doing so to establish their identities.

This chapter is divided into six sections. It opens with a study of the role of the celebration of the Centennial of Central American Independence as a space for

popular participation and the transformation of the understanding of politics. Then, I review efforts to organize the United Provinces of Central America to understand why the Federation was such a significant issue in Central American history. Third, the Pact of San José, which led to the celebration of the Centennial as a regional activity, and the opposition encountered in Costa Rica, is discussed. This chapter focuses on the specific developments of each country in Central America. This includes Costa Rica at war with Panama, the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, the role of politics and economic intervention in Honduras, and the development of new spaces for subalterns in El Salvador.

## The Celebration of the Centennial

The celebrations of the Centennial of Central American Independence in September of 1921 made possible social and political mobilization. It introduced democratic use of public space, planted the seed for the creation of a political society,<sup>61</sup> and showed that democratization was impossible without popular participation. It was a democratic use of the public space because although there was hierarchy in the participation in official activities, many representatives of interest groups participated in them and diverse social actors could organize parallel activities. For example, in Guatemala it was the first time in decades that there was

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<sup>61</sup> Avritzer defines political society as a product of democracy. Democracy is understood as a form of political competition among groups and state administration. Avritzer differentiates it from political public space: a form of societal organization that involves demands for accountability, respect of rights and democratic practices at the local level, and the expansion of political rights. Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 6.

freedom of expression and workers were able to organize a Central American conference to address their concerns.

Employers, workers, students, and women participated officially in the Centennial through the organization of specific activities such as intellectual or artistic competitions, and the organization of conferences. Different agents organized conferences in Guatemala to celebrate the Centennial. For example, the Chamber of Commerce of Guatemala invited all Central American chambers to a conference where they discussed trade issues. The Central American Workers Conference provided opportunities for workers to discuss their concerns and demand institutionalization of their rights. Other examples are the Unionist advocates meeting, the Panamerican Student Conference and the Freemasons Conference. The celebrations opened a brief space for popular participation and helped to transform the understanding of politics.

The Centennial addressed sociopolitical tensions, such as the role of the army and the government, both local and national, nationhood, and especially the unique relation between the state and the Church after almost fifty years of liberal governments and reforms. In Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica, instead of competing for citizens' loyalties with the Church, these countries included religious activities in the program. Therefore, people from most walks of life participated in a celebration that like a pendulum swayed from religious to secular, intertwining and making even more complex the creation or consolidation of national identity.

Independence Day celebrations are important because, as argued by William Beezley and David Lorey, they were key elements in the formulation of abstract values through public ritual and national icons;<sup>62</sup> commemorations were more than just concrete symbolic formulations. Purposes of celebrations include the renovation of bonds with the motherland, the theatrical representation of the nation, power, and society, and of course, public entertainment. The Centennial renewed nationhood when it reproduced foundational rites, constructed new buildings, renovated parks, erected statues and showed that in the first decades of the twentieth century the public space was the center of sociopolitical life in Central America.

As defined by Benedict Anderson, “late official nationalism” involves those nationalisms, which by the late twentieth century were married to states.<sup>63</sup> By doing so, nation-states exploited elements of existing models of popular nationalisms for their benefit. The commemoration agglutinated and took advantage of traditional means by which communities celebrated local activities and raised funds for infrastructure, charity, or the Church. The same can be said when governments and intellectuals raised popular heroes to national stardom and reconstructed them as

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<sup>62</sup> William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey, *Viva Mexico! Viva la Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2001), xiii.

<sup>63</sup> Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons. Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 2000), 47. Anderson explains that the term “official nationalism” was coined by Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London: Methuen, 1977). Adapted by Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

heroes and martyrs of the nation. This is the case of Atlacatl and Barrios (El Salvador),<sup>64</sup> José Dolores Estrada (Nicaragua) and Juan Santamaría (Costa Rica).<sup>65</sup>

## The United Provinces of Central America

Central Americans knew that one of the characteristics of Costa Rica was disinterest over any idea related to the Central American Federation. Many Costa Rican politicians argued that the Morazanist ideal already had been proven wrong; thus neutrality, localism and regional ethnicity were stressed in discussions against unionism led by three times president Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1910-1914, 1924-1928, 1932-1936). On the other hand, all of the other living former presidents and a group linked with the local newspaper *La Prensa*, supported unionist efforts, and believed that the only way to defend Central America from foreign interests, interventionism, and political upheaval was through the union.

Several attempts were made to organize Central America in a Federation, some of them of lesser advantage than others. This chapter addresses only three of them. The first effort was immediately after Independence from 1823 to 1838, when the region organized itself as the “Provincias Unidas de Centro América” (United

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<sup>64</sup> For the study of heroes in El Salvador see, López Bernal, “El proyecto liberal de la nación en El Salvador: 1876-1932”.

<sup>65</sup> Patricia Fumero, “La celebración del santo de la patria: la develización de la estatua al héroe nacional costarricense, Juan Santamaría, el 15 de setiembre de 1891,” in *Fin de Siglo XIX e identidad Nacional*, ed. Francisco J. Enríquez Solano and Iván Molina Jiménez (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 402-36. Patricia Fumero, “De la iniciativa individual a la cultura oficial: el caso del General José Dolores Estrada en la Nicaragua de la década de 1870,” in *Nicaragua en busca de su identidad*, ed. Frances Kinloch (Managua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua, 1995), 13-41.



Provinces of Central America ).<sup>66</sup> Francisco Morazán (1792-1842) was president of the United Provinces of Central America (1830-1838), and after its collapse in 1838 he tried to restructure it. In 1842, Morazán took over the government of Costa Rica, where he received little local support. Costa Ricans captured and executed Morazán in the main park of the capital city, San José on Independence Day, September 15, 1842.<sup>67</sup>

Guatemalan president Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-1885) promoted the second effort to reorganize the Federation, but opposition led to war with El Salvador where he died. A decade after Barrios' attempt two deep changes in the region affected the union revival: the increasing influence of the U.S. in internal affairs, especially because of canal interests, and the emphasis upon peace as a prerequisite to confederation.<sup>68</sup> After these attempts, diverse Central American countries proposed new, yet ineffectual ways to confederate. For example in 1892, El Salvador called the Diet of Central America without Costa Rica. Boundary problems and cross-border politics made it impossible for governments to agree.

Political changes in the region promoted new ways to organize the region. Efforts had in common the need to organize a regional government and diplomatic representation, the reorganization of the economy and commerce, and overall to seek social and regional improvement. After thirty years of conservative governments in

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<sup>66</sup> See Rafael Obregón Loría, *Costa Rica en la independencia y la Federación* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1977).

<sup>67</sup> Notwithstanding the animadversion to Morazán, Costa Rica named one of the most important parks in San José after him in 1887, only 45 years later. *La República* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 22, 1887), 3. *La República* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 30, 1887), 2.

<sup>68</sup> The classic book to study the Central American Federation is Karnes, *The Failure of Union. Central America 1824-1975*. This paragraph and the next two are inspired in Karnes.

Nicaragua, liberal José Santos Zelaya (1893-1909) took office. Zelaya promoted new unionist efforts. He called for a presidential conference in Gulf of Fonseca at the port of Amapala, Honduras in 1895.

Unionist Honduran President Policarpo Bonilla (1893-1903), Salvadoran President Rafael Antonio Gutiérrez (1894-189), and Zelaya attended the conference in Amapala. They approved seventeen articles and created the “República Mayor” (Greater Republic of Central America).<sup>69</sup> Obviously, members of the new republic invited Guatemala and Costa Rica to adhere,<sup>70</sup> and the first meeting was scheduled for September 15, 1896. Costa Rica recognized the “República Mayor.” A year later, Costa Rica and Guatemala participated in a meeting held in Guatemala City. These two countries had concerns related to the Greater Republic and boundary issues to discuss. Costa Rica has a long dispute over the northern border and the use of the San Juan River. Costa Rica and Guatemala did not adhere, even though public debates in newspapers in Costa Rica show that there was support to join the initiative. Frictions between countries in the region did not prevent a meeting of members of the “República Mayor” in Managua in 1898 to create a constitution. Delegates changed the name from “República Mayor” to “Estados Unidos de Centro América.”<sup>71</sup> This effort ended when the Salvadoran General, Tomás Regalado (1898-1903) took over the government and separated El Salvador from the initiative.

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<sup>69</sup> Art. 1. “Tratado de union celebrado entre las repúblicas de El Salvador, Honduras y Nicaragua. República Mayor de Centro-América (20 de junio de 1895),” in Alberto Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana* (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1957), 145.

<sup>70</sup> Art. 15. “Tratado de unión celebrado entre las repúblicas de El Salvador, Honduras y Nicaragua,” *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>71</sup> “Constitución Política para los Estados Unidos de Centro-América,” *Ibid.*, 148-75.

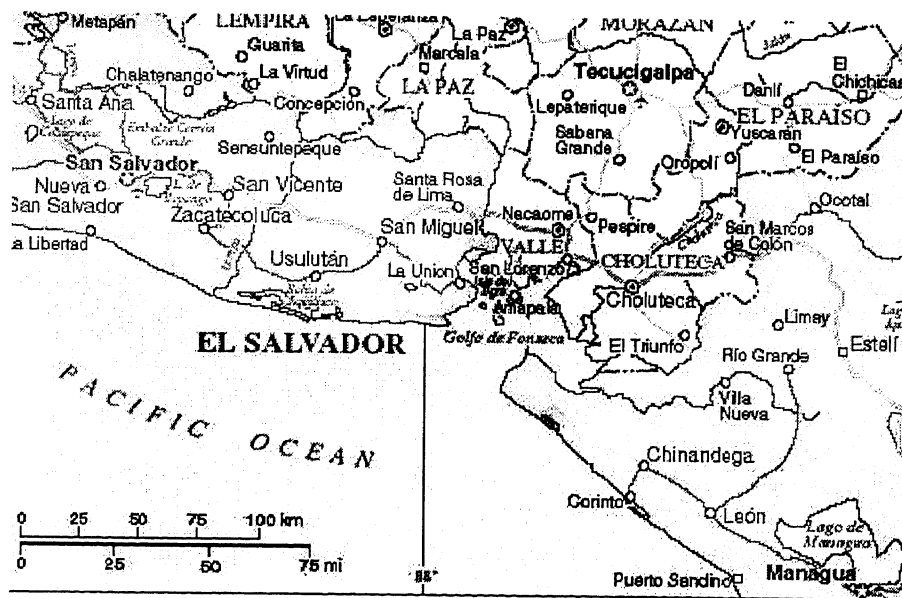
To seek peace in the region, Nicaraguan president José Santos Zelaya initiated in 1902, another unionist attempt by calling for a presidential meeting in the port of Corinto to settle international disputes in the area. Guatemalan president, Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), rival in power to Zelaya, did not appear.

The purpose of the meeting in Corinto was to sign a treaty in which all five countries would erase past differences and proclaim the principle of obligatory arbitration as regional presidents and delegates discussed it earlier in the late 1880s and during the 1890s regional conferences. In addition, the treaty of Corinto proposed the creation of a Tribunal of Central American Arbitration to commence duties on September 15, 1902.<sup>72</sup> All five countries endorsed it, even though Guatemala never signed it. Next year, they signed a less ambitious pact ratifying the Corinto Pact at El Salvador. It called for nonintervention in the internal affairs of the other states and demanded compulsory arbitration. This time, Guatemala did sign the treaty but Costa Rica did not. These agreements, and another ratified in 1904, which included four more articles with friendly intentions, did not ensure peace in the area. Continuous interference within each country's politics made diplomatic relations volatile and agreements useless.

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<sup>72</sup> It commenced to work on October 2, 1902. Jurists nominated were, as first president, Salvador Gallegos (El Salvador), Octavio Beeche (Costa Rica), José Leonard (Honduras), Julián Irías (Nicaragua). Karnes, *The Failure of Union. Central America 1824-1975*, 184.

Map 2  
Gulf of Fonseca



Source: United Nations, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/honduras.pdf>

The U.S. government planned another conference in an attempt to bring peace and end disputes between Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Governments held the meeting in San José on September 15, 1906, and it lasted for ten days. Nicaragua backed out because Zelaya saw no need for U.S. interference and thought that the Pact of Corinto, three times ratified, was adequate. At San José, four countries endorsed the Pact of Corinto and re-established the Tribunal of Central American Arbitration. At this point, it had not reviewed any case.

Relations between countries in the isthmus were troublesome caused by foreign interference in domestic affairs. By the end of the nineteenth century the practice of dissident political forces in one country organizing in a neighboring country and threatening to return or actually doing so was a fairly steady custom or

pattern. Such interference was the main cause of difficulties between Honduras and Nicaragua; consequently, the pact was broken in 1907. Months later, the U.S. and Mexico called for a Central American Peace Conference held in Washington D.C. This conference led to a peace and amity treaty. The outcomes were as follows: first, it had a ten-year term. Second, arbitration was compulsory. For that purpose, the Central American Court of Justice was inaugurated on May 1908 in Cartago, Costa Rica. Third, states had to take care of political refugees that could jeopardize peace in bordering states. Fourth, each country had to patrol its borders, and fifth those governments that achieved office by revolution would not receive recognition.<sup>73</sup>

The Tobar Doctrine was also included as a clause in the “Tratado de Paz y Amistad” of December 1907, signed in Washington D.C. The U.S. served as informal guarantor, a privilege that opened a period of primarily diplomatic interventionism in Central America.<sup>74</sup> In addition, this conference created the International Central American Bureau installed in Guatemala on September 15, 1908,<sup>75</sup> and the Central

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<sup>73</sup> Oficial, *Conferencia de paz centroamericana, Washington, D.C. 1907* (Guatemala: Publicación de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Guatemala, Tipografía Nacional, 1913). The Conference was held from November 14 to December 20, 1907. Karnes, *The Failure of Union. Central America 1824-1975*, 186-90.

<sup>74</sup> Charles L. Stansifer, "La aplicación de la doctrina Tobar a Centroamérica," *Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano* 32 (1977): 45-57.

<sup>75</sup> The objectives of the “Oficina Internacional Centroamericana were: 1. Concurrir con todos sus esfuerzos a la reorganización pacífica de la Patria Centroamericana. 2. Imprimir en la enseñanza popular un carácter esencialmente centroamericano, en sentido uniforme, haciéndola lo más amplia, práctica y completa posible, y de acuerdo con la tendencia pedagógica moderna. 3. El desarrollo del comercio centroamericano y de cuanto tienda a hacerlo más activo y provechoso, lo mismo que a extenderlo en sus relaciones con las demás naciones. 4. El incremento de la agricultura y de las industrias que puedan desarrollarse con provecho en sus diversas secciones. 5. La uniformidad de la legislación civil, comercial y penal, debiendo reconocer, como principal fundamento, la inviolabilidad de la vida, el respeto a la propiedad y la consagración más absoluta de los derechos de la personalidad humana; la del sistema de aduanas; la del sistema monetario, de modo que asegure un tipo de cambio fijo; la sanidad general y especialmente la de los puertos centroamericanos; el afianzamiento del crédito de Centro América; la uniformidad del sistema de pesas y medidas, y la constitución de la

American Pedagogical Institute in San José. The purpose of the Pedagogical Institute was to promote higher educational standards in the area, but did not open.<sup>76</sup>

The ideal of union was the basis for the discussions for these treaties. Central American delegates insisted on the need to strengthen commerce, communications, and economy, and to achieve the unified codification of customs and laws. Moreover, peace and confederation became intertwined including a prerequisite to create a legitimate political system. It also meant that similar political stability was required and a compromise of non-aggression between countries had to be honored to organize the union.

### The Pact of San José, December 1920 - January 1921

Central America had a long history of pacts and agreements. However, no agreements signed and discussed by Central American governments inhibited governments from interfering in each other's issues. Sociopolitical and economic changes in each country made governments aware of the importance of international relations within Central America. For example, land tenure and transportation of commodities were affected by unsolved political problems. In addition to the problems among El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua caused by U.S. interference in the Gulf of Fonseca, and tension between Costa Rica and Nicaragua due to U.S.

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propiedad raíz, de tal manera firme e indiscutible que pueda servir de base sólida al crédito y permitir el establecimiento de bancos hipotecarios. "Conferencia de la Paz Centroamericana." "Convención para el establecimiento de una Oficina Internacional Centroamericana" in: Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 202.

<sup>76</sup> The final document is the "Conferencia de la Paz Centroamericana." "Convención para el establecimiento de un Instituto Pedagógico Centroamericano," Ibid., 203-05.

“interests” in the San Juan River, which prevented Costa Rica’s free use of that bordering river, all consequences of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty.

To address socio-political dissatisfaction and the accumulation of unsolved historical disagreements, Central American governments called for a new conference in an effort to organize a treaty that could lead to a political and economic union. International tensions had escalated when the U.S., chief sponsor of the Washington Peace Conference of 1907, refused to honor its obligations. In addition, failure by the U.S. and Nicaragua to accept the Central American Court’s decision regarding the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1916, which granted rights of transit across Nicaragua to the U.S., and permitted a U.S. military base in the Gulf of Fonseca, halted the Court. If the proposal was not accepted, at least the meeting would help tighten links and renovate regional affections.<sup>77</sup> Every country sent representatives; and it was a big surprise for unionists, when Costa Rica and Nicaragua were convinced to participate. They held the Central American Conference at the “Casa Amarilla,” the Foreign Affairs Ministry building, and former site of the Central American Court of Justice in San José, Costa Rica on December 1, 1920.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 19, 1920), 2.

<sup>78</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 23, 1920), 2. The “Casa Amarilla” was the site of the Central American Court of Justice and Andrew Carnegie donated the building. The building was also known as the American Peace Palace. The Court was inaugurated on May 25, 1908 and closed on March 12, 1918. The original site was Cartago, Costa Rica, but after the 1910 earthquake, the court was moved to San José. See Manuel Castro Ramírez, *Cinco años en la Corte de Justicia Centroamericana: (exposición a los poderes públicos de El Salvador y a Centro América en general)* (San José, C.R.: Imprenta Lehmann, 1918). Carlos José Gutiérrez Gutiérrez, *La Corte de Justicia Centroamericana, Biblioteca del pensamiento centroamericano (Organización de Estados Centroamericanos)*. (San Salvador, El Salvador: Secretaría General ODECA, 1957). Juan Anchisi Caceres, “La Corte de Justicia Centroamericana” (Licenciatura, Universidad de San Carlos, Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales, 1951). Karnes, *The Failure of Union. Central America 1824-1975*, 190-203.

Notwithstanding a significant group of intellectuals and politicians, who believed in the need for regional reorganization, and related economic and political benefits of the union, Costa Ricans had long been skeptical of the union. On the inauguration day of the conference, politicians, intellectuals, and workers gave lectures related to the benefits of union at the Trébol theatre. Salvadoran intellectual, unionist, and anti-imperialist, Alberto Masferrer (1868-1932) shared front stage with Costa Rican intellectual, politician and educator, Alejandro Aguilar Machado, former Costa Rican President Rafael Yglesias Castro (1894-1902), and workers' leaders. In addition, a group of young unionist intellectuals gave lectures in other cities to promote unionist ideals.<sup>79</sup> The unionist newspaper *La Prensa* daily printed reports of the discussions and other information related to the Union from the region. The newspaper *La Tribuna* opposed it, so confrontation and dissent were common, therefore promoting participatory publics.

The International Central American Bureau prepared the program for the Conference.<sup>80</sup> Conference sessions were private, but journalists and unionists argued the need to participate in them. Unionists thought that the public had the right to know what issues were discussed on a daily basis, because they affected every Central American citizen.<sup>81</sup> Unionists thought that citizens should be active participants in the discussion, even though they could not be physically present. Unionists stressed the need to educate citizens on all aspects concerning the

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<sup>79</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Dec. 04, 1920), 3.

<sup>80</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 27, 1920), 3.

<sup>81</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 27, 1920), 2.



possibility of a commercial and political reorganization of Central America. Therefore, with the exception of Nicaragua, every country sent representatives to cover the conference to form public opinion. Even though a Nicaraguan journalist was lacking during the conference, newspapers published news sent by international agencies and cable reports. Unionists encouraged alternative political practices and the expansion of the public sphere.

Table 1 shows journalists sent for the Conferences and the periodicals they represented. Costa Rican newspapers are not included because every local newspaper reported about the conference in a daily basis. Román Mayorga Rivas of the Associated Press was the only confirmed representative from outside Central America.

Table 1  
Central American Journalists  
Conference of San José  
San José, December 1920

Country/City	Name of Periodical	Type of Periodical	Representative
El Salvador	<i>Diario del Salvador</i>	newspaper	Román Mayorga Rivas
El Salvador	<i>La Patria</i>	newspaper	n/d
Guatemala	<i>El Unionista</i>	newspaper	Carlos Salazar Herrera*
Honduras	<i>Sucesos</i>	journal	Rafael Alduvin L.
Tegucigalpa	<i>La Regeneración</i>	newspaper	Coronado García
Tegucigalpa	<i>Renacimiento</i>	journal	Alejandro Aguilar Machado**
United States	Associated Press	media	Román Mayorga Rivas

N/d No data

\* Intellectual, writer, Costa Rican.

\*\* Intellectual, unionist, Costa Rican.

Source: *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) Nov. 23, 1920, 2. *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) Dec. 02, 1920, 1.

Each delegate and country had its own political agendas. Honduran delegate, Mariano Vázquez, openly manifested his enthusiasm in an interview, “here we do not come to discuss the Union, we came to make it [form a union] for the glory of Central America.”<sup>82</sup> Those words, added to the coverage made by the media, promoted the reaction of some former presidents of Costa Rica. Francisco Aguilar Barquero (1919-1920) argued that Costa Rica could not endorse the union because of the differentiated economic, social, and politic development among Central American countries. Aguilar Barquero stressed the lack of infrastructure and education as well as disparities in law and its enforcement in the region.<sup>83</sup> The poll made by the newspaper *La Patria* showed that the following Costa Rican presidents supported the idea of a union: Bernardo Soto (1885-1886, 1886-1890), Rafael Yglesias (1894-1898, 1898-1902), Ascensión Esquivel (1902-1906), Cleto González Víquez (1906-1910, 1928-1932), Alfredo González Flores (1914-1917), and Julio Acosta García (1920-1924). Former president, Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno did not support the union and said, “the Union is like forming a bank with five bankrupt [members].”<sup>84</sup>

Jiménez Oreamuno was well known for his anti-unionist feelings based upon differentiated socioeconomic development. He argued that one of the key differences between Costa Rica and the other four countries was its ethnic composition. Jiménez Oreamuno represented a generation of intellectuals who considered Costa Rica as ethnically homogeneous, and that its “whiteness” was one of its best assets. For that

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<sup>82</sup>“...aquí no venimos a discutir la Unión sino a hacerla para la gloria de Centroamérica.” *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 29, 1920), 4.

<sup>83</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Dec. 03, 1920), 2.

<sup>84</sup> “la unión es como asociar en banca a cinco quebrados.” *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Dec. 03, 1920), 2.

reason, newspapers and unionist intellectuals discussed his declaration and received passionate reactions from unionist supporters. Following his convictions, Jiménez Oreamuno promoted and participated in an anti-unionist and anti-conference rally that commenced with public speeches at the “Circo Teatro,” San José.<sup>85</sup> From the theatre, opponents went to the streets, marched and stopped in different city corners to give speeches. One of the intellectuals and educators who gave a public speech was Pedro Pérez Zeledón. The newspaper *La Prensa* did not provide detailed information.<sup>86</sup> This is the only known anti-unionist demonstration at the time of the conference.

In the news accounts there is much information related to popular support for unionism in Costa Rica from the worker sector,<sup>87</sup> some female associations and from university students, especially from the Law School at San José.<sup>88</sup> Central American workers also manifested their support for the conferences and unionist ideals.<sup>89</sup> The use of the public space by different social actors’ to address their differences and concerns was more common each day.

Women’s roles had changed in the early twentieth century and the media highlighted them, helping to transform women’s roles. Unionist periodicals especially emphasized the increasing role of women in the public sphere. In each of the five countries, women organized unionist committees and worked intensely side by side with men. In Costa Rica, women (“señoras y señoritas”) organized a committee in late 1920 to demonstrate their interest and support of the restoration of the Federation,

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<sup>85</sup> Site: 9th Avenue, 5th Street, San José, Costa Rica.

<sup>86</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Dec. 11, 1920), 1.

<sup>87</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 26, 1920), 5.

<sup>88</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 23, 1920), 2.

<sup>89</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 27, 1920), 3.

and some of the unionist committees created in 1917 resumed their activity fueled by the Conference of San José.<sup>90</sup> A letter that delegates in San José received from the female unionist committee of Ahuachapán, a rural town in the northern border of El Salvador, is an example of the coverage and interest that discussions awakened in the region. In this letter, these women discussed the meaning of the union and manifested their support and the need to sign the Pact of San José.<sup>91</sup> Active female participation shows how the public sphere was broadening to include other voices.

One of the arguments used by unionists to support the federation was the political power and better capability to negotiate that Central America could achieve, especially when it dealt with U.S. companies, such as the banana and oil industries. Unionists also thought that economic development and socio-political progress could only be accomplished as a region, especially if military interference could be eliminated. The rhetoric that stressed sociopolitical change in the isthmus aroused support from different social actors, from workers and intellectuals to women and politicians. For that reason, the ideal of the union awakened passions, divisions, and interests not known before.

The Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was another issue discussed in the conference at San José. The interest in this discussion explains why Costa Rica supported this particular unionist effort. President Julio Acosta supported the effort because it could lead to recognition of Costa Rica's rights over the river San Juan in dispute because of the treaty. Acosta's strategy could be as follows, if Central Americans could

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<sup>90</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 23, 1920), 2.

<sup>91</sup> *La Prensa* Costa Rica, (Dec. 02, 1920), 2.

organize a federation, the new Federal government could lead to an understanding with the U.S., and a new round of negotiations related to the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty could begin.<sup>92</sup> Government officials used this argument to encourage the Congress to support the Federation but the minority report and Jiménez Oreamuno's influence were stronger. As Salisbury concludes "the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was also a major stumbling block, for the United States, according to Jiménez [Oreamuno], would never allow the treaty to be changed in any way that would be prejudicial to its own national interests; thus, any Central American effort to change the treaty would encounter severe resistance in Washington."<sup>93</sup>

The Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was a delicate issue in every country in Central America, with the obvious exception of Nicaragua, who was against it. Nicaragua's interest and defense of the agreement weakened the conference. Efforts ended when the Nicaraguan delegate left the meeting without signing the Pact of San José and went back to consult his government and the U.S. Department of State. Months later, the Congress of Costa Rican did not endorse the agreement and did not send official delegates to the Federal Council meeting to be held at Tegucigalpa. This decision created some animosity against Costa Rica in the region. As Costa Rica stepped back, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador started to plan the Federation. These three

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<sup>92</sup> *La Gaceta Oficial*, Costa Rica (June 2, 1921).

<sup>93</sup> Richard V. Salisbury, "Costa Rica and the 1920-1921 Union Movement," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 19, no. 3 (1977): 393-417. *La Tribuna*, Costa Rica (June 9, 1922).

countries left the question of the organization of the Federation to the Federal Council meeting in Tegucigalpa (June-September, 1921).<sup>94</sup>

## International Turmoil: Costa Rica at War

Political turmoil in the region made diplomatic relations even more difficult and problems were not only within the five Central American countries. Costa Rica had a long dispute with Panama over the delimitation of its southern border. Two arbitrations had been made, one in 1900 by French President Emile Loubet, and the second in 1914 by the U.S. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Edward D. White. In addition, in 1910, authorities signed the “Anderson-Porras” convention to try to agree on the location of the border.<sup>95</sup> Only two months after the Pact of San José, on February 20, 1921 Costa Rican President Julio Acosta addressed the nation to explain that an invasion from Panama had started on the southwest border, in the region of Coto, and to communicate to citizens and the international community that the invasion threatened national sovereignty.<sup>96</sup> The “war” started with a brief invasion of

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<sup>94</sup> El Salvador and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Libro Rosado* (San Salvador: Imprenta Nacional, 1921), 102-13.

<sup>95</sup> Luis Anderson, *El laudo Loubet; contribución al estudio de la cuestión de límites entre Costa Rica y Panamá* (San José: Tipografía de Avelino Alsina, 1911). Costa Rica and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Documentos relativos á la controversia de límites con la República de Panamá* (San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1909). Edward Douglas White, Costa Rica, and Panama, *Fallo Arbitral del Chief Justice de los Estados Unidos de América en la controversia de límites de las repúblicas de Costa Rica y Panamá* (San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1914).

<sup>96</sup> Artículo 1. Declárase atentatoria contra la soberanía de Costa Rica la ocupación por Panamá de la región al Oeste y al Norte de la línea fronteriza entre ambas repúblicas, según fue estatuida por el Laudo Loubet de 11 de setiembre de 1900 y confirmada por el tratado Anderson-Porras del 17 de marzo de 1910 y el Laudo White del 12 de setiembre de 1914. Artículo 2. En lo sucesivo dicho territorio queda bajo el mando de las autoridades civiles y militares de la República.” *Diario de Costa Rica* (March 01, 1921), 1. See Luis Fernando Sibaja Chacón, *El conflicto bélico de 1921 entre Costa Rica y Panamá* (San José: Seminario de Investigaciones Centroamericanas-Universidad de Costa Rica, 1969). Available from <http://historia.fcs.ucr.ac.cr/hcostarica/materiales/guerraconpanama1921.htm>

Costa Rican soil by Panamanian forces, and ended in September 1921, although the border was not defined until 1941. On September 1921, the Costa Rican newspaper *La Patria* explained the outcome and significance of this border “war:”

“San José, Costa Rica, September 8, 1921. On the 5<sup>th</sup> a military expedition recuperated Coto without resistance. This act puts an end to the problem of limits with Panama and consecrates sovereignty over the totality of the territory. This is how Costa Rica commemorates the Centennial.”<sup>97</sup>

Why is war with Panama an issue in this discussion? It is important because the war underscored nationalism and spurred some Central American regional loyalty when Costa Rica received unconditional support from the other four countries. It also renewed the discourse of nationhood, because Costa Rica won the war and defended its sovereignty against a foreign invader. Another reason is the definition of national limits, which were essential for the creation of a new political community, as the boundary with Panama linked the Federation with the U.S. Finally, the war and the Central American support for Costa Rica motivated Panama not to participate in the official celebrations of the Centennial in Guatemala. Locally the war resulted in an excellent excuse for the government to organize a modest celebration for the Centennial in Costa Rica, a decision media did not like because they wanted a “magnificent” celebration similar to the one held in Guatemala City.

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<sup>97</sup> “San José de Costa Rica, 8 de Septiembre de 1921. El 5 expedición militar recuperó Coto, sin resistencia. Este acto termina la cuestión límites con Panamá y consagra soberanía sobre totalidad territorio. Así inicia Costa Rica conmemoración Centenario.” *La Patria*, Guatemala (Sept. 9, 1921), 2.

## Intervention in Nicaragua

In the long run the military and economic intervention of the United States in Nicaragua (1909-1932) produced a nationalistic and anti-imperialist elite and, an even more divided society. The Centennial offered the Nicaraguan government the opportunity to re-elaborate the meaning of independence and sovereignty when celebrating the Centennial on the dates of the first popular pro-independence and sovereignty movement of 1811. Study of the celebration provides the opportunity to analyze the symbolic challenge that elites made to interventionism and the fragmentation and lack of support for the government.

In his memoirs, former Nicaraguan President Emiliano Chamorro (1917-1920) emphasizes that he signed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty (1913, ratified in 1916) as an amendment to the Chamorro-Weitzel Treaty, agreed to a year earlier by Diego Manuel Chamorro as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua and the U.S. Minister, George E. Weitzel.<sup>98</sup> Chamorro explains the need for this controversial treaty as required for the economic and political survival of Nicaragua and never intended to harm the sovereignty of El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Colombia, even though years later, he agrees that it did not do Nicaragua any good.<sup>99</sup> Notwithstanding his arguments, Nicaraguan and regional reaction to the Treaty was negative. This is especially true due to the U.S. military occupation since 1912 and U.S. customs

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<sup>98</sup> See George Thomas Weitzel, *American Policy in Nicaragua: Memorandum on the Convention between the United States and Nicaragua Relative to an Inter-oceanic Canal and a Naval Station in the Gulf of Fonseca. Signed at Managua, Nicaragua, on February 8, 1913.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916). Emiliano Chamorro, *El último caudillo: autobiografía* (Managua, Nicaragua: Ediciones del Partido Conservador Demócrata, 1983), 219.

<sup>99</sup> Chamorro, *El último caudillo: autobiografía*, 219-24.



receivership. The Treaty threatened the sovereignty and autonomy of three of the five countries in the isthmus, and awakened nationalistic feelings because the treaty was perceived as a symbol of U.S. interventionism.

Nicaraguans were especially concerned over the consequences of the intervention and Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. An economic depression during 1920-1921 added to Nicaraguans' concerns. Economic instability and depression due to high import prices, low coffee production, and declines in the prices for sugar and wood provoked social upheaval. In 1920, the General Customs Administrator appointed by the U.S. Department of State in Nicaragua, Mr. Ham, presented his annual report, which argued that the intervention was beneficial for the economy because after the occupation "Nicaragua was free of revolutions, more or less, because of the friendly interest of the U.S."<sup>100</sup> Dissatisfaction with internal affairs increased Nicaraguans' dissatisfaction with the occupation.

In early August, 1921 an opposition movement was formed in northern Nicaragua, organized by a group of Liberal revolutionary nationalists who opposed the government of Diego Manuel Chamorro (1921-1923) and the U.S. political and economic intervention. This movement forced the government to recruit 4,000 men at a very high cost, not only because of their wages and because of maintenance, but as Nicaragua had been in an economic recession and could not afford a rebellion. The movement made things even more difficult as peasants could not attend their crops. Others, fleeing recruitment, hid in the mountainous regions thus producing a labor

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<sup>100</sup> *Diario de El Salvador* (Aug. 26, 1921), 2.

scarcity. In the short run, the rebel movement hurt coffee and sugar production, and foreign debt increased given that the government had to buy military equipment and supplies from the U.S.<sup>101</sup> Finally, the movement motivated the U.S. to send an extra group of marines, and consequently a battleship arrived to the port of Corinto, undermining Nicaragua's sovereignty even more.<sup>102</sup>

Although presidential arguments disqualified the revolutionary movement, the government applied state of war and martial law in the departments of Nueva Segovia, Estelí, Jinotega, Matagalpa, and Chinandega during August and September 1921.<sup>103</sup> A month later, the Nicaraguan government called for compliance of the first clause of the Amapala Pact of 1920,<sup>104</sup> and extended the state of war sixty days when rebels penetrated through Honduras.<sup>105</sup> Nicaragua blamed Honduras for providing support and diplomatic frictions started; Honduras and El Salvador had to send troops to protect their borders and seek rebel forces.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Oficial. Nicaragua, *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores* (Nicaragua: s.p.i., 1921), xi.

<sup>102</sup> Oscar-René Vargas, *Historia del siglo XX* (Managua: Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Nacional de Nicaragua y Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 2001), 164-65. *Diario de El Salvador* (Aug. 25, 1921), 1.

<sup>103</sup> *La Gaceta* (Nicaragua), (Aug. 25, 1921). *La Gaceta* (Nicaragua), (Aug. 24, 1921), 1508. *Diario de El Salvador* (Sept. 5, 1921), 1. *La Gaceta* (Nicaragua), (Sept. 8, 1921), 1512.

<sup>104</sup> The clause stated that governments should maintain peace and order in their boundaries and must watch harmful, political emigrants. Nicaragua, *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores*, 100-01.

<sup>105</sup> *La Gaceta* (Nicaragua), (Oct. 21, 1921).

<sup>106</sup> Cited in *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Aug. 27, 1921), 3.

Map 3  
Political Limits  
Nicaragua and Honduras



Source: United Nations, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/nicaragu.pdf>

The press in Central America discussed the rebel movement and defined it as nationalistic, supporting of regional sovereignty, and against U.S. intervention and the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. In Tegucigalpa, a local newspaper summoned 100,000 men to join the cause in the name of regional independence and sovereignty.<sup>107</sup> For its part, the Nicaraguan government called the movement antipatriotic and criminal.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Aug. 23, 1921), 3.

<sup>108</sup> *La Tribuna* (Managua) (Sept. 03, 1921), 3.

## Honduras and Political Interventionism

Honduras' political development was one of constant instability from the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>109</sup> A pattern of corrupt elections and foreign pressures consolidated regimes that would grant extensive concessions to foreign investors.<sup>110</sup> Pressured by the U.S., President Francisco Bertrand (1913-1919) resigned from the transitional government in the face of a new rebellion. Bertrand tried to impose his brother-in-law via the Liberal Constitutionalist Party in 1919, which resulted in a polarization of political groups and a skirmish called the "Revolution of 1919."<sup>111</sup> When the U.S. ambassador intervened and asked the President to resign, Bertrand abandoned the country, and received asylum in the U.S. The Minister of Foreign Affairs denounced the U.S. intervention to the League of Nations,<sup>112</sup> but nothing was done.

The intervention was sheltered in the Tobar Doctrine that stated that any government resultant of a *coup d'etat* or from illegal elections would not have diplomatic recognition.<sup>113</sup> In the case of Honduras in 1919, the U.S. threatened non-

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<sup>109</sup> From 1877 to 1948, the Honduran political system witnessed seventeen presidential elections, usually involving only the Liberal and the National parties, and presences 146 military engagements. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972*, 45. From 1900 to 1933, Honduras witnessed 14 different governments and 159 civil war actions. Mario Posas and Rafael del Cid, *La construcción del sector público y del Estado nacional de Honduras, 1876-1979*, 2a ed., *Colección Rueda del Tiempo* (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1983), 51.

<sup>110</sup> Arturo Taracena Arriola, "Liberalismo y poder Político en Centroamérica," in *Historia General de Centroamérica*, ed. Víctor Hugo Acuña (San José: FLACSO, 1994), 211.

<sup>111</sup> Posas and Cid, *La construcción del sector público y del Estado nacional de Honduras, 1876-1979*, 53.

<sup>112</sup> "Documentos que acusan la intervención de un Ministro Extranjero en la vida política de Honduras," in: *Revista de la Academia Hondureña de Geografía e Historia* (Tegucigalpa), Vol. LVI, No. 2 (October-December, 1972), 58.

<sup>113</sup> The doctrine was designed by Ecuadorian Carlos Tobar. Art. I. "Los gobiernos de las Altas Partes Contratantes no reconocerán a ninguno que surja en cualquiera de las cinco Repúblicas por

recognition, offered services and support, and finally warned of possible military intervention.<sup>114</sup> Consequently, the U.S. sent a gunboat to the port of Amapala, and left it there after elections, just in case. The course of action led to anarchy. General Rafael López Gutiérrez (1919-1924) took office and “marked a turning point in the relationships between militarist politics, Honduran society, and the state.”<sup>115</sup> López Gutiérrez’s term experienced an estimated 21 revolts, which gives one an idea of the political turmoil.<sup>116</sup>

Honduras’s attempts to be part of a modern capitalist society was different from the rest of Central America. The U.S. dominated the Honduran economy since the late nineteenth century because of the scarcity of local capital and Honduran governments attracted foreign investment through a generous concessionary policy. The government’s objective was to promote development through the creation of infrastructure projects linked to concessions. Honduras had modest resources therefore state building commenced with the support of foreign investment, creating dependency on U.S. investors that gave them significant power. This situation undermined Honduran sovereignty.

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consecuencia de un golpe de estado o de una revolución contra un Gobierno reconocido, mientras la representación del pueblo, libremente electa, no haya reorganizado el país en forma constitucional. Art. II Ningún Gobierno de Centro América podrá en caso de guerra civil, intervenir a favor o en contra del Gobierno del país donde la contienda tuviere lugar. Art. III. Se recomienda a los Gobiernos de Centro América, procurar por los medios que estén a su alcance, en primer término la reforma constitucional en el sentido de prohibir la reelección del Presidente de la República, donde tal prohibición no exista, y en segundo la adopción de todas las disposiciones necesarias para rodear de completa garantía el principio de alternabilidad en el poder.” “Convención adicional al tratado general,” *Tratado de Paz y Amistad celebrado en Washington por los delegados de las cinco Repúblicas de Centro América el 20 de diciembre de 1907*. Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 190.

<sup>114</sup> Marvin Barahona, *La hegemonía de los Estados Unidos en Honduras, 1907-1932*, 1a ed. (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 1989), 150.

<sup>115</sup> Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972*, 48.

<sup>116</sup> Taracena Arriola, "Liberalismo y poder Político en Centroamérica," 235.

Foreign investment in Honduras was in two different areas, bananas, and mining. Banana production reduced the possibility for other economic sectors to expand, and limited development to the context of the enclave.<sup>117</sup> The influence of U.S. capital was such that Marvin Barahona argues, “North American hegemony evolved with time toward a type of domination, but this domination was permitted, accepted, even used by Honduran political elites.”<sup>118</sup> Consequently, the elites did not have large amounts of land, nor did they have leverage with the state,<sup>119</sup> and had a weak commercial status. This characteristic differentiated them from the coffee elites of Guatemala and El Salvador. Class antagonism is another difference between Nicaragua and Honduras, because in Honduras the center of dissatisfaction was the economy and the distribution of income rather than political issues.

To comprehend the formation of the public sphere and sociopolitical development in Central America, economic performance needs to be explained to set the context to understand the shift from European to U.S. investments and its political omnipresence in the region. A close look at the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) helps understand Central America’s astonishing economic performance in the 1920s. Central America’s GDP rose at a yearly average of 3 percent from 1920 to 1924, and 4.3 percent the following five years.<sup>120</sup> Banana exports in Honduras increased tenfold after World War I, and by the mid 1920s, banana companies were cultivating over

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<sup>117</sup> Vilma Láinez and Víctor Meza, “El enclave bananero en la historia de Honduras,” *Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos* 5, no. Mayo-Agosto (1973): 154.

<sup>118</sup> Barahona, *La hegemonía de los Estados Unidos en Honduras, 1907-1932*, xiii.

<sup>119</sup> See Darío Euraque, “La ‘reforma liberal’ en Honduras y la hipótesis de la ‘oligarquía ausente’: 1870-1930,” *Revista de Historia* 23, no. Enero-Junio (1991): 9-11.

<sup>120</sup> Víctor Bulmer-Thomas, “Economic Development over the Long Run -Central America since 1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 15, no. 2 (1983): 273.

100,000 acres with 22,000 workers. Table 2 shows some of the land concessions given to the banana companies in Costa Rica and Honduras “with the pretext of the development of agriculture.”<sup>121</sup>

Table 2  
Concessions to UFCo and Cuyamel Fruit Company  
1884-1924

Country	Year	Company	Concession
Costa Rica	1884	UFCo.	800,000 acres
Honduras	1911	Cuyamel Fruit Company	10,000 hectares*
Honduras	1914	UFCo.	15,000 acres
Honduras	1924	UFCo.	400,000 acres**

Source: Torres-Rivas, Edelberto. *Interpretación del desarrollo social centroamericano; procesos y estructuras de una sociedad dependiente* (Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1971), 97, 114. Oficial. *Honduras*. Decreto No. 78 (March 04, 1912). Marvin Barahona. *La Hegemonía de los Estados Unidos en Honduras (1907-1932)* (Honduras: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 1989), 55-56.

\* Only in Puerto Tecla. They already owned 5,000 hectares.

\*\* Total acres owned by 1924.

Finally, in Nicaragua, coffee exports grew from 27 per cent of exports in 1920 to 67 percent in 1926.<sup>122</sup> The problem was that economic performance represented a huge increase in sales to the U.S., but imports from the U.S. doubled in each country, with the exception of El Salvador, where imports quadrupled from 1913 to 1929.<sup>123</sup> Table 3 shows the geographic relocation of capital in Central America after World War I made at the expense of European investment, however; redirection did not

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<sup>121</sup> *La Prensa*, Costa Rica (Aug. 17, 1921), 2.

<sup>122</sup> Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, 59-60.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

necessarily mean investment in new economic activities. U.S. investment rose from 112 million dollars in 1919 to 251 millions in 1929.<sup>124</sup>

Table 3  
U.S. Investment in Central America in U.S. Dollars  
1913, 1930

Country	1913	1930
Costa Rica	7, 000,000	32, 663,000
El Salvador	3, 000,000	34, 732,000
Guatemala	n/d*	75, 107,000
Honduras	3, 000,000	71, 730,000
Nicaragua	3, 000,000	13, 002,000

Source: Ciro F. S. Cardoso and Héctor Pérez Brignoli. *Centro América y la Economía Occidental (1920-1930)* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1977), 294.

\*n/d: No data.

Noteworthy is the size of U.S. investment in Guatemala and the growth of investment in Honduras (23.91 times), followed by El Salvador and Costa Rica. The difference in the growth of investment in Nicaragua represents the effects of intervention and customs receivership. The consolidation of the Liberal regime and an export-oriented economy and the increase in the exports to the U.S. explains the economic performance of Central America in the 1920s.

### The Salvadoran Government and Workers' Organizations

Land privatization in El Salvador had its origins in the 1880s Liberal reforms. In the beginning, privatization did not lead to land scarcity,<sup>125</sup> although it promoted a

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<sup>124</sup> Mira Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1970* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), 55. Cited by Barahona, *La hegemonía de los Estados Unidos en Honduras, 1907-1932*, 99.



process of class polarization that was at its peak in the 1920s. In the late nineteenth century, liberal reformers made some institutional changes that made possible the proliferation of small and medium size producers. Land reforms could not break with labor recruitment practices inherited from the colonial period nor did they attract laborers to the coffee fields. Coercive recruitment wore away the subsistence economy of the communities and one of its objectives was to destroy communal based organizations and class solidarity.

By the early twentieth century, coffee had changed the landscape, way of life and social structure of El Salvador. The coffee boom also promoted new ways to relate socially and politically as it transformed cities and commerce flourished. A dense indigenous and mestizo population supported the coffee boom; the problem was that no one wanted to work on the farms. In order to exercise social control and prevent any uprising, the Salvadoran government created the National Guard in 1912 and expanded dramatically thereafter. The relation between coffee planters and the state in El Salvador was one of dependency as in Guatemala.

The world axis shifted from Europe to the United States after World War I, and it is revealed in Central America through an increasing economic and political interest of the U.S. in the isthmus. In El Salvador, the government of Jorge Meléndez (1919-1923) facilitated the penetration of U.S. capital (it doubled from 1919 to 1929),<sup>126</sup> and levels of corruption became enormous. Transfer of money from the

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<sup>125</sup> Aldo Lauria-Santiago, *An Agrarian Republic: Commercial Agriculture and the Politics of Peasant Communities in El Salvador, 1823-1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 233.

<sup>126</sup> Taracena Arriola, "Liberalismo y poder Político en Centroamérica," 228.

state to private accounts grew, as did the concentration of land and wealth. In addition, an increasing urban-based middle sector grew boosted by the agro-export economy. This process led to social unrest reflected in several demonstrations repressed by the “Red League,” a political and paramilitary organization that suppressed opposition through violence and fear.<sup>127</sup>

The escalating repression against peasants and workers, and the 1921 crisis distanced many workers, intellectuals, and students from the regime. Therefore, urban middle sectors increasingly demanded political inclusion and economic participation in the 1920s.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, the influence of new ideologies such as communism and anarchism, allowed worker organizations to be more independent and autonomous from the state and promoted workers’ participation in the public sphere.

## Workers’ Participation

New “spaces” that broadened social structures and promoted national feelings opened in the early 1920s. A close look at workers’ organizations helps explain the character of domination and the construction of strategies of resistance by subordinated groups and the expansion of the public sphere in El Salvador.<sup>129</sup> This

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<sup>127</sup> For further explanation about the “Ligas Rojas” see, Ana Patricia Alvarenga Venutolo, *Cultura y ética de la violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932* (San José: EDUCA, 1996), 249-71. Also Roque Dalton, *Miguel Mármol; los sucesos de 1932 en El Salvador* (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1972).

<sup>128</sup> Taracena Arriola, “Liberalismo y poder Político en Centroamérica,” 167-253. Also Aldo Lauria-Santiago, *An Agrarian Republic: Commercial Agriculture and the Politics of Peasant Communities in El Salvador, 1823-1914*, *Pitt Latin American Series* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1999), 228-29.

<sup>129</sup> Ana Patricia Alvarenga Venutolo, “Auxiliary Forces in the Shaping of the Repressive System. El Salvador, 1880-1930,” in *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State. The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean*, ed. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1998), 122-50.

case study helps to understand the importance of workers' participation in Central America. I argue that democratic practices imply participation in the public sphere, thus the participation of citizens in a deliberation process tests their interests in a public forum,<sup>130</sup> and social organizations are a medium.<sup>131</sup>

The number of different types of workers' organizations skyrocketed in El Salvador because they were provided with freedom of association by the long lasting regime of Meléndez-Quiñónez. Consequently, the opening of spaces for different actors created social support to legitimize their regime. The family dynasty of Meléndez-Quiñónez – Carlos Meléndez (1913-1914, 1915-1918), Jorge Meléndez (1919-1923), and Alfonso Quiñónez Molina (1914-1915, 1918-1919, 1923-1927) – promoted urban labor unions but did not permit rural ones. The alliance between the workers' union and the State included the participation of workers in moralizing campaigns and in the renovation of urban space,<sup>132</sup> which led to significant popular support for the government. Meléndez had also co-opted many intellectuals. Table 4 shows the 78 civil Salvadoran organizations listed in four regional newspapers during May-October, 1921. The amount contrasts with 56 organizations found from 1880 to

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<sup>130</sup> "For a deliberative theory it is crucial that citizens (and their representatives) test their interests and reasons in a public forum before they decide. The deliberative process forces citizens to justify their decisions and opinions by appealing to common interests or by arguing in terms of reasons that 'all could accept' in public debate." Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy*, 5. For a broader explanation of the relation between deliberation and democracy see William Rehg and James Bohman, "Discourse and Democracy: The Formal and Informal bases of Legitimacy," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 4 (1996): 79-99.

<sup>131</sup> Social organizations promote beliefs, value systems and new forms of social and political behaviour. For the importance of these organizations in the socialization process cf. Maurice Agulhon, *The Republic in the Village: The People of the Var from the French Revolution to the Second Republic* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire; New York; Paris: Cambridge University Press; Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1982). Maurice Agulhon, "Clase obrera y sociabilidad antes de 1848," *Historia Social* 12 (1992): 141-66.

<sup>132</sup> Alvarenga Venutolo, *Cultura y ética de la violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932*, 226-34.

1899.<sup>133</sup> These figures explain the expansion of the participation of subaltern groups in the public sphere at El Salvador.

Table 4  
Associations  
El Salvador, 1921

Type of Association	Number	City/Town	Number
Worker	41	San Salvador	47
Literary	3	San Vicente	8
Sport	11	Santa Tecla	5
Charity	6	Santiago de María	5
Social	5	Santa Ana	5
Student	2	Sonsonate	2
Political	2	Usulután	1
Religious	2	Atiquizaya	1
Others	6	Metapán	1
		La Unión	1
		San Miguel	1
		No data	1
Total	78		78

Source: *Excelsior* (Honduras) 1921, *La Patria* (Guatemala) 1921, *Diario del Salvador*, 1921, *Diario Oficial* (El Salvador) 1921.

How can we explain the opening of the political sphere, and the development of inclusive policies? One way to see it is as an interest of the state in nation building, the need to create hegemony, the reconstruction, and disciplining of popular culture for capitalism, and the promotion of liberal ideals of progress/development and “civilization.” These interests led to a fictional political inclusion of subaltern groups. I consider it fictional because the state did not offer or make any social changes. This

<sup>133</sup> Iván Molina Jiménez, *La estela de la pluma. Cultura impresa e intelectuales en Centroamérica durante los siglos XIX y XX* (Heredia, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 2004), 118.

short political opening led to a radicalization of the Salvadoran society in the 1920s, and this process was not a peaceful one by the 1930s.

## Conclusions

Faith in the dream of the Central American union did not vanish until its overall failure in 1921. The Centennial promoted belief in this possibility supported by the compromises acquired in the Pact of San José, and the interest and involvement of workers' associations for the formation of a Central American federation.<sup>134</sup> This movement found popular support in grassroots and women's organizations, and in some political and intellectual elites. Popular support found its expression even in allegoric carriages displayed in public parades during the Centennial that represented the Central American union and unionist feeling. For example at Santa Tecla, on the 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday September 18, a carriage paraded through the city representing the union with "beautiful women on it."<sup>135</sup>

Economic development resulting from coffee exports made possible the consolidation of the state, the creation of basic infrastructure and a relative degree of political stability, but this process did not guarantee the creation of national identity. Central America had constructed its political identity through the political community created by the administrative organization of the Spanish crown. Therefore, when independence came, multiple political identities were shaped. There were

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<sup>134</sup> Estatutos de la Sociedad Unionista de Obreros "La República." *Diario Oficial* (El Salvador), July 12, 1915, 1289-1291.

<sup>135</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 20, 1921), 1; *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 23, 1921), 4.

Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, and Costa Ricans - but at the same time many felt allegiance to a town or “pueblo” or felt as members of the “Patria Grande,” as Central Americans. By arguing that multiple political identities were shaped I mean that identities were created through complex relations that were not exclusive but complementary, not created concentrically nor hierarcically.<sup>136</sup> The same was found in 1921. Furthermore, identity was also constructed through other venues that intersected with the national/local/regional one: workers constructed identification by means of their own activities through aid societies, “sociedades,” organizations, and federations or unions. Others constructed ethnic, local and regional identities, or through class and gender solidarity, or a combination of them.

In Anderson’s words the Centennial had an aura of singularity. The uniqueness of the event set a frame of mind for an open and inclusive organization of diverse events in the region. The aura of singularity enabled societies to think about themselves, opening spaces for others to participate, as workers did.

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<sup>136</sup> This argument is developed by Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, “Nación y clase obrera en Centroamérica (1870-1930),” in *El paso del cometa. Estado, política social y culturas populares en Costa Rica (1800-1950)*, ed. Iván Molina and Steven Palmer (San José: Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies-Editorial Porvenir, 1994), 154-55.

## Chapter 2. The Central American Workers Conference

Participation of workers in the Centennial demonstrates tolerance of the governments in the region towards the voices of subaltern groups in the early 1920s. The obvious exception is occupied Nicaragua. In this context, governments enabled workers to use the public space and provided them with an institutionalized arena to discuss and present their concerns.<sup>137</sup> At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, workers in the region developed an increasing participation in the public sphere, first with mutual aid associations and recreational facilities that promoted their improvement, and afterwards with the shift towards union, syndicates, and federations. In 1921, changes in workers' organizations promoted an active political participation noticeable at the Second Workers Conference held to celebrate the Centennial.

The focus of this chapter is the Second Central American Workers Conference. After years of conflicts and repression, workers demands found their way into the Federal Constitution of Central America (stillborn) and into the laws and constitutions of individual countries in Central America. The enforcement of these laws is another story. The Second Central American Conference links the celebrations of the Centennial with the opening of institutionalized spaces to subaltern groups. I show how the presentation in the public sphere of workers' identity and concerns in the context of the Centennial promoted the integration of their demands into the

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<sup>137</sup> Víctor Hugo Acuña is the author of an important case study. He studies the Salvadoran artisan association, "Sociedad la Concordia" to understand middle-class organization and their loyalty to the prevailing sociopolitical order. See Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "The Formation of the Urban Middle Sectors in El Salvador, 1910-1944," in *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society, and Community in El Salvador*, ed. Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 39-49.

institutionalized sphere of politics. Moreover, the discussion of these issues during the Second Central American Conference demonstrates that workers were addressing social problems in 1921.

Workers saw the need for a regional identity because they felt that if they could organized as a region and find a shared identity, they could have greater political leverage to fight for their rights, and better working and living conditions. Individual countries defined who was a naturally born “ciudadano” (citizen) as a regional response whether to differentiate themselves from the other countries, and to strengthen the nation-state. However, some individual countries following the “unionist” tradition, considered a citizen anyone born inside the region and who voluntarily declared commitment to the national state. Workers followed the unionist tradition, and in the context of the celebrations of the Centennial of the Independence of Central America (September 15, 1921), workers held the “Segundo Congreso Obrero Centroamericano” in Guatemala City, where they founded the “Confederación Obrera Centroamericana” (COCA) as an umbrella organization for workers movements throughout the isthmus. COCA was endorsed by the American Federation of Labor (AFL-U.S.). Creation of a regional workers’ organization is a further indication that the unionist movement was at its peak during the Centennial.

Central America has a long tradition of workers organizations that have promoted class, gender, and occupational identity formation. The increase in the number of workers organizations founded in the early 1920s is a consequence of the diversification of economic activities, the relative openness of the political regimes



and the impact of ideologies associated with the Mexican (1910) and Russian Revolution (1917). Those who participated in diverse forms of association were artisans and urban workers, and workers in the area of communication (railways, telephone, and telegraph) and enclave related activities. Rural sectors, peasants and day laborers, were rarely organized or were not able to do so at this time.<sup>138</sup> The spectrum of organizations attracted a variety of members, which in some cases did not belong to the same economic or social strata, type of work, nor to the same religious or ideological affiliations. Although there was heterogeneity in membership and types of organizations, they all had a common goal, the improvement of laborers' education, working and living conditions.

Among other early types of associations, - or "Mutuales"- the turn-of-the century workers' aid and charitable organizations, also helped to pave the way for leagues, unions, and federations to develop. Table 5 shows the type of workers' organizations that sought the improvement of their members from 1917 to 1921. The participation in the public sphere of some of these organizations redefined relations and politics in the long-term in Central America. Evidence of these organizations was found in newspapers ads, news, or editorials in selected months. Notice that by 1921 there are no "Mutuales," which shows a shift towards unionization. The column "Liga, Gremio, Confederación and Unión" (League, Guild, Confederation and Union) refer to "obreros" (skilled workers and/or employees not owners) or "trabajadores"

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<sup>138</sup> See Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Lead as Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Clases Subalternas y Movimientos Sociales en Centroamérica (1870-1930)," in *Historia general de Centroamérica*, ed. Edelberto Torres-Rivas, et al. (Madrid: Comunidades Europeas: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario: FLACSO, 1993), 255-323.

(workers in general) in every country except Costa Rica where “Gremio” refers to specific professional activities, i.e. female cigar makers, chauffeurs, bakers, painters, tailors and shoemakers (they could be employees or small workshop owners). “Sociedad” groups included both general workers organizations and specific groups of workers by activity.<sup>139</sup> “Beneficencia” (charitable organizations) groups were related to charity and could be social or workers organizations. “Others,” includes an array of organizations such as sport, social, edifying, freemason, or religious groups.

Table 5  
Workers Organizational Forms in Central America in Percentage  
July-October, 1917-1921

Country	Asociación	Center/Comite	Liga/ Gremio Confederación/ Unión	Sociedad	Charitable	Other	Total
El Salvador	2.0	1.0	15.0	45.0	9.0	28.0	100
Guatemala	21.0	-	17.3	30.4	8.6	22.7	100
Honduras	-	4.80	15.0	27.0	3.2	50.0	100
Nicaragua	-	18.2	36.5	-	-	45.3	100
Costa Rica	-	12.1	30.3	12.1	12.1	33.4	100

Sources: *Diario de Centro-América* (Guatemala), 1921, *Diario de Guatemala* (Guatemala), 1921, *El Demócrata* (Guatemala), 1921, *La Patria* (Guatemala), 1921, *Diario de Occidente* (El Salvador), 1921, *Diario del Salvador* (El Salvador), 1921, *Diario Oficial* (El Salvador), 1915, 1917, 1921, *La Época* (El Salvador), 1921, *El Cronista* (Honduras), 1913, 1917, *La Gaceta* (Honduras), 1918, *Excelsior* (Honduras), 1920, 1921, *Nuevo Tiempo* (Honduras), 1919, *Patria* (Honduras), 1921, *Acción Católica* (Granada, Nicaragua) 1918-1919, *El Demócrata* (Rivas, Nicaragua), 1921, *La Tribuna* (Managua), 1921, *La Gaceta. Diario Oficial* (Nicaragua), 1921, *La Gaceta* (Costa Rica), 1921, *La Prensa* (Costa Rica), 1920, 1921, *Diario de Costa Rica* (Costa Rica), 1921, *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica), 1921, Salvador Mendieta, *La Nacionalidad* (San José, Imprenta Alsina, 1905), 61.

Different social groups made themselves politically visible in these years in an attempt to show publicly their identities and to seek formal institutional recognition.

<sup>139</sup> For a case study of the Salvadoran “Sociedad de Artesanos La Concordia” (La Concordia Artisan Society) see Acuña Ortega, “The Formation of the Urban Middle Sectors in El Salvador, 1910-1944,” 39-49.

These social movements built on prior organizations such as voluntary, community and mutual associations, and socioeconomic networks. The new “sociedades,” “asociaciones” and “sindicatos” called for reforms and full citizenship, and sought changes and a greater participation in the decision-making process at regional and national levels. For example, workers increasingly demanded rights and better living and working conditions, such as an eight-hour workday, the right to strike, protection from accidents, and housing laws and projects. Leaders of these organizations were schoolteachers, intellectuals, artisans, and enclave proletarians working in the school system, media, diverse types of urban occupations and banana plantations.

The participation of workers was possible with the influx of new ideas and ideologies, and the increasing inclusion of new sectors in the educational system. As elsewhere in Latin America, this process raised class-consciousness and enabled workers to shift from mutualism and guild societies, towards federations, unions, syndicalism, and anarchism. In Costa Rica, syndicalism began in Cartago in 1914 and grew from then on.<sup>140</sup> In 1921 the “Sindicato Católico de Señoras y Señoritas Empleadas de Comercio y Talleres” was founded by women in Guatemala. The creation of this syndicate indicates a certain degree of class-consciousness and political organization.<sup>141</sup> Solely in Guatemala, from 1923 to 1926 communists and anarchists promoted the creation of 13 new syndicates. In addition, the Pan American

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<sup>140</sup> Centro de Capacitación para el Desarrollo (CECADE), *Historia gráfica de las luchas populares en Costa Rica, 1870-1930*, 1a ed. (San José: Editorial Porvenir: CECADE, 1986).

<sup>141</sup> Workers organizations in Costa Rica are studied by Vladimir De la Cruz, *Las luchas sociales en Costa Rica, 1870-1930* (San José, Costa Rica: ECR-EUCR, 1980). Mario Oliva, *10 de mayo en Costa Rica, 1913-1986*, 1a ed. (San José, Costa Rica: IICAC, 1987).

Federation of Labor (COPA) endorsed the formation of similar organizations throughout Central America.

Central America's participation in the world's economy produced new industries and services and workers associations as shown in Table 5. Changes in the destiny and type of production had consequences for social relations and class structure. These countries relied primarily on coffee and banana exports, but a relatively small industrialization started early, as did the diversification of services, in spite of a basically rural population by 1920. Migration was rural-rural, rather than rural-urban. This pattern is explained by the ups and downs of seasonal employment, since workers moved to the countryside to work in coffee, cotton, sugar or banana plantations, or internationally. Hence, workers introduced their cultural baggage to the so called "modernization process." For example, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, laborers in the Caribbean coastal zone was scarce to the point that banana production had to rely heavily on the incorporation of West Indian workers. Sometimes banana companies moved workers from a plantation in one country to another in the region or outside of it for example to ports such as New Orleans or New York.

The level of organization of workers varied. Governments did not permit rural workers (peasants or day laborers) to organize, while enclave and urban workers unionized to negotiate their demands. During the 1920s, workers made themselves politically visible and introduced democratic practices while creating a participatory public. The consolidation of an export-led model in Central America made possible a relative stability that promoted an incipient workers' movement. These workers were

under the influence of two revolutions, anarchist and socialist ideologies, and labor organization practices emanating from the U.S. They sought reforms and real citizenship. In the short run, workers' rising radicalization encouraged the shift from mutualism to syndicalism, and endorsed the foundation of communist parties throughout the isthmus. The Communist Party was created in Guatemala, in 1923; in Honduras, in 1929; in El Salvador, in 1930; in Costa Rica, in 1931; and in Nicaragua it was formally formed in 1944, even though it had existed, informally, since the early 1930s.<sup>142</sup>

The process of political consciousness raising was not an easy one. Initiatives started early in the twentieth century. One of the first successful workers' initiative planned to discuss regional problems was the First Central American Workers Conference (Primer Congreso Obrero Centroamericano) held in San Salvador on November 5, 1911.<sup>143</sup> Workers planned the conference in the context of a broader program to celebrate the centennial of the first Salvadoran cry of independence. Governments of each workers' organization financed participant groups. Only

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<sup>142</sup> For the Communist Party in Guatemala see Arturo Taracena Arriola, "El Primer Partido Comunista de Guatemala (1922-1932). Diez Años de una historia olvidada," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 15, no. 1 (1989): 49-63. For Costa Rica, José Merino del Río, *Manuel Mora y la democracia costarricense: viaje al interior del Partido Comunista* (Heredia, Costa Rica: Editorial Fundación Universidad Nacional, 1996). De la Cruz, *Las luchas sociales en Costa Rica, 1870-1930*. Thomas P. Anderson, *El Salvador, Matanza; El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971). For a revision see Alvarenga Venutolo, *Cultura y ética de la violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932*. Víctor Meza argues that the communist party in Honduras was created in 1927, because in 1922 it was a subsidiary of the Central American Communist Party. Víctor Meza, *Historia del movimiento obrero hondureño*, 1a ed., *Colección Códices* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 1980), 19-20. H. Meza M., *Origen del comunismo y su acción desastrosa* (Tegucigalpa: Imprenta de la Policía Nacional, 1952). Rodolfo Cerdas Cruz, *La hoz y el machete: la internacional comunista, América Latina y la revolución en Centro América*, 1a ed. (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1986). In Nicaragua, it was called the Nicaraguan Socialist Party named after the sociopolitical characteristic it assumed. Founded on July 3, 1944. Personal communication with professor and researcher, Luis Alfredo Lobato, Ph.D.

<sup>143</sup> Barahona, *La hegemonía de los Estados Unidos en Honduras, 1907-1932*, 185.

Nicaragua did not send representation. State involvement and relative support to workers initiative shows the degree of patron-client relations.

The first cry of independence in 1811 symbolized a century of struggles for new modes of sociopolitical organization and of national liberation. In a context of increasing foreign sociopolitical and economic intervention in Central America, early independentist efforts became symbolic examples to follow for some social actors. For this reason, independence provided a powerful rhetoric for workers. Ten years later, in 1921, workers held a second regional conference in Guatemala during the celebrations of the centennial of independence. Therefore, after an analysis of their needs, problems and experience, workers thought that the only way out was to fight for their own improvement. A century of “independent” life had shown that in the economic realm, “politicians betrayed muscle workers with false promises of improvement and development.”<sup>144</sup> Consequently, workers thought their efforts should be towards the promotion of their wellbeing by associating and changing the political realm.

The vocabulary used, and the slow but steady shift towards syndicalism shows the radicalization of workers. This process was not simultaneous throughout Central America because it depended on the degree of development of the organizational forms. In Costa Rica, influenced by anarcho-syndicalism, the organization of the first

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<sup>144</sup> Decreto No. 2. El Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano CONSIDERANDO: “que en cien años de mentida independencia en lo económico, el obrero del músculo ha sido más de una vez engañado con falsas promesas de mejoramiento por los políticos de oficio...” Confederación de Obreros de El Salvador and Unión Obrera Salvadoreña, *Informe del Delegado, labores, acuerdo y decretos del Congreso Centroamericano de Obreros, reunido en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre del corriente año, bases de fusión aprobadas por los Consejos de la Confederación de Obresos [sic] de El Salvador y Unión Obrera Salvadoreña* (San Salvador: Imprenta Diario del Salvador, 1921), 52.

syndicate occurred in 1914 in the secondary city of Cartago. The creation of the “Sindicato Católico de Señoras y Señoritas Empleadas de Comercio y Talleres” (Catholic Syndicate of Commerce and Workshop Women, Guatemala, 1921), an all women’s syndicate, shows some degree of female organization.<sup>145</sup> That same year workers created the “Unión Obrera Socialista” (Socialist Workers Union), a political workers organization, and developed a strategy to encourage syndicalism. In addition, the Pan American Federation of Labor (COPA, Confederación Obrera Panamericana) founded in 1918, endorsed the formation of similar organizations throughout Central America. The increasingly radicalized syndicates did not welcome some of the associations affiliated with COPA, in particular because the pro-imperialist American Federation of Labor (AFL) headed by Samuel Gompers endorsed COPA. Due to this connection Nicaraguan anti-imperialist unions and civil organizations especially refused ties with COPA.<sup>146</sup> The limitations of the former type of organization is that many were not class conscious, and liberalism and positivism still influenced them.

### Proceedings of the Second Central American Workers Conference

The Centennial of the Independence gave an institutional setting for the discussion of regional problems as workers demanded real citizenship and economic improvement. In the context of the celebrations, in Guatemala City on September 1921, workers held the Second Central American Workers Conference (Segundo

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<sup>145</sup> Acuña Ortega, “Clases Subalternas y Movimientos Sociales en Centroamérica (1870-1930),” 277.

<sup>146</sup> Arguments against those workers organizations affiliated with the COPA can be found in founder of the Nicaraguan workers organization, “Obrerismo Organizado” (1923) and director of the workers newspaper *La Evolución Obrera*, Sofonías Salvatierra, *Obrerismo y nacionalidad* (Managua: Tipografía Progreso, 1928).

Congreso Centroamericano de Trabajadores). In the meetings workers decided to create the “Confederación Obrera de Centro América” (COCA, Central American Workers Confederation)<sup>147</sup> an umbrella organization which had as its official site the designated capital city of the future Federal state, that was Tegucigalpa, Honduras. COCA was associated with COPA.

The Central American Workers Conference had several objectives. The conference declared its intention to establish permanent communication among unions and to promote a Workers’ Syndicalism Confederation of Central America (Confederación Obrera Sindical de Centro América). Another objective was to study and discuss the needs and economic conditions of workers, peasants, and day laborers. Finally, the conference vowed to the organizations that had sent delegates that they would include the resolutions of the Conference in each countries’ laws and constitutions, as the Federal Constitution did in 1921.<sup>148</sup> They were convinced that the openness of the public sphere and the broadening of the political sphere in early 1920s Central America made this a feasible proposal to implement.

To understand the importance of the discussion of workers concerns and social consciousness they show, it is necessary to examine the actual proceedings of the conference. The Guatemalan report of the Second Central American Workers

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<sup>147</sup> Decreto No. 1. El Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano DECRETA: 1o. Declárase solemnemente establecida la “Confederación Obrera Centroamericana” en honor a la Gran Patria Centroamericana.” Confederación de Obreros de El Salvador and Unión Obrera Salvadoreña, *Informe del Delegado, labores, acuerdo y decretos del Congreso Centroamericano de Obreros, reunido en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre del corriente año, bases de fusión aprobadas por los Consejos de la Confederación de Obresos [sic] de El Salvador y Unión Obrera Salvadoreña*, 50.

<sup>148</sup> Federación Obrera de Guatemala, *Memoria del Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano celebrado en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre de 1921, a iniciativa de la Federación Obrera de Guatemala para la Protección Legal del Trabajo* (Guatemala: Imprenta Nacional, 1921), 13.



Conference starts with the introduction and explanation of the importance of the meeting. On October 1920, the “Sociedad de Albañiles” (Masonry Association) proposed the regional workers’ meeting to the “Federación Obrera de Guatemala para la Protección Legal del Trabajo” (Guatemalan Workers Federation for the Legal Protection of Work) to seek the consolidation of a regional collective identity. The Federation for the Legal Protection of Work accepted the proposal. Consequently, a committee was created and a president chosen. To initiate the organization, the committee summoned every workers’ organization in the region through letters and press.<sup>149</sup> They received a significant response from workers’ organizations, especially from the northern triangle, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Workers understood that the conference needed political and economic endorsement, for that reason they negotiated with the government of Guatemala.<sup>150</sup> The Guatemalan government supported the conference, included it in the official program of the celebrations, and provided workers with a physical space, the “Teatro Abril.”<sup>151</sup> The support included the participation of the president of Guatemala, Carlos Herrera Luna, and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emilio Escamilla. Both attended the opening ceremony on September 12 as guests of honor. The Centennial Official Committee also gave workers the opportunity to participate with delegations in parades and to give public speeches. Nevertheless, in the end the government did

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>150</sup> Decreto No. 3. Artículos 1-2. Ibid., 8.

<sup>151</sup> The “Teatro Abril” was at 9a. avenida sur and 14 calle oriente, Guatemala City.

not provide financial support for the Conference.<sup>152</sup> No further explanations were given.

The Conference went as expected and workers left a printed record of the discussions in “Informes” and “Memorias”<sup>153</sup> to be shared with members of the organizations they represented or were sent to workers’ organizations throughout the region for local discussions. The analysis of the proceedings of the Conference reveals a language that shifts towards radicalization. For example leaders’ radicalization is found in the slogans used when they signed their speech papers: “Salud y Revolución Social” (Wellbeing and Social Revolution) or “Salud, Paz y Evolución Social” (Wellbeing, Peace, and Social Evolution). Throughout the conference, workers discussed syndicalism, class-consciousness, and proletarianization showing a high degree of understanding of how society, economy and politics worked.

Workers considered that the correct way to organize was through syndicalism. Contradictorily, many of the projects discussed defend and propose the foundation of cooperatives, mutual aid, and savings institutions, which show a strong influence from mutualism and anarchism. Workers also contradicted themselves in the third

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<sup>152</sup> “El Gobierno conservador que nos regía a la sazón, como tal, no cumplió con la ley; no subvencionó absolutamente este torneo [Congreso].” The statement was made as a footnote. Guatemala, *Memoria del Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano celebrado en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre de 1921, a iniciativa de la Federación Obrera de Guatemala para la Protección Legal del Trabajo*, 19.

<sup>153</sup> Federación Obrera de Guatemala, *Memoria del Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano celebrado en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre de 1921, a iniciativa de la Federación Obrera de Guatemala para la Protección Legal del Trabajo* (Guatemala: Imprenta Nacional, 1921). Confederación de Obreros de El Salvador and Unión Obrera Salvadoreña, *Informe del Delegado, labores, acuerdo y decretos del Congreso Centroamericano de Obreros, reunido en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre del corriente año, bases de fusión aprobadas por los Consejos de la Confederación de Obresos [sic] de El Salvador y Unión Obrera Salvadoreña*.

decree because they established that another intention of the conference was to promote better relations between “races,” that is between the mestizo society and indigenous peoples or Afro-Caribbeans, but they did not approach ethnic issues.<sup>154</sup> The closest they got was when they argued about day laborers in rural areas.

During the days of the Conference, workers discussed issues that could help to support and solidify the best interests of the workers in the isthmus. Furthermore, they addressed the topic of women, motherhood, and child labor, but the only woman present was María Ernestina Mejía, from San Pedro Sula, whom attendees to the Conference elected as the pro-secretary. Notwithstanding Mejía was the only women present, her participation showed progress in terms of women’s political participation. The conference finished on September 18, 1921 and workers sent the final agreements to the Federal Council in Tegucigalpa.

Workers settled on several final agreements. Believing as they did in the Federation and because workers thought that the Federal government would guarantee an institutionalized space, they called for a Third Central American Workers Conference on September 1922 at Tegucigalpa. Following anarchist ideology, another agreement asked all members of every workers’ association not to support any political party because “workers vote must be for the workers.”<sup>155</sup> The final agreement demanded the respect and incorporation of all the resolutions and agreements into each country’s legal system. In this way workers strove

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<sup>154</sup> Decreto No. 3. Guatemala, *Memoria del Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano celebrado en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre de 1921, a iniciativa de la Federación Obrera de Guatemala para la Protección Legal del Trabajo*, 7.

<sup>155</sup> Decreto No. 2, Art. 2. Ibid., 84.

institutionalization and official recognition through the elevation of their concerns and identity to the public level, showing a nuanced comprehension of the power of discourse and social consciousness.

## The Federal Constitution of Central America and Workers' Resolutions

The Pact of San José established the meeting of delegates to create a Federal Constitution. Representatives from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala started to elaborate the document on July 20, and approved the Constitution by September 15, 1921. Delegates legislated to make a new social contract. They discussed socioeconomic and political issues and, gendered and children's participation in the workplace. Most importantly, many of the concerns discussed during the Workers' Conference were included in the Constitution. The Federal Constitution of 1921 had fourteen titles, 209 articles and included a law of "Amparo," freedom of press and association, and state of siege. Under title VIII, "Work and Social Cooperation," ten articles establish the principles for work relations and social benefits. Three big topics divide the articles: work place conditions, social practices, and education.

First, Title VIII demanded better work place conditions. After years of political struggle throughout the region for the creation of what workers' called the "English Labor Week" (forty-hours),<sup>156</sup> the Federal Constitution established an eight-hour workday and gave the employers the responsibility for labor accidents that might occur on their premises. The Constitution provided workers with the right to strike if

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<sup>156</sup> See Acuña Ortega, "Clases Subalternas y Movimientos Sociales en Centroamérica (1870-1930)."

they did not engage in coercion, engage in any illegal practice, or disrupt the social order.

Workers' also succeeded in incorporating into the Federal Constitution the basis for the creation of the "Institute of Social Reforms" to regulate relations between "capital and work." The task of this Institute of Social Reforms was to "harmonize relations between work and capital;" to promote and endorse associations for production, savings and consumption, as well as accident and life insurance; to protect marriage and family as the base of society and protect the home/family life (hogar). A clear indication of the influences of anarchism was the creation and protection of obligatory savings institutions.<sup>157</sup> With the inclusion of the resolutions of the conference into the Federal Constitution, workers were trying to redefine relations, not only at the work place but also in the political arena.

Preoccupied with social practices, different groups brought to the public sphere discussions related to family, women, and children. Feminist and religious movements as well as workers' interests made possible the inclusion of some clauses for their protection and rights into the Federal Constitution. The rhetoric associated with workers' discussions led to demands for special protection for women and children in the workspace, and the creation of special institutions to facilitate the protection of maternity and helpless children. Even though these type of social

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<sup>157</sup> Título VIII. Trabajo y Cooperación Social. Articles 163-172, "Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921." Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 254.

institutions were only created decades later, the presentation and discussion of these topics show awareness of the increasing problems women and children were facing.

Issues of family and the need to change sexual behaviour were also at stake. To address the high illegitimacy rate a special law was included to enable social institutions to investigate, socially control, and to make men and women responsible for their procreative acts. Furthermore, the need to promote behavioral changes inside low status groups included the following. It read: "It is the obligation of the Federation and each individual country to restrict the use of alcoholic beverages."<sup>158</sup> Elites and workers alike saw alcoholism as a hindrance to improvement.

The Federal Constitution also addressed the problem of education and the exclusion of vast rural majorities from the educational system. To solve the problem in rural areas the constitution states that property owners must contribute to the creation of rural elementary schools. Although the article does not refer specifically to indigenous people it would affect them as in Central America they have traditionally lived in rural areas. To solve high illiteracy rates and other challenges facing indigenous peoples, the Constitution mandated that the State must provide indigenous communities with schooling and professional (craftsmanship) education. The Constitution sought social, economic, and political improvement, which for the time was innovative because it included a set of preoccupations addressed by subalterns as well as politicians. The problem with the Federal Constitution is that it

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<sup>158</sup> "Es deber de la Federación y de los Estados restringir gradualmente el uso de bebidas alcohólicas. Las Asambleas de los Estados procurarán suprimir la Renta de Licores, substituyéndola convenientemente." Título VIII. Trabajo y Cooperación Social. Article 172, Ibid., 255.

was stillborn because it could never be utilized. Notwithstanding the analysis of this Constitution is important because it included demands of subaltern actors. For the first time their concerns were addressed publicly and institutionalized.

## Conclusions

Workers' participation increased in the public sphere and broadened the concept of politics and democratization through the promotion of public debate,<sup>159</sup> the discussion and negotiation of the common good, the introduction of alternative political practices, challenging political culture and the efforts to create institutional forms to address their identities and concerns. Through their discourses, workers, feminists and other interest groups at the time, promoted a very politicized Central American society. Workers' discourse presented their demands and identities in public, and made a critique of their exclusion from the economic and political sphere. Notwithstanding social awareness, sources show that ethnic issues were not addressed publicly during the Workers' Conference and the celebrations of the Centennial. However, workers were mediated by cooptation, paternalism, control and repression, and limited organization, a product of their separation by economic activity (occupation), geography, age group and/or gender and ethnic segmentation. In spite of its relatively weak organization, workers' activities threatened the states in such a

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<sup>159</sup> For a broader discussion see Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "The Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

way that governments chased and killed them in the 1930s.<sup>160</sup> It happened as predicted in the introduction of the Second Central American Workers Conference papers:

“If popular complaints are taken care of on time [...it] will avoid the wonderful future revolution, in which our descendants will die by thousands as today occurs in Russia because of the stupidity of czarism, caused by the confidence in the passivity of the eternal servant: the worker.”<sup>161</sup>

The influence of liberal positivism, socialism, and anarchism is present in the language and concerns of the minutes of the workers conference. These schools of thought reflect the objectives of workers’ associations. For example, workers saw education as the key for improvement and for class mobility, as well as the creation of mutual funds and savings accounts. Overall, workers wanted to shape class identity. As Acuña concludes, the creation of workers’ identity entailed the moralization, refinement of ways and a better labor discipline,<sup>162</sup> aligning with elites’ understanding of modernity. Workers’ discourse finally found its way into the Federal Constitution, especially in Title VIII, and into national constitutions years or decades later.

Central American society in general, and workers specifically, knew the symbolic value of Independence Day and they used this context to discuss, present, and negotiate their interests. Workers knew that independence meant more than

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<sup>160</sup> For Costa Rica see the novel of Carlos Luis Fallas, *Mamita Yunai* (Madrid: Castellote, 1976). For El Salvador, Dalton, *Miguel Mármol; los sucesos de 1932 en El Salvador*.

<sup>161</sup> “Si se atienden a tiempo estas quejas populares, ese plebiscito del sufrimiento, quizá se evite la formidable revolución del porvenir, en que mueran nuestros descendientes por millares como acontece hoy en Rusia por la estupidez del zarismo, por la confianza en la pasividad constante del eterno siervo: el trabajador.” Guatemala, *Memoria del Congreso del Trabajo Centroamericano celebrado en Guatemala en el mes de septiembre de 1921, a iniciativa de la Federación Obrera de Guatemala para la Protección Legal del Trabajo*, 3.

<sup>162</sup> Acuña Ortega, “Clases Subalternas y Movimientos Sociales en Centroamérica (1870-1930),” 273-74.



national sovereignty and the separation from Spain. Nicaraguan intellectual, journalist, and workers' movement leader, Sofonías Salvatierra explained its importance when he wrote

“...September 15, has for our [Central American] workers' a current deep value, because it reminds him of the transition from servitude to citizenship. The consequences of liberty that originate in that glorious day are not for the governmental politician who reproduces the colonial encomienda, but for the workers that are the social inheritors of the servile encomienda...”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> “...el 15 de Septiembre, que tiene para nuestro obrero una significación actual y profunda, como que él le recuerda su transición de siervo a ciudadano. Las consecuencias de libertad que se originan de aquella fecha gloriosísima, no son realmente para el político gubernamental, continuador del encomendero colonial, sino para el obrero que es el heredero social de la encomienda servil...” Salvatierra, *Obrerismo y nacionalidad*, 125. For the study of Sofonía Salvatierra and the workers movement he endorsed and developed see Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Historia del movimiento obrero en Nicaragua,” *Cuadernos Centroamericanos de Historia* 2 (1988): 70-75.

### Chapter 3. The Official Celebration of the Centennial: Guatemala, September 15, 1921

In 1921, all of the five countries were living particular situations that promoted popular mobilization and the re-birth of an old ideal, the federation. As things were changing in the region, the Centennial provided workers and others with an institutionalized space in the public sphere. Governments offered civil participation through voluntary associations in the organization of official events, balls, keynotes, competitions and the like. The opening of this space was even more providential because international intervention had complicated and invigorated internal politics. In 1919, the U.S. had intervened briefly in Honduras, and had occupied Nicaragua since 1912, exacerbating existing partisan rivalries in northern Nicaragua in August 1921. Guatemalan Dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera was recently ousted. Costa Rica and Panama were at war over the delimitation of their common border that same year. Notwithstanding, 1921 was perceived as a time for renewal and assessment.

Three sections divide this chapter that examines the role of the official celebrations of the Centennial of the Independence of Central America held in Guatemala City through September 1921. The first examines the official celebrations at Guatemala City, the role of the State and the importance of the participation of Central American delegations. Secondly, Church activities are covered, along with the return from a long exile of Archbishop Muñoz y Capurón. In addition, this chapter takes a close look at the competition for loyalties between the State and the Church in

Guatemala. Third, popular and international participation, and the organization of the city, its renovations and lodging, and consumption as well as entertainments are considered to assess the participation of citizens.

The five Central American countries, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, agreed to celebrate the Centennial of Independence (September 15, 1921) in Guatemala when they signed the Pact of San José (Costa Rica) in January 19, 1921.<sup>164</sup> Officers from the five governments decided that Guatemala City should be the official site for the celebrations since it was the former capital city of the United Provinces of Central America. They expected Guatemala to organize a program and make the arrangements needed,<sup>165</sup> but agreed that all five countries would finance the costs.<sup>166</sup> Honduras contributed ten thousand gold pesos,<sup>167</sup> or ten thousand dollars.<sup>168</sup> Nicaragua gave USD\$ 5,000,<sup>169</sup> and the United Fruit Company (UFCo.) donated USD\$ 1,000.<sup>170</sup> Costa Rica invested 45,000 colones,<sup>171</sup> or ten thousand dollars.<sup>172</sup> No data for El Salvador is available, even though it is known that the Salvadoran government gave two thousand dollars to

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<sup>164</sup> Alberto Herrarte, *La unión de Centroamérica, tragedia y esperanza; ensayo político-social sobre la realidad de Centroamérica* (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1955), 219.

<sup>165</sup> *Convenio para la Celebración del Primer Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América*. Cláusula Segunda. Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores., *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores* (Guatemala: s.p.i., 1921), 267.

<sup>166</sup> *Convenio para la Celebración*. Cláusula Tercera: "Que los Gobiernos de los cinco Estados Centroamericanos concurrirán a los gastos que origine la celebración del Centenario." Ibid. All translation is mine except otherwise stated.

<sup>167</sup> Oficial. Honduras, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licdo. Don Antonio R. Reina, Secretario de Estado, por Ministerio de la Ley. 1920-1921* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1922), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 16, 1921), 1.

<sup>168</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 02, 1921), 4.

<sup>169</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 6, 1921), 5.

<sup>170</sup> *Diario de Guatemala*, Guatemala, (Aug. 29, 1921), 2.

<sup>171</sup> ANCR. Congreso, 12270, 1921.

<sup>172</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 16, 1921), 1.

university students so that they could attend the Panamerican Student Conference in Guatemala.<sup>173</sup>

The program of the celebrations multiplied itself in diverse settings because simultaneously, many villages, towns, and cities throughout Central America designed diverse programs to commemorate the “magnificent event.” Local governments, municipalities, private citizens and public “suscripciones” provided funds. Such contributions helped each citizen feel included and a participant of the event. In many cases, local or regional newspapers posted names, or names and amounts so everyone could learn who had been generous. An extraordinary fundraising case was that of La Ceiba, Honduras, a banana export center which received from Vaccarro Brothers’ banana company USD\$ 1,000 and from Pedro Emilio Dutú, USD\$ 1,500.<sup>174</sup> Other donations included a Christ given by the Syrian colony,<sup>175</sup> and a contribution of five thousand soles, given by neighbors.<sup>176</sup>

Guatemala, as expected, started early, organizing a committee of thirteen including one military officer.<sup>177</sup> It met on a regular basis to plan, schedule and organize all the activities. To do so, the committee summoned civil society through direct invitations made to social, intellectual, commercial, and charity organizations

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<sup>173</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 13, 1921), 1.

<sup>174</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 02, 1921), 4. *Excelsior*, Honduras (Aug. 11, 1921), 1.

<sup>175</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 02, 1921), 4.

<sup>176</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 16, 1921), 6. For immigration from the Middle East see, Darío A. Euraque, “National Formation, Mestizaje and Arab Palestinian Immigration to Honduras, 1880-1930s,” *Critique/St. Paul* 6, no. Spring (1995): 25-37.

<sup>177</sup> The committee was formed by Félix Foncea [sic], president. Juan J. Alejo de la Cerda, Herbert Apfel, Cristóbal Azori, Eduardo T. Cabarrús, Francisco Córdón, General Víctor Durán M, Francisco Fajardo, José Goubaud, Félix Schafer, as vocals. José Ma. Saravia and José Calvo Carrillo as treasurers, and Jorge García Salas T. as secretary. Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias* (Guatemala: Tipografía Sánchez & de Guise, 1921), 46.

and associations, teachers, students, and worker unions. Also, beginning early in August the committee placed ads in the newspapers inviting individuals or organizations to suggest any activity they wanted to promote in the general program.<sup>178</sup> Opening public fora<sup>179</sup> enabled the committee to receive feedback, donations, create subcommittees, and to encourage local and regional newspapers to comment on their meetings and decisions. This approach helped to summon civil society to participate, and allowed the organization of a wide range of activities.

The commemoration of the Centennial of the Independence created expectations and called upon many different organizations, institutions, and people because it was a novelty. Paraphrasing Anderson's words, the celebrations of the centennial of Central American Independence were outside the grip of seriality, they would not be repeated annually into the infinite future, and was outside the logic of the originless replica; they had the aura of singularity.<sup>180</sup> Besides parades, civic participation, official celebrations, balls and receptions the commemoration included a sports competition, the "Juegos Atléticos Centro-Americanos," and a "Congreso Pedagógico Centro-Americano."<sup>181</sup> In addition, the committee organized official exhibitions: Apiculture, Central American Arts and Industry, and Central American Stock Breeding. Centennial advocates promoted the publication of commemorative

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<sup>178</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 10, 1921), 2.

<sup>179</sup> *Public fora* is understood as the capacity to transform an existing consensus into public forms of deliberation. Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 51.

<sup>180</sup> Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons. Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, 56.

<sup>181</sup> This conference was postponed and scheduled to meet in 1922. Honduras was to send the following professors: Miss Visitación Padilla, Pompilio Ortega, y Trinidad Fiallos. Honduras, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licdo. Don Antonio R. Reina, Secretario de Estado, por Ministerio de la Ley. 1920-1921*, 6.

books throughout the isthmus. In addition, some private organizations held conferences as did the Central American Free Masons, Central American Worker Unions, Pan American Students, Unionist Party, and the Chamber of Commerce. The participation of diverse interest groups and social actors was only possible due to a relative political opening at the time.

### The Official Commemoration Event of September 1921

This first section addresses the official commemoration ceremonies organized by the government of Guatemala. The interest of representing Central America as a unified political entity and diplomatic arrangements in the celebrations shows how important it was for the region to demonstrate a united political front, especially in view of the recent interest in Central America shown by the U.S. because of the Panama Canal. Representations also played a key role; the committee scheduled activities to give an egalitarian sense to society, even though they definitively organized activities hierarchically. Politics also influenced decisions when it came to honors and the selection of heroes or patriots. Moreover, the program and activities of the Centennial make it obvious that the government of Guatemala organized a secular activity, differentiating it from the rest of Central America where the Catholic Church had a more active role.

Unionist president of Guatemala, Carlos Herrera (1920-1921) emitted resolutions that gave Central American diplomatic representations importance and placed these delegates and himself as host in the eyes of Latin and North American, and European delegations. The resolution on September 6, 1921, announced that the

heads of the special diplomatic commissions sent by Central American governments and the resident ones in Guatemala, were considered as members of the national governmental body, thus by diplomatic protocol they should come immediately after the President.<sup>182</sup> Organization of these delegations followed the precedent of the Vienna Congress of 1815.<sup>183</sup> Another disposition declared that honors and a salute of 15 gunshots at the port of arrival would welcome every special diplomatic commission.<sup>184</sup> In addition, each of the five members of the “Oficina Internacional Centro-Americana” (OICA) sent a delegate.<sup>185</sup> Guatemala expected as many as 200 Salvadorans to attend the celebrations.<sup>186</sup> The only missing representative of the area was Panama because Central American countries had a diplomatic problem with it caused by the recent Costa Rica-Panama border war that same year. Therefore, the Panamanian government sent a note stating that no delegation would attend the ceremonies in Guatemala because Central America, as a whole, supported military and diplomatically the position of Costa Rica.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Articles 1-3, Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias*, 48.

<sup>183</sup> *Libreto de Ceremonias*, 48-50

<sup>184</sup> Article 4, 8, Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias*, 49-50.

<sup>185</sup> This institution was created on the Second Central American Conference, on February 1910, even though it was agreed to the Washington Conference of 1907. Its main purpose was to give information and propaganda of Central American interests. It was not a political institution and had its site in Guatemala. The OICA edited a journal. Abraham Ramírez Peña, *Conferencias centroamericanas, 1909-1914; seguido de un apéndice que comprende los últimos tratados y convenciones celebrados por El Salvador con datos sobre la vigencia internacional de ellos* (San Salvador, El Salvador: Imprenta Nacional, 1916), 39-41. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Guatemala, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias* (Guatemala: Tipografía Sánchez & de Guise, 1921), 43.

<sup>186</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 7, 1921), 4.

<sup>187</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 30, 1921), 2.

To understand the significance of the celebrations of the Centennial for international politics, Table 6 shows each country that sent special delegations. It includes the names of delegates, if there was a secretary or “agregado,” if they arrived with wives or daughters and the place of lodging. This table does not include resident delegations in Guatemala. Women participating in special delegations did not play significant roles in the events. They accompanied their fathers or husbands to some of the official doings. This is not the case of women participating in committees throughout Guatemala or Central America. Women were part of the decision-making process, prepared students, and school activities, and they organized activities in their communities and participated as judges in diverse competitions, keynote speakers, or poetry readers.



Table 6  
International Delegates  
Guatemala, September 1921

Country	Name of Delegate	Secretary/ Agregados	Wife or Daughters	Size Delegation	Housing
Costa Rica	Rafael Yglesias*	2	2	5	Hotel Iberia
Nicaragua	Francisco Torres	2	1	4	5a. Sur No. 11
El Salvador	Rafael Zaldívar*	2	3	6	7a. Norte No. 10 B
Honduras	Carlos Alberto Ucles	2	0	3	Pensión Imperio
Mexico	Luis Caballero	1	1	3	5a Poniente No. 3
United States	Benton McMillin	2	2	5	10a Poniente No. 18
Cuba	Juan de Dios García	2	1	4	Hotel Royal
Dominican Republic	Alfonso Fahsen Bauer	0	1	2	6a Norte No. 1
Ecuador	P. Ernesto Sandoval	0	1	2	10a Norte No. 58
Brazil	José H. Muñoz	0	0	1	4a Sur No. 60
Colombia	Manuel Esguerra	2	1	4	n/d
Paraguay	Antonio Carrera Wyld	1	1	3	9a Poniente
Peru	Enrique A. Carrillo	1	0	2	Hotel Iberia
Uruguay	Pedro Erasmo Callorda	2	2	5	Pensión Imperio
Belgium	Nicolás Leybeth	0	0	1	13a Poniente 2a A
France	Albert Revelli	2	1	4	9a Poniente No. 3
Great Britain	Hugh William Gaisford	1	1	3	9a Sur y 13a Oriente
Holland	J. I. De Jongh	1	0	2	3a Sur No. 46
Norway	Federico Gross	1	0	2	9a Sur 26/ 2a Sur 35 B
Portugal	Herbert Apfel	0	0	1	Hotel Iberia
Spain	Pedro Quartín y del Saz Caballero	3	3	7	Hotel Iberia
Sweden	Jorge Zengel	0	0	1	13a Poniente No. 8
Switzerland	Leon N. Diebold	0	0	1	13a Poniente No. 8
Total				71	

Sources: *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 10, 1921), 2. *La Patria*, Guatemala (Sept. 7, 1921), 4. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (May 14, 1921), 1. *La Patria*, Guatemala (Sept. 9, 1921), 4. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 19, 1921), 1. *La Patria*, Guatemala (Sept. 9, 1921), 4. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 19, 1921), 1. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 3, 1921), 1. Guatemala, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias* (Guatemala: Tipografía Sánchez & de Guise, 1921), 15-42.

\* Ex-president

The official program started with the inauguration of the “Palacio del Centenario” on Saturday, September 10 at dusk.<sup>188</sup> Central American representatives

<sup>188</sup> It was designed and constructed by honored Italian Cristóbal Azori. During the celebrations, the Guatemalan government conferred Azori with a gold medal on September 15, 1921, where he received

presented their credentials, read their speeches first, and placed themselves close to the Guatemalan President. Afterwards, the remaining delegations presented their credentials and read their speeches to President Herrera and the Central American representatives. By doing so, the governments of Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica participated as hosts in the event and demonstrated to the world their commitment as a region to Central America. The military band played all five national hymns and officers gave protocol speeches.<sup>189</sup>

The committee planned in detail every official activity, as described in a program spelling out activities and dress code, and the committee designed the program to make society as a whole feel it participated in every event. Etiquette was rigorous and the program for the delegates was very rigid and structured. On inauguration day delegates participated with commoners in a concert at the Central Park. At night, they attended a gala ball at the newly remodeled Club Guatemala. Blue and white, the Federal colors, were those of vehicles, dresses and light bulbs, which expressed modernity.<sup>190</sup> There was glamour for some, and popular activities for others who enjoyed youth dances at “Teatro Libertad,” a soirée organized by the “Liga Obrera Unionista”,<sup>191</sup> and concerts, cinema and fireworks in the plazas. On Sunday, September 11, at 9:00 a.m. delegates inaugurated the Central American sports competition at the stadium of the “Campo de Marte.” At 3:00 p.m., they

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an ovation. There is a contradiction in press releases because some newspapers say that he was Italian. A note of *La Prensa* argues that he is a Spanish citizen. *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 21, 1921), 5.

<sup>189</sup> Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias*, 53-54.

<sup>190</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 11, 1921), 3.

<sup>191</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 11, 1921), 3.

opened the Central American Arts and Industries exposition and at 6:00 p.m., special delegations and the Central American representatives visited the “Campo de Feria.” Every night from this day on there were concerts and fireworks at parks for the masses.<sup>192</sup> On Monday and Tuesday morning, delegates went to inaugurate wards at the “Hospicio Nacional” (which served as a poorhouse and an orphanage) and the “Hospital General,” and the Arts Exhibition. Later citizens and delegates held balls and banquets in differentiated spaces, some in theatres and halls, others in workers’ clubs, warehouses, or market places.<sup>193</sup>

Activities changed by the 14<sup>th</sup>. It was the turn for statues and monuments. Particular politicians and specific political context decided who was the hero or founding father (prócer) to honor. They did so by erecting a specific monument and by naming or re-naming public spaces or with the dedication of poems and/or hymns.<sup>194</sup> During the celebrations of the Centennial, officials made an explicit statement in the selection of heroes in Guatemala and it was a narrative associated with unionist ideals. The most remarkable inauguration was the statue of General José María Reyna Barrios (1892-1898) at the “Paseo de la Reforma.” After the inaugurations, military officers made inspections from the balustrade of the Palacio, and at night composer and director Luis A. Delgadillo played the “Sinfonía Indígena”

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<sup>192</sup> Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libro de Ceremonias*, 57.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>194</sup> To study the role of monuments and selection of heroes in changing societies see Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

(Indigenous Symphony). This is the only reference to an activity in which delegates and the committee honored the indigenous past.<sup>195</sup>

When clocks turned midnight and September 15 began, 100 bells rang, the national flag was run up, and many at the Central Park sang the hymn for Central America. At 5 a.m., a reveille awakened Guatemala City and, by mid morning, pictures of the founding fathers of the Independence were unveiled. Officials read the Act of Independence as it was done on every Independence Day celebration. A tuxedo with tails was mandatory dress for the event, and delegates were required to respect strict protocol. At night, delegates heard a concert by director Luis Roche and attended a *soirée* at the Palacio.<sup>196</sup> On Friday, they inaugurated the Agriculture and Livestock Exposition, the sports competition continued, and the races at the racetrack started.<sup>197</sup> Saturday morning was for military maneuvers and horse races. At night, delegates wore tuxedo with tails for the concert by director Alberto Mendoza in the “Palacio del Centenario.”<sup>198</sup>

After eight days of protocol and diverse activities, on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> the governmental committee and delegates went again to horse races, visited a big *maqueta* of Guatemala in the park, and inaugurated a bust for Ing. Francisco Vela, an urban engineer. At night, the committee had organized a banquet of honor for the diplomatic delegations at the Palacio. Next Tuesday they had a theatre gala at the

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<sup>195</sup>Guatemala and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias*, 57. 60

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 63.

“Teatro Variedades.”<sup>199</sup> The delegates gave awards to competitors and exhibitors on September 25, the last day of activities.

The committee decided to open the participation to a broader public yet maintain the social hierarchy. To do so the committee identified the descendants of the chosen heroes and martyrs to honor them through ads placed since early September in newspapers. Descendants had to submit their personal information, permitting organizers to know exactly whom they were, their relation, address and occupation. Local newspapers partially published this information.<sup>200</sup> To give relevance to the activity delegates distributed silver commemorative medals in the form of leaves to those descending from the leading actors/próceres of the Independence at the “Palacio del Centenario.”<sup>201</sup> The committee encoded civil actors with significance when recognizing and identifying descendants, and brought them to the front stage of politics, by recalling long forgotten events and thereby reconstituting social relations.

The Church scheduled activities that competed with official ones. Intending to give relevance to faith, a half-hour previous to the official activity described above, the Church started a Solemn Mass with the participation of the Archbishop and the general director of the Catholic committee for the commemoration of the centennial.

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>200</sup> An ad stated as follows: “El Comité de Festejos del Centenarios ruega a los descendientes directos de los PROCERES DE LA INDEPENDENCIA, se sirvan dar sus nombres, direcciones y clase de parentesco al infrascrito en el edificio de la Jefatura Política y Municipalidad: 9ª Calle Poniente y 6ª Avenida sur, esquina. Jorge G. Salas T. Secretario.” *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 2, 1921), 4.

<sup>201</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 2, 1921), 4.

Governmental and religious activities divided citizens' attendance to the activities and loyalties.

The official committee and the government tried to control the politics of representation as the program of activities demonstrates. A close look at the protocol shows that hierarchy at the Centennial celebration in Guatemala City was restricted to secular authority and delegates. There was no official presence of the Catholic Church in the program because Liberal reforms had separated political and religious spheres in Guatemala in the late nineteenth century. In addition, urban and rural settings differentiated activities, because in many places activities started with the celebrations of masses, *Te Deums* or church bells ringing at dawn, intertwined with a reveille. In these cases, presidents, delegates, local government representatives and citizens moved between secular and religious music and activities.

## The Church

The Catholic Church traditionally plays an important role in the history of Spanish America. The Liberal Reforms of the late nineteenth century separated the State from the Church and started an era of secularization. The commemoration of the Centennial was a moment of continuing tension between the state of Guatemala and the Church, and for that reason both institutions competed for alliances and preeminence in the celebrations. This section shows the tactic used by the Catholic Church in Guatemala during the celebrations to attract loyalties and to maintain its public presence after five decades of exclusion by liberal governments.

Liberal governments throughout Latin America started to separate the State from the Roman Catholic Church as early as the 1870s, and Central America was no exception.<sup>202</sup> In Guatemala the revolution of 1871 limited the power of the Church, confiscated its property, established civil marriage and divorce, abolished the tithes, reduced the number of clergy and expelled some religious orders. Reforms affected especially education in rural areas because in many cases the Church had dominated the school system in the countryside.

Many perceived the Centennial as a time of renewal and new social convention. Inspired by the arrival of the newly appointed Archbishop of Guatemala and the hope that a new relationship could begin between the State and the Church, the newspaper *La Patria* published on September 15, a public homage to these relations by transcribing Article 11 from the Independence Act:

“May the Catholic religion we have professed in the past and will profess thereafter conserve itself pure and unchanged, keeping its spirit of religiosity alive, which has always distinguished Guatemala, and shall we respect its ecclesiastic Ministers, secular and regular, and protecting their people and properties.”<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> From now on it will be referred to only as the Church. See, Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America*. Taracena Arriola, "Liberalismo y poder Político en Centroamérica," 167-253. Peter A. Szok, *"La última gaviota:" Liberalism and Nostalgia in Early Twentieth-Century Panama* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001). Rene Rethier Reeves, "Liberals, Conservatives, and Indigenous Peoples: The Subaltern Roots of National Politics in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala" (Ph.D, The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1999). Vincent Peloso and Barbara A. Tenenbaum, *Liberals, Politics, and Power. State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996).

<sup>203</sup> “Que la religión católica, que hemos profesado en los siglos anteriores y profesaremos en los siglos sucesivos, se conserve pura e inalterable, manteniendo vivo el espíritu de religiosidad que siempre ha distinguido a Guatemala, respetando a los Ministros eclesiásticos, seculares y regulares y protegiéndolos en sus personas y propiedades. Acta de Independencia. 15 de Septiembre de 1821.” Article 11, "Acta de Independencia," (Guatemala: 1821).

The appointment of Reverend Luis Javier Muñoz y Capurón, in August 1921 to his home country, Guatemala, was especially significant since as a child, the government sent his father, a teacher and owner of a private school, his family, and the Jesuits, among others, to exile after the liberal revolution of 1871.<sup>204</sup> Now his parishioners saw Muñoz y Capurón as coming back from a long exile and reconciled with his motherland. For many he represented a new beginning for the relations between the Church, the Guatemalan state, and believers.<sup>205</sup>

Reverend Muñoz y Capurón was working in Barranquilla, Colombia when he received the appointment as Archbishop of Santiago de Guatemala.<sup>206</sup> Muñoz first traveled in August of 1921 to Costa Rica for his consecration and stayed with his brother in-law, Governor Francisco Jiménez Oreamuno,<sup>207</sup> in Cartago. Afterwards the Archbishop went to stay at the “Internunciatura Apostólica” to commence the process of consecration, which both Costa Rica and Guatemala celebrated. The flags of each of the five Central American countries and the Vatican decorated the Metropolitan Cathedral of San José, Costa Rica on consecration day, September 9.<sup>208</sup> The procession took place inside the Church because the liberal laws of 1884 prohibited religious activities outside the Church property.<sup>209</sup> These laws presented no problem

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<sup>204</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 10, 1921), 1.

<sup>205</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 13, 1921), 1.

<sup>206</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 11, 1921), 11.

<sup>207</sup> Governor Francisco Jiménez Oreamuno is the brother of three times president Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1910-1914, 1924-1928, and 1932-1936). Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno was also president of the Supreme Court of Justice, of the Congress and Secretary of State.

<sup>208</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 10, 1921), 1-2.

<sup>209</sup> “All processions except Holy Week, Corpus and of the Saint of the place, outside the temples are prohibited.” Executive Decree (September 01, 1884). Colección de Leyes y Decretos, Costa Rica, 1884. To study the relation between the Catholic Church and liberals in 19<sup>th</sup> century Costa Rica see,



for the President of Costa Rica and his Ministers who attended all activities, private and public.<sup>210</sup> The consecration took place first in Costa Rica because it was the site of the “Internunciatura Apostólica de Centro América.”<sup>211</sup>

After the ceremony, Muñoz y Capurón embarked from Puntarenas and arrived at the Salvadoran port of “La Libertad.” At the port President Jorge Meléndez (1919-1923), Salvadoran Archbishop Belloso and a group of Catholics waited to honor him.<sup>212</sup> Later, on September 11, at the port of San José in Guatemala, a large group composed of relatives, members of diverse workers’ unions and Catholics greeted Muñoz y Capurón and traveled with him to the capital city where followers prepared festivities. The train stopped in several small towns and villages so that the parishioners could meet and receive blessings without any official control.<sup>213</sup> Therefore, the Church represented in the figure of the Archbishop renovated relations with citizens confronting the liberal state.

Close relations between the Church and citizens went even further. In Guatemala City a welcome committee published ads in diverse newspapers showing a political opening and the broadening of the public sphere. Catholic or not, on September 9 and 10, the Catholic committee invited citizens to greet the Archbishop at the railway station. Newspapers and flyers specified the exact date and time, and

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Claudio Antonio Vargas Arias, *El liberalismo, la Iglesia y el Estado en Costa Rica*, 1. ed. (San José: Ediciones Guayacán, 1991).

<sup>210</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 7, 1921), 1-2.

<sup>211</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 19, 1921), 1. Comisión de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia en Latinoamérica, *Historia general de la Iglesia en América Latina*, vol. VI (Salamanca: CEHILA; Ediciones Sígueme, 1981), 306. Palacio Arzobispal, “Mensajero Del Clero,” 98 (1921): 1078.

<sup>212</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 10, 1921), 7. Latinoamérica, *Historia general de la Iglesia en América Latina*, 306-08. I am grateful to Marvin Vega at the Archivo de la Curia Metropolitana, Costa Rica for providing with helpful information.

<sup>213</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 10, 1921), 1-2.

asked Catholics to embellish their houses and place *luminarias* at night. Hence, these practices competed with governmental regulations for the embellishment of private houses and commercial buildings for the Centennial.<sup>214</sup> A day later, the welcome committee published an update telling the parishioners that the Archbishop was to arrive on the 11<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon and that steam engines would blow a long whistle an hour before his arrival, while bells would ring at the exact moment of his arrival.<sup>215</sup> From the properly decorated train station, the welcome committee organized a parade to accompany the Archbishop to a *Te Deum* at the Cathedral,<sup>216</sup> and the press commented that this nomination was to benefit relations between both countries, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

An editorial in *La Patria* shows the importance of the consecration:

“With the celebrations of the festivities for the Centennial, Guatemala has evidently and magnificently demonstrated that the Catholic faith is still alive and fervent in their hearts. Even though the impious attacks and fifty years of oppression suffered by Catholics under rulers simulating liberalism, which have attacked by every possible means the religious creed of the majority of the population of Guatemala... It was established for the great day of the Centennial [that the Archbishop would take office] to unite the commemoration and this magnificent day of the beginning of the episcopate of Mr. Muñoz, and the ceremony was even more splendid given the ruinous conditions of the Cathedral of Guatemala [caused by liberal repression and an earthquake in 1917].”<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 9, 1921), 1.

<sup>215</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 10, 1921), 2.

<sup>216</sup> Latinoamérica, *Historia general de la Iglesia en América Latina*, 306.

<sup>217</sup> “Con motivo de las fiestas centenarias, Guatemala, ha demostrado de manera evidente y majestuosa que la fe católica se mantiene vívida y ferviente en los corazones, a pesar de los ataques de la impiedad y de los cincuenta años de opresión sufrida por los católicos bajo en imperio de gobernantes que, simulándose liberales, han atacado por diversos medios las creencias religiosas de la mayoría de los habitantes de Guatemala.... Fijóse para este gran día del Centenario, a fin de unir la conmemoración de esta magna fecha a la iniciación del episcopado del Sr. Muñoz; y la ceremonia como era de esperarse revistió el mayor esplendor dado el estado aún ruinoso de la Catedral de Guatemala.” *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 19, 1921), 1.

On September 15 at 9:00 a.m., Archbishop Muñoz y Capurón took office at the Metropolitan Cathedral. The press stressed the similitude between secular and religious powers, because on approximately similar dates, the two supreme powers of Guatemala took office, on September 11, 1920, President Carlos Herrera, and now a year and four days later, the Church installed Archbishop Muñoz y Capurón.<sup>218</sup> Religious activity finished at 11:30 a.m., when a demonstration of Catholic denominations and laypersons started to walk towards the Centennial Palace at the same time officials read aloud the Independence Act and held official activities. Reporters declared that more than forty thousand Catholics accompanied the kilometer long procession that became a significant peaceful confrontation with governmental policies. It must have been very striking for the governmental officials, delegates, diplomats and other local and national representatives to see this peaceful civil demonstration of solidarity, support, and communion with the Church.<sup>219</sup> A demonstration only made possible by the openness product of the celebrations of the Centennial.

The Catholic Church made itself heard when it showed governmental officials and the world that Central American society in general and Guatemala in particular, longed for their religious leaders. This was expressed when thousands participated in daily religious activities through September 25, the last day of governmental official celebrations. Obviously, the Centennial was also a time for renewal and positioning for the Catholic Church of Guatemala. It is evident that two different and competing

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<sup>218</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 19, 1921), 1.

<sup>219</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 19, 1921), 1.

celebrations were taking place at the same time in the streets of the city during the commemoration: a secular and a religious one. Only the themes of illuminations, decoration of private houses and commerce buildings, and commemorative “arcs of triumph” separated both. The press daily discussed the activities, and how laypersons and religious personnel publicized activities and faith. This was only possible because for the first time in fifty years there was a real possibility of free speech and religious tolerance. The State officials learned through demonstrations and religious activities that civil society backed the Church and did not wholly favor state policies regarding religion.

### The City: Infrastructure and Entertainment

The renovation of the city helps to elucidate how the government of Guatemala, through its modernizing achievements and selection of heroes, politicized the urban plan of the capital city to transmit an ideological vision. Moreover, the celebrations of the Centennial became a public spectacle where the masses attended as spectators and participants, and learned, informally, the values, symbols, and achievements of the state and at the same time amused themselves with the variety of scheduled activities.

As Foucault explains, norms, behavior and rationality are internalized through education, example and training. Foucault bases this premise on the assumption that this process could create the normative behavior expected from each member of

society.<sup>220</sup> Therefore, if educational experiences can construct the self, schools had to represent society harmoniously, and remember citizens' laws and their enforcement. In the early twentieth century, cities included places for public debate and gatherings that promoted the development of a democratic public sphere, where workers, anarchists, feminists, politicians, among others could express their opinion. As population grew and workers raised in protest the public sphere began to dichotomize ideologically. The Centennial gave the opportunity to social actors to manifest their thoughts and expectations.

The Guatemalan government and its elites resolved to show visitors their advancement and modernization, civic prowess, historical achievements, and wholeness of being.<sup>221</sup> Hence, the government renovated and created new civic spaces; many of the parks and plazas were improved, and new ones constructed that would be appropriate for the "magnificent" event. Organic intellectuals and governments chose and honored founding fathers and heroes, and they placed statues and memorials to honor those who deserved it.<sup>222</sup> The urban plan of the city was politicized through monuments, statuary and memorials, which transmit ideology through their meaning and memory. In sum, society needed to enhance the prestige and desirability of the city to make it meaningful and playful, and the city became an instrumental symbol of order and power.

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<sup>220</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

<sup>221</sup> M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>222</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 01, 1921), 4.

The Centennial provided the opportunity for civic improvement and embellishment of all types of public and private buildings, entertainment centers, civic spaces, and monumentalia throughout Central America. By renovating public spaces, reproducing the symbols of the nation, incorporating elements of the popular culture, and making citizens feel that they were participants of the process, liberals acknowledged the importance of culture as one of the realms of politics.

The “Palacio del Centenario” became a “beautiful symbol of development,” growth and renewal,<sup>223</sup> and it demonstrated to society and the world that those days of ruin and turmoil had come to an end with the destitution of Estrada Cabrera. The Palace was the most important building constructed for the event. It had an English garden, an illuminated plaza,<sup>224</sup> and an ample balustrade so authorities could use it for military reviews and “paseos cívicos” (civic parades). It rose in the same place as the late “Palacio de Gobierno,” the Supreme Court of Justice, and the “Comandancia de Armas.” The Palacio became a civic spectacle when city dwellers and visitors went to observe the ongoing construction, some knowing that it was the only opportunity to take a close look at it.<sup>225</sup> The governmental officials chose this site to capitalize on collective memory so citizens could relate to it as a site of power.

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<sup>223</sup> “La Plaza del Centenario y el Palacio en ella erigido son un bello exponente del progreso de nuestra capital después de los angustiosos días de la ruina.” *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 2, 1921), 1. Costa Rica, *Primera exposición Centroamericana de Guatemala: documentos relativos a la participación de Costa Rica en dicho certamen* (San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1896).

<sup>224</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 2, 1921), 1.

<sup>225</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 29, 1921), 6. For the role of historical reconstruction and collective memory of public places see, Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*.

To display progress and civilization the Guatemalan government also renovated other traditional gathering spaces. It thoroughly remodeled the Central Park, restoring its colonial role as forum. The government constructed a pavilion for the festivities on the north side of the park, renovated government buildings alongside, and widened the plaza in front of the Cathedral, even though the Cathedral itself was in a ruinous condition reflecting former relations with the State and the earthquake of 1917. Government initiatives brought up to date “La Concordia” park, the “Plaza Las Victorias,” and the “Parque Gálvez.” On the southern edge of the city, a horse racetrack and a bullfight arena were built. The “30 de Junio,” and “La Reforma” boulevards were extended, and the electric company invested in renovating electric lines and posts in two main streets: 6<sup>th</sup> avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> street. These effort introduced new elements of modernity into the city.

In the same fashion, the private sector participated in renovations. Key businesses brought in electric lighting; they inaugurated a *socialite* space, the “Club Guatemala,” and renovated the “Teatro Variedades.”<sup>226</sup> As government and private sectors were modernizing spaces, citizens were summoned to paint the façades of their houses in gray, illuminations and national symbols were recommended, and by decree, private owners had to repair sidewalks, if not law would be enforced.<sup>227</sup> The Guatemalan government made efforts to make society as a whole a participant in the

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<sup>226</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 23, 1921), 1. The “Teatro Variedades” had a capacity of 1800 spectators, 1000 in first class, and was inaugurated in 1908 by Spanish Ramiro Fernández Xatruch. Site: 6a Calle Poniente No. 7. J. Bascom Jones, William T. Scoullar, and Máximo Soto Hall, *El "Libro Azul" de Guatemala, 1915. Historia condensada de la república* (New Orleans, U. S. A.: Searcy & Pfaff, Ltd., 1915), 232.

<sup>227</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 01, 1921), 2.

“magnificent event.” The sense of renovation was lived through building efforts, news published, expectations created by newspapers, and by participating actively and symbolically throughout Central America. The Centennial created a sensation that it was time for rejoicing and renewal.

International city dwellers were compelled to participate as well. Therefore, they donated traditional arcs of triumph adding to those placed by nationals. Triumphal arcs were made of palms, leaves and flowers, or wood and had elaborated designs. Citizens placed them in strategic sites as symbols of respect and victory. Religious activities traditionally used arcs as well. One of these arcs was placed in front of the Church of the Calvary (6<sup>th</sup> Ave.) and three others were donated, one by the Department of Sacatepequez,<sup>228</sup> another by the Salvadoran workers residing in Guatemala,<sup>229</sup> and a third one by the Chinese residents.<sup>230</sup> By donating arcs and other items, foreign residents proved their allegiance and paid respect to the country. The city received other donations to improve it. U.S. and English residents contributed with bleachers for the “Stadium” at the “Campo de Marte;” the Spanish colony donated a bench; Italians gave a clock tower and the French a chandelier. All these were placed at the Central Park.<sup>231</sup> Other foreign colonies donated equipment for charity and public health. Germans gave sterilization equipment for the maternity ward at the General Hospital; Mexicans organized two charity kermises for the “Casa del Niño” (orphanage) the Swiss bestowed a silk flag and a donation for the “Casa de

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<sup>228</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 20, 1921), 7.

<sup>229</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 22, 1921), 5.

<sup>230</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 26, 1921), 6.

<sup>231</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 26, 1921), 6.



Beneficencia” (Charity House). The Chinese colony also gave three sets of fireworks to amuse the masses.<sup>232</sup> The Guatemalan society was happy to receive all foreign donations because they proved friendship and commitment. Media highlighted these types of donations and used them as examples for others to follow.

Illustration 1  
Arc of Triumph Donated by Artisans  
San José, Costa Rica 1913



Source: Iglesia Católica, *Libro conmemorativo de las fiestas constantinianas en San José de Costa-Rica y del gran Congreso Eucarístico celebrado con tal motivo del 8 al 12 de octubre de 1913 (con aprobación eclesiástica)* (San José: Tipografía Lehmann (Sauter & Co.), 1913)

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<sup>232</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 26, 1921), 6.

The novelty of the Centennial celebration attracted hundreds of visitors to Guatemala. Massive attendance at official and unofficial activities such as sport competitions and conferences of all sorts reflected popular participation. In addition, the government promoted specific interest group participation when officials gave an opportunity to different social and workers organizations to express themselves in public and media highlighted freedom of speech.

Renovations of the city were completed for the Centennial, but the “Comité de Festejos” expected an overflow crowd from Central America in addition to official delegates, sportsmen, students, workers, unionists and free masons who went to their meetings and competitions. They knew there were not enough rooms, so by August 9 the committee placed ads in the newspapers asking people to register availability of beds in order to find lodging for the delegations and other visitors.<sup>233</sup> By early September, they were concerned because they realized that there were still not enough rooms to accommodate everyone.

The official committee relied on the media to help promote the event and to find solutions to local limitations. For that reason, ads placed to accommodate guests in public and private facilities show that commerce was reacting to new codes of modernity, decorum, and respectability. To provide housing for the visitors, private entrepreneurs opened guesthouses, and placed ads to house and attract visitors; these new and petit entrepreneurs offered all types of services. Hence, to attract prospective patrons, ads described modern, comfortable accommodations: anti-seismic buildings,

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<sup>233</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 9, 1921), 2. *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 7, 1921), 3.

food, “hygienic” rooms, decency and order, comfortable furniture, stables for horses, and garages for automobiles and carriages.<sup>234</sup> Table 7 shows the number of hotels, inns, guesthouses, and restaurants in Guatemala City. All data is reconstructed from ads in newspapers, for that reason it is incomplete.

Table 7  
Hotels, Inns, Guest Houses, and Restaurants  
Guatemala City: 1915, 1921 and 1929

	1915	1921	1929
Hotels	12	4	26
Inns	4	n/d	4
Guesthouses	2	18	27
Restaurants**	2	1	20
Eateries	n/d	n/d	14

**Sources:** Jones, J. Bascom, Scoullar, William T., Soto Hall, Máximo. *El "Libro Azul" de Guatemala, 1915. Historia condensada de la república* (New Orleans, U. S. A.: Searcy & Pfaff, Ltd., 1915), 380-382. José A. Quiñonez. *Directorio General de la República de Guatemala* (Guatemala, Imprenta Nacional, 1929), 254, 272, 286-287. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 12, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 16, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 17, 1921), 6. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 20, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 22, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 26, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (Aug. 27, 1921), 2. *La Patria* (1921). Guatemala, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. *Centenario de la Independencia de Centro-América. 1821-1921. Libreto de Ceremonias* (Guatemala: Tipografía Sánchez & de Guise, 1921), 15-42.

\*\* Exclusively restaurant service.

n/d: no data available

Local residents renewed and decorated houses, bought the supplies they needed for the celebrations and consumption differentiated by class. Consumption made a positive impact on the economy, not only in Guatemala but also regionally,

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<sup>234</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 16, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 18, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 20, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 22, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 26, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 27, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 31, 1921), 6.

because the Centennial created the need for new commodities and services those commercial houses were eager to satisfy. Advertisements offered all kinds of merchandise, from materials to renovate houses and buildings to hairstyle services, shoes, dresses, suits, undergarments and accessories for men, women and children, all differentiated by class and gender. Patrons could get hold of everything desired depending upon the specific socioeconomic conditions, ages, gender, and activity attended.<sup>235</sup> Furthermore, commerce offered flags, buttons, and illuminations for public display, drinks, catering service, ice and whatever was required for entertaining privately and publicly.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, in changing times commercial houses offered elegant cars to replace carriages, they were new and pre-owned, and patrons could buy or rent them. Cars were even raffled at \$10 gold apiece to democratize ownership.<sup>237</sup> Ads made people perceive a democratic participation in the Centennial even though ads show that consumption was a symbolic element for differentiation.

Publicity played a crucial role at the Centennial. Three types of publicity, besides that placed in newspapers and flyers directed people to attend parades, conferences and exhibitions. These are: banners, caps, and buttons. Commercial

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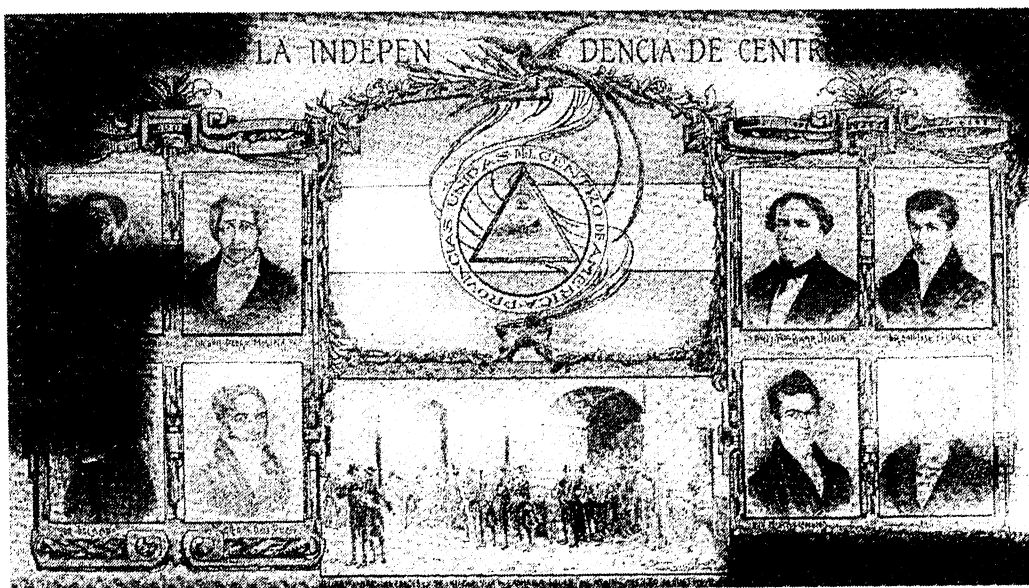
<sup>235</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 04, 1921), 4. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 06, 1921), 3, 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 08, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 09, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 16, 1921), 3, 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 17, 1921), 6. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 22, 1921), 6. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 27, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 30, 1921), 6.

<sup>236</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 27, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 29, 1921), 4. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 31, 1921), 2.

<sup>237</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 09, 1921), 5. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 20, 1921), 2. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 27, 1921), 4. *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 29, 1921), 5.

houses offered to print banners for interest groups with the slogans of any political, religious, freemason, charity, workers or students associations.<sup>238</sup> Buttons sold to the public had the emblem of the Federal Republic, but patrons could personalize them.<sup>239</sup> For children, businesses offered baseball type caps with an emblem for the Centennial printed on it.<sup>240</sup> Publicity and consumption strategies targeted specific groups showing a degree of specialization.

Illustration 2  
Official Postcard. Guatemala  
Próceres de la Independencia de Centro América



Source: Archivo de la Imagen. CIRMA, Antigua Guatemala.

<sup>238</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 27, 1921), 3.

<sup>239</sup> ¡A PESO EL VOLCÁN!! Botones Unionistas con el escudo aprobado por la Asamblea de Tegucigalpa, vende a \$5.00 cada uno el almacén "LA SORPRESA," 6ª. Avenida Sur No. 18. frente a la Paquetería. Para las reventas en los Departamentos y en la Capital, precios especiales." *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 9, 1921), 3.

<sup>240</sup> Gorritas "Centenario" A \$ 50 PARA NIÑOS VENDEMOS 6ª. Avenida Sur No. 40B y 7ª Calle Oriente, frente al No. 1. REINOSO E HIJOS. Has a picture. *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 10, 1921), 8.

The main purposes of the activities programmed were to educate, inculcate values and to open public fora. However, basically, officials designed many of them to entertain the majority of the attendees; masses went to the Centennial for the spectacle. Therefore, the Committee scheduled a great variety of entertainment and the Guatemalan newspaper *La Patria* commented on it in early September,

“People from the capital city and those who come to the festivities from other places would be very difficult to please if they complained for lack of entertainment in Guatemala. Entertainment is abundant at the Centennial, and there are activities to please all type of interests. Comics and clowns, bulls and elephants, zebras and horses, camels and wise monkeys, all are coming to this capital city to please children and adults, literate and illiterate, unionists and democrats.”<sup>241</sup>

The Centennial committee planned a wide range of activities differentiated between rich and poor. The educated, wealthy, and powerful participated in conferences, and presented their creations, research and experiments at the exhibitions and “Juegos Florales” for the illiterate and others to admire and learn. Elites went to the theatre, galas, banquets, and concerts while the commoners admired fireworks, heard concerts at parks and viewed cinema in open spaces. Popular groups went to the circus and bullfights, horse races, parades, sports exhibitions, and heard national and popular music. Commoners were at the same time spectators and participants at the civic and religious parades and demonstrations, and popular entertainment. They were the ones who filled the city.

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<sup>241</sup> “Descontentadizos en demasía seríamos los capitalinos y los que de otras partes a las festividades vengan, si fuéremos a quejarnos de falta de diversiones en Guatemala. Estas van a abundar en el Centenario y las habrá para todos los gustos. Cómicos y payasos, toros y elefantes, zebras [sic] y caballos, camellos y monos sabios, van llegando a esta capital para hacer las delicias de chicos y grandes, alfabetos y analfabetos, unionistas y demócratas.” *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 3, 1921), 1.

The liberal states of Central America established different ways to promote the development of the arts and culture, understood in its classical definition. Subsidizing theatrical presentations was one strategy because liberal governments and intellectuals saw theatre in two different ways. First, liberals saw theatre as an institution that promoted changes in social behavior and educated the audience through example, therefore providing means for “civilizing” popular sectors, while offering culture and entertainment at the same time. Secondly, theatrical representations multiplied and provided dynamism to commercial activities. For that reason, states promoted theatrical representations by subsidizing foreign companies, as well as circus or bullfights at special occasions.<sup>242</sup> The government of Guatemala financed a Spanish theatre company with twenty thousand dollars to perform during the Centennial, and funded with the same amount the “Circo Modelo” and the bullfight company to entertain. The “Circo Modelo” performed twice a day with a matinee and a night show. The impact of popular entertainment was such that a Salvadoran reporter claimed that the income received by the circus was two thousand dollars per day; it had over seven thousand seats and was always sold out. The bullfight company also sold out its presentations. The government traditionally relied on subsidies to promote cultural activities, including the theatrical company. It used the same practice for bullfights and the circus, even though these were two profitable entertainment activities.

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<sup>242</sup> For the case of Costa Rica see Patricia Fumero, *Teatro, público y estado en San José, 1880-1914: una aproximación desde la historia social*, 1. ed., *Colección Nueva Historia* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1996). Patricia Fumero, "Entre el Estado y la Iglesia: el teatro en San José a fines del siglo XIX," *Jahrbuch für geschichte von staat, wirtschafft und gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 34 (1996): 239-66.

Political changes after the overthrow of Estrada Cabrera enabled the Guatemalan society to participate in the celebrations in several ways highlighted by the media. The numbers of common citizens participating in the events impressed journalists from the region and in particular with the freedom of speech and press in Guatemala after the fall of Estrada Cabrera. They thought that President Herrera was a real democrat since he was not concerned with all the negative commentaries his administration received from citizens and newspapers. An example of the openness of public discussion during the Herrera administration is the observation the journalist from the *Diario del Salvador* made of the two plays performed at the Teatro Renacimiento: “El Centenario” (The Centennial) and “Ensalada Chapina” (Guatemalan Salad). He perceived an abuse of freedom because both sold out plays presented President Herrera and his highest officials in a ridiculous and disrespectful way.<sup>243</sup> This journalist also found similar negative commentaries in the “cantinas” he attended.<sup>244</sup> The Centennial demonstrated new governmental openness; in the case of Guatemala, it gave its citizens the possibility to express discomfort with society and the administration. The increasing consciousness and organization of subalterns helped people to take advantage of this space.

The geographic division of entertainment helped to make the celebrations hierarchical because of the physical distance between activities, especially since there were not enough public means of transportation or bus routes. Spectators complained

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<sup>243</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Oct. 03, 1921), 4.

<sup>244</sup> Cantina is also the name given to a space inside the theatres, normally up front where refreshments are served. They were two cantinas in each elite theatre that separated genders.



that many activities were not within walking distance and argued that common people did not have enough money to pay private or public transportation to attend activities on the outskirts of Guatemala City. Plans for renovation of the city included a reorganization of its physical space. Centennial officials seized the opportunity to insist on redistribution of the city's public space to change the façade of the city.

The wide range of activities, associations, and types of official participants and sites are shown in Table 8. Marginal activities not covered in detail by the media are not included, even though there are some vague references of other happenings throughout the city. Inaugurations included the inaugural ceremony of the "Palacio del Centenario," "Sociedad de Auxilios Mutuos," and the "Academia de Comercio" building, as well as the installation of the Central American and International Library and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Pharmacy. This category also included the opening ceremony of the works at the orphanage and the General Hospital and unveiling of statues, memorials, and monuments. New social clubs inaugurated included the Club Guatemala and the German Club. Associations included diverse groups of social organizations such as the "Cooperativa y Caja de Ahorro;" student, religious and unionist associations; "Sociedad Amigos 26 de Octubre;" "Academia de Comercio;" "Academia Nacional Central de Maestras," and the like.

Table 8  
Number of Different Activities, Participants, and Sites  
Celebration of the Centennial, Guatemala City  
September 1921

Activities		Participants		Sites	
Public decorations	4	Associations	20	Plazas/parks	12
Dance, parties and food	10	Foreign Colonies	10	Theatres	5
Different daily activities	11	Orchestras	5	Association buildings	7
Civic	14			Charity institutions	5
Inaugurations	10			Social club	2
Competitions	3			Educational institutions	all
Conferences	6			Public institutions	all
Expositions	4			Arenas*	4
Parades and demonstrations	7				
Church related activities	11				
Associations and official participants	39				

\* Includes circus, bullfights, racetracks and sports competitions.

Source: *Diario de Centro-América* (Guatemala), 1921, *Diario de Costa Rica* (Costa Rica), 1921, *Diario de Occidente* (El Salvador), 1921, *Diario del Salvador* (El Salvador), 1921, *El Cronista* (Honduras), 1913, 1917, *El Demócrata* (Guatemala), 1921, *El Demócrata* (Rivas, Nicaragua), 1921, *Excelsior, Honduras*, 1921, *La Época* (El Salvador), 1921, *La Patria* (Guatemala), 1921, *La Prensa*, Costa Rica, 1921, *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica), 1921, *La Tribuna* (Managua), 1921, *Nuevo Tiempo* (Honduras), 1919, *Patria* (Honduras), 1921

## Conclusion

The overthrow of Estrada Cabrera became important for the celebration of the Centennial because it gave the population, especially the students, workers, and unionists a sense of accomplishment. Ex-president Manuel Estrada Cabrera was sentenced to death on September 9, 1921, only a few months after he was overthrown

blamed of being mentally ill.<sup>245</sup> Four months earlier his daughter had committed suicide pressured by political events.<sup>246</sup>

Activities to celebrate the Centennial of Independence absorbed Central America for more than three weeks during the month of September 1921. Almost everyone throughout Guatemala participated as actor or spectator in a huge number of dissimilar forms to represent and reproduce nationhood and independence. Precisely the importance of representations is that they mediate between what might be real and the spectator's perception of reality. Officials organized programs and activities hierarchically, some activities for the rich and powerful, and others for the masses, and some were shared physically and symbolically. Nevertheless, the committee designed activities to make popular sectors feel included and participants of every event. Students and citizens performed hymns and oaths to the flag, and the committee encouraged participation through public demonstrations and parades. Everyone was invited to feel they belonged to Central America first and Guatemala second. Unionism was the sentiment in vogue. Furthermore, authorities and members of different Centennial committees in the five countries tried to encourage Central American identity by supporting activities that encouraged a sense of belonging to a regional political identity.

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<sup>245</sup> Decreto 1022. Guatemala. *Recopilación de Leyes de la República de Guatemala*. Tomo XXXIX (Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1925), 6. An explanation of the process is explained in Ernesto Viteri Bertrand, *El Pacto de Unión de 1921, sus antecedentes, vicisitudes y la cesación de sus efectos* (Guatemala, Guatemala: Editorial e Imprenta Apolo, 1976).

<sup>246</sup> Guatemala 10 de mayo. La señorita Guadalupe Estrada Chinchilla, hija del ex Presidente Cabrera se suicidó el viernes. *Excelsior*, Honduras, (May 12, 1921), 1. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 10, 1921), 2.

Local committees, including known indigenous communities throughout Guatemala, organized similar activities where students and civil society participated actively or symbolically. However, official comments or press reports did not stress or give any importance to indigenous participation. National rhetoric at this time did not include the indigenous or Afro-Caribbean peoples.

In rural committees and activities, women had the power to make decisions along with men, especially for those activities where students were involved, so their role was meaningful. Politically, women also had an outstanding role when it came to the creation of Unionist Party committees in rural Guatemala and El Salvador. Female committees participated actively in the celebration of the Centennial in Central America.

Hierarchy and separation between powers was also important. The State and the Catholic Church respected each other's realms and by doing so, they shared, divided, and claimed loyalty of citizens. In the case of the Church in Guatemala, the Centennial was a time of renewal and renovation of its relation with society and the State. For the first time in fifty years of liberal governments, there was freedom of press, of speech and religious worship.<sup>247</sup> With respect to the Church, the most symbolic event was the unveiling of a statue of General José María Reyna Barrios. The Catholic influenced newspaper *La Patria* stressed the importance of this homage

“The erection of this monument is a tribute from Guatemala to a president who was the most progressive and respectful of the law that the Republic has had during the past fifty years of liberal empire... the administration of

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<sup>247</sup> “hay completa libertad de Imprenta, aunque a decir verdad mucho se abusa de ella.” *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (May 18, 1921), 6.

General [José María] Reina [sic] separates itself from the ones preceding him and from the one that followed, because in his administration he did not govern with fierce despotism which characterized the administration of [Justo Rufino] Barrios [1873-1885]... and [there was not] the scandalous robbery as in the government of [General Manuel Lisandro] Barrillas [1885-1892]... nor was there any threat to the press nor complete suppression of public liberties that were enforced by [Manuel Estrada] Cabrera since he took office. To the contrary, General Reina [sic] kept liberties and respect, and insisted on respect for the law, more than any of his liberal predecessors and his liberal successor. For that reason many of those who called themselves liberals and abhor liberty, have said in pamphlets and newspapers that Reina [sic] threw himself in the hands of the conservatives, something that not long ago the *Diario de Centroamérica* repeated.”<sup>248</sup>

Noteworthy for Catholics was the fact that, even though there were some flaws during his government, Reyna Barrios permitted the Archbishop of Guatemala, Reverend Casanova y Estrada, to come back from exile on March 1897. This decision promoted reconciliation between the liberal government and the Church.<sup>249</sup> Now, in 1921, two forces were disputing and negotiating loyalties, and their place in society in simultaneous and unofficial events and settings, and citizens appeared to want to change politics and society.

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<sup>248</sup> “La erección de este monumento es un tributo de Guatemala al gobernante más progresista y respetuoso a la ley que ha tenido la República durante los cincuenta años del imperio liberal; ... la administración del General Reina distinguióse completamente de las que le precedieron y de la que lo siguió porque durante ella no se ejerció por el Gobernante aquel despotismo feroz que caracterizó la administración de Barrios, ...[ni hubo] los escandalosos robos del gobierno de Barrillas; ni existió el amordazamiento total de la prensa y completa supresión de las libertades públicas, que impuso Cabrera en el país desde su ascensión al poder. Por el contrario, el General Reina, mantuvo las libertades y respetó e hizo respetar la ley mucho más que sus antecesores liberales y que su liberalismo sucesor, por lo cual sin duda varios de los que aquí se llaman liberales y abominan la libertad, han dicho en folletos y periódicos, que Reina se ‘echo en brazos de los ‘conservadores’,’ cosa que no hace mucho repetía aún el *Diario de Centroamérica*.” *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 21, 1921), 1.

<sup>249</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 21, 1921), 2.

## Chapter 4. The Celebration of the Centennial in Costa Rica

This chapter studies the participation of Costa Rica in regional sociopolitical activities to understand its contradictory standing over the Federal dream. Because cross-border politics was a problem in neighboring countries in Central America, the 1921 war with Panama over border issues are addressed to understand the limited and low profile national celebrations of the Centennial.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first focus is on nation building and nationalistic discourse that sets the basis for the formation of Costa Rican identity. Second, I show how intellectuals revised the rhetoric of the nation to create a new paradigm that stressed civic values, especially in the school system, making possible the revalorization of new political or social figures in the context of the Centennial. The third section, Celebrations, Students and Popular Entertainment, shows how Costa Rica centered the celebration in the educational system, and not on independentist or unionist movements thus reinforcing the specificity of the Costa Rican identity separate from a Central American one. However, at the same time officials organized low profile popular activities for the masses.

### Nation Building and Nationalistic Discourse

The process of nation building began in Costa Rica when liberal elites achieved power in the 1870s and started a series of reforms to modernize, in the capitalist and positivist way, the state and society.<sup>250</sup> These liberals thought that order

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<sup>250</sup> See Orlando Salazar Mora, *El apogeo de la República Liberal en Costa Rica: 1870-1914*, 1. ed., v. I (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1990).

and stability was a necessary condition to achieve development, therefore liberal governments sought to strengthen the presence of the state throughout the country. Strengthening the state, they believed, would help to exert social control.<sup>251</sup> The liberal rhetoric of “civilization” promoted new patterns of behavior and morality, and diversification of consumption patterns. In other areas, the secular state especially limited the influence of the Church in education, and fostered the formation of public opinion and civic culture. Reform of the education system in 1885 supported the new liberal ideals.<sup>252</sup>

Liberal efforts linked the national discourse of sovereignty and nationality to the construction of an imagined community, and officials disseminated nationalism through socialization within institutions. The rise of nationalism manifested itself through the creation and cyclical representation of national symbology. The representation of national symbols is associated with the need to incorporate popular sectors in civic activities. At the turn of the century, the educational system started to honor the national calendar, so by the 1920s every student and citizen presumably was acquainted with the national symbols and calendar.

Education promoted upward mobility of young intellectuals who came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds that promoted in the mid 1910s the discussion of

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<sup>251</sup> To understand the increase of police stations over Costa Rica in this period see José Daniel Gil, "Controlaron el espacio hombres, mujeres y almas. Costa Rica: 1880-1920" (paper presented at the Tercer Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1996).

<sup>252</sup> See Astrid Fischel Volio, *Consenso y represión: una interpretación socio-política de la educación costarricense*, 1a ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1987). Astrid Fischel Volio, *El uso ingenioso de la ideología en Costa Rica*, 1a ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1992). Iván Molina Jiménez, "Explorando las bases de la cultura impresa en Costa Rica: la alfabetización popular (1821-1950)," in *Comunicación y construcción de lo cotidiano*, ed. Patricia Vega (San José: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1999), 23-64.

issues related to the reproduction of patriotism and questioned its meaning. One of the means used by these young intellectuals to question the system was through media, which shows the degree of expansion of the public sphere. Editorials in newspapers and journals began to highlight the failure of the educational system when it came to the representation of national symbols. Media found a lack of nationalism in students and young people. It seemed that nationalism, as expressed decades before, was worn out and renewal of nationalism was needed, as manifested in an editorial of the newspaper *La Prensa Libre* in September 1914.

“We remember that some years ago the date of the glorious emancipation of the Motherland was celebrated with jubilation; in all faces you could see an immense satisfaction of being free as well as the satisfaction to live under a regime of peace, and even school children greeted with enthusiasm our beautiful and patriotic National Anthem. Things have changed starting some years ago and we see it with pain. Now September 15, passes unnoticed for citizens and school children and to those whom they are given the day off, the same way they are given the day of San José (Saint Joseph).”<sup>253</sup>

The lack of patriotism highlighted in subsequent years by the media produced a national discussion on how Costa Rica should celebrate the Centennial. For that purpose, the government created a committee as early as January 1920 and made official arrangements to prepare a historical, biographical, and geographical dictionary,<sup>254</sup> a collection of documents related to independence,<sup>255</sup> medals, stamps,

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<sup>253</sup> March 19, day of the saint patron of the city, San José (Saint Joseph), and it is a local holiday. “Recordamos hace algunos años la fecha de la emancipación gloriosa de la Patria era celebrada con júbilo; en todos los rostros se veía la satisfacción inmensa de ser libres, de vivir bajo un régimen de paz y hasta los niños de las escuelas, se reunían con entusiasmo para cantar nuestro bello y patriótico Himno Nacional. Las cosas han cambiado, y lo vemos con pena de unos años a esta parte. El 15 de setiembre pasa desapercibido para el pueblo y para los niños de las escuelas, a quienes se les da asueto como se da asueto el día de San José.” *La Prensa Libre* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 16, 1914), 2.

<sup>254</sup> The committee decided to reprint, for the fourth time the geography written by educator Miguel Obregón. Miguel Obregón Lizano, *Nociones de geografía patria*, 4 ed. (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1921).



the organization of a historic-artistic exhibition and a conference where children would be the only topic studied.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, citizens and media started to discuss the need to revalorize long forgotten individuals who had given significant contributions to society, such as founding fathers, musicians,<sup>257</sup> and intellectuals. Definitively, society as a whole thought that it was time for renewal of Costa Rica's nationalism and saw the need for changes so symbology and discourse could appeal to new generations.

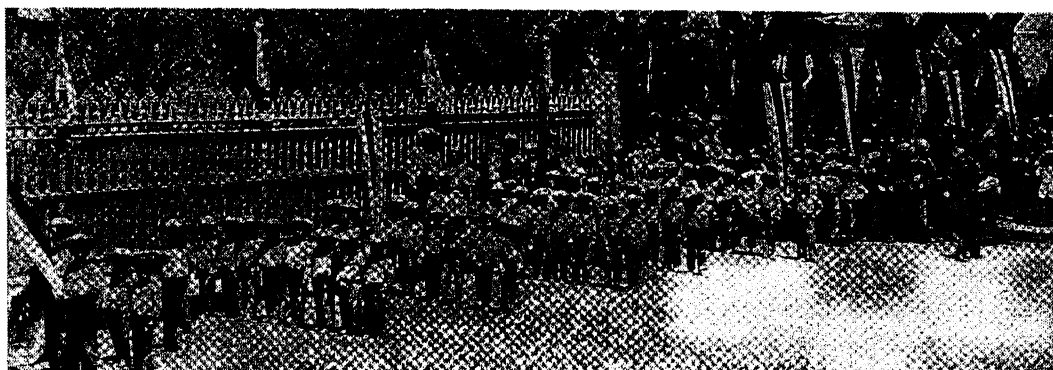
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<sup>255</sup> Carlos Gagini, *Documentos para la historia de Costa Rica* (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1921). The government designated Ricardo Fernández Guardia and Pedro Pérez Zeledón to seek and copy documents related to the Independence to commemorate the Centennial for the years prior to 1848. *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Set. 03, 1920), 2.

<sup>256</sup> ANCR. Congreso, No. 21089, 1920, f. 17-21, 47-19.

<sup>257</sup> The city of Heredia dedicated a monument to Manuel María Gutiérrez, author of the national anthem. "...en Heredia un comité llamado 'Junta Pro-Manuel María Gutiérrez,' que tiene por fin la erección de un monumento al autor del Himno Nacional en una de las plazas de la ciudad, para inaugurarlo el día del Centenario de la Independencia...." ANCR. Congreso, No. 12491, 1921. It was unveiled on December 09, 1921. *Diario de Costa Rica* (Sept. 21, 1921), 1. The monument was promoted by the director of the "Escuela Normal," Omar Dengo as an example for the new generations. Costa Rican sculptor, Juan Ramón Bonilla, donated the bust. It was finally unveiled on December 08, 1921 in Heredia. ANCR. Congreso, No. 12491, 1921, f. 2-5. Published in *La Gaceta* (Costa Rica), No. 118, May 29, 1921. *La Tribuna*, Costa Rica, (Sept. 21, 1921), 1. *Excelsior*, Honduras (Set. 20, 1921), 1.

Illustration 3  
Independence Day Parade.  
Elementary Students, San José  
Costa Rica circa 1921



Source: Fernández Guardia, Ricardo, ed. *Costa Rica en el siglo XIX*. (San José: Editorial Gutenberg, 1929).

Newspapers also criticized the educational system in Costa Rica. Editorials in different newspapers concluded that, notwithstanding the high levels of literacy in Costa Rica, the school system did not promote or reproduce the national discourse and practices that could appeal to students. The number of schools in Costa Rica had increased eight percent from 1906 to 1915. In these years, the number of teachers increased by 38.2 percent and students 47 percent.<sup>258</sup> During this period, Costa Rica's public investment in education was proportionally higher than Mexico, Uruguay, and Argentina.<sup>259</sup> The Liberal governments' commitment to education reflected their politics and achievements. Increasing literacy rates show the effectiveness of

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<sup>258</sup> Costa Rica and Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, *Censo de población de Costa Rica, 11 de mayo de 1927* (San José: Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1960), 83.

<sup>259</sup> Oficina Nacional de Censo, *Alfabetismo y analfabetismo en Costa Rica según el Censo General de Población de 11 de mayo de 1927, Publicación No. 3* (San José: Imprenta Alsina, 1928), 13. Carlos Newland, "The Estado Docente and its Expansion: Spanish American Elementary Education, 1900-1950," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994): 449-67.

education. Literacy rates went from 31.42 percent in 1892 to 76.4 percent by 1927.<sup>260</sup> These figures also provide the information to conclude that in Costa Rica popular and rural sectors had access, studied and grew up reading nationalist history textbooks.<sup>261</sup> However, how citizens appropriated and re-constructed nationhood is another story, as demonstrated publicly by media. Table 9 shows literacy rates that compare Guatemala and Costa Rica.<sup>262</sup> These figures explain the limited impact of education in Guatemala and the accomplishment and expansion of the education system in Costa Rica.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Oficina Nacional de Censo, *Alfabetismo y analfabetismo en Costa Rica según el Censo General de Población de 11 de mayo de 1927*, 13, 15. Costa Rica and Censos, *Censo de población de Costa Rica, 11 de mayo de 1927*, 41, 44. Costa Rica and Industria y Comercio. Dirección General de Estadística y Censos Ministerio de Economía, *Censo de Población 1892* (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1974), xvi-xv.

<sup>261</sup> See Patricia Fumero, "Intellectuals, Literacy and History Textbooks in Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador, 1884-1927," *The Nicaraguan Academic Journal* 4, no. 1 (2003): 69-87.

<sup>262</sup> From 1898 to 1920 Guatemala invested in education 78, 400, 287. 34 pesos. *Excelsior* (Honduras) (August 16, 1921), 4.

<sup>263</sup> In 1920 Nicaragua illiteracy rate age 10 and above was 40.49 percent (461.198 on a population of 638.119). Oficial. Nicaragua, *Censo General de 1920. Administración del General Chamorro* (Managua: Tipografía Nacional, 1920), 10.

Table 9  
Literacy in Costa Rica and Guatemala in Percent  
1892-1927

	Costa Rica*		Guatemala*	
Year	1892	1927	1893	1921
Population	243,205	471,524	1, 364,678	2, 004,900
Literacy rate	31.42	76.4	11.37	13.18

\* Children under 7 years not included.

Source: República de Guatemala. Ministerio de Fomento. Dirección General de Estadística. *Censo de Población de la República levantado el 28 de agosto de 1921* (Guatemala: Taller Guttenberg, 1924), 12, 67. Oficina Nacional de Censo. *Alfabetismo y analfabetismo en Costa Rica según el Censo General de Población de 11 de mayo de 1927*. Publicación No. 3 (San José: Imprenta Alsina, 1928), 13, 15. Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda. Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. *Censo de Población de Costa Rica, 11 de mayo de 1927* (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1960), 41, 44. Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Comercio. Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. *Censo de Población 1892* (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1974), pp. xiv, xv.

Costa Ricans created nationalism through a discourse that stressed civil society and democracy. Emphasis was placed on constructing a society that could build consensus. That explains why there was no oath to the flag. Instead Costa Rican “schoolchildren and citizens sang the National Anthem,”<sup>264</sup> and the flag was displayed.

### *Monumentalia* and Historical Revision

Late official nationalism in Costa Rica prioritized socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems, and conventions of behaviors.<sup>265</sup> By doing so,

<sup>264</sup> The activity was not an institutionalized practice in Costa Rica and no written oath was found, nevertheless there is one reference to a patriotic oath to the flag that took place in Esparta [now Esparza], Puntarenas. *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 28, 1921), 6.

<sup>265</sup> Late official nationalism involves those nationalisms, which by the late twentieth century were married to states. By doing so, nation-states exploited elements of existing models of popular

the government and some Costa Rican intellectual elites revised the rhetoric of the nation, making possible the revalorization of new figures in the context of the Centennial. Monuments and statues have an educational and symbolic quality. Educators, politicians, and media knew it, as argued in the following editorial in the newspaper *La Tribuna* on September 15, 1921:

“More than a foolish human vanity, the statue is a great and generous expression of the morality of a nation... The statues that are erected to the great men of the Republic ARE AN OUTDOORS SCHOOL. Who only sees in them a marble or bronze block to which the genius of the artist gave life; who can only admire the beauty of the curve, or the greatness of the conception, will always be in front of an art work, whose importance is in proportion with the spectators’ culture, but will never feel the emotions radiated by the statue (that the School suggests) on those who familiarized with the thought that created it, they will understand and admire it...”<sup>266</sup>

The selection of the values and events represented by *monumentalia* define their subjective significance. They are an ideological phenomena because they reflect a previously established reality that represents the interests of a particular point in time. Monuments and statues become important as a mean to educate –informally– citizens on national values and history. Knowing it and the importance liberals gave to the European heritage in Costa Rica, one of the obvious figures to revalorize was Queen Isabella I, “La Católica” (1451-1504). Central Americans had celebrated the

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nationalisms for their benefit. Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons. Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, 47.

<sup>266</sup> “Mas que una necia vanidad humana, la estatua es una alta y generosa expresión del sentimiento de la moralidad de un pueblo... La estatua que se erige a los grandes hombres de la República, no es la obra decorativa de una ciudad, ES UNA ESCUELA AL AIRE LIBRE. Quien solo pueda ver en ella el block [sic] de mármol o de bronce a quien el genio del artista diera vida; quien sólo pueda admirar la belleza de la curva, o la grandeza de la concepción, siempre estará frente a una obra de arte, cuya importancia guardará proporciones con la cultura del espectador, pero no sentirá las emociones que la estatua irradia (que la Escuela sugiere) sobre quienes familiarizados con el pensamiento que lo creara, la comprendan y la admiran...” *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 15, 1921), 8. Emphasis from the original.

“Día de la Raza” (Day of the Race) on a regular basis since the beginning of the twentieth century on October 12, as a milestone of the arrival of Spaniards to America, and the Centennial seemed to be a meaningful moment to recognize the key role of Spanish culture. The Congress discussed the need to recognize the role of Queen Isabella I in the discovery of America. Hence, some argued that Congress emphasized the recognition made to Columbus but never to the Queen. For that purpose, the Congress approved a modest scale monument placed at the “Parque España” in San José,<sup>267</sup> and the bust was unveiled on October 12, 1921.

The government and the Congress decided to honor even controversial figures that softened the negotiation of power between the liberal and secular State and the Church. One of these controversial figures was Monsignor Bernardo Augusto Thiel (1850-1901). Bishop Thiel confronted the liberal state in the 1880s with his “cartas pastorales” and communications to the priests, nuns, and laypersons. Thiel also created three newspapers published by the Church,<sup>268</sup> where editorials questioned official state policies and the secularization process, in the same way they questioned changes in society and in cultural practices. After many confrontations, the government sent Thiel to exile because of his active political style, public discussions and high profile. Notwithstanding, his political stance and continuous problems with

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<sup>267</sup> ANCR. Congreso, No. 12392, 1921. This city park is south of the Ministry of Foreign Relations and east of the “Escuela Metálica” in San José.

<sup>268</sup> Thiel founded the following newspapers: *El Mensajero del Clero* (1882); *Eco Católico* (1883), and the *Unión Católica* (1890). To study relations between the Church and liberal state in Costa Rica see, Vargas Arias, *El liberalismo, la Iglesia y el Estado en Costa Rica*. Ricardo Blanco Segura, *Historia eclesiástica de Costa Rica: del descubrimiento a la erección de la diócesis (1502-1850)*, 2a ed. (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1983). Fumero, *Teatro, público y estado en San José, 1880-1914: una aproximación desde la historia social*, chapter 4.

liberal governments, Congress approved Thiel's monument and gave five thousand colones to help fund the project. Moreover, the Congress declared Thiel "Benemérito de la Patria" on May 25, 1921.<sup>269</sup> The revalorization of Thiel shows how distant latter-day liberalism was from its original form, five decades earlier.

At the time of the Centennial, the Costa Rican government took advantage of the relations of its citizens with the Church. That explains the participation of high officials of both, the State and the Church, in all the activities sharing front stage. For example, on September 15, the representatives of the Church in the provincial city of Heredia offered a banquet at the "Casa Cural" (the residence of the priest) for the authorities. The President of Costa Rica, Julio Acosta, the Minister of War, Aquiles Acosta, the Minister of Education, Miguel Obregón, the Minister of "Fomento," Narciso Blanco, and the Commandant of Heredia Nicolás Ulloa, sat alongside with Archbishop Dr. Rafael Ottón Castro, the Vicar of Alajuela, José del Olmo, a priest from Alajuela, Ricardo Zúñiga, and all the priests from Heredia.<sup>270</sup> Liberal reforms and separation of spheres was not an issue at the time.

Differently from Guatemala and similarly to the rest of Central America, the Church in Costa Rica organized a solemn religious procession with the support of the State in Heredia on September 12. Liberals had promoted the creation of a secular society, which they had achieved by 1921. However, along with civil society organizations and students the President Julio Acosta, representatives from the Court

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<sup>269</sup> ANCR. Congreso, No. 12330, 1921.

<sup>270</sup> *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 15, 1921), 9.

of Justice and the Congress marched with the Archbishop, Bishops and priests,<sup>271</sup> and almost every town held a *Te Deum* to thank God for Independence and to seek protection for the following years. Sharing activities indicate a high degree of accommodation achieved by the State and the Church and the relaxation of the “Liberal Reforms” of the 1880s.

Changes were obvious in other levels also, which showed transformations in the nationalistic discourse. When discussing the apathy of society towards the commemoration of Independence Day an editorial of the newspaper *La Prensa Libre* in 1915 argued for the importance of the old days:

“Those glorious days that stand out in the history of each nation, are those that we have forgotten very disdainfully, even though they are many times melted in bronze as homage to those who were stimuli to the present generations. For this reason, when we think about this glorious day [Independence Day], we have intimately censured the way how we celebrate it in our country, almost, almost, as it was the day of the dead, without pomp, without pride of blood.”<sup>272</sup>

*La Prensa Libre* highlighted a key issue. The creation of national symbols and the substitution of the National War against the filibusters in 1856-1857 for the war of Independence was the base for official nationalism in the late nineteenth century. The state and educational system in Costa Rica since the 1880s had promoted an official nationalism based on the “Campaña Nacional” (National War), against the U.S.

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<sup>271</sup> *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 04, 1921), 2. *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 15, 1921), 14.

<sup>272</sup> “Esas jornadas gloriosas que resaltan en la historia de cada pueblo, son las que hemos olvidado, desdeñosamente, a pesar que muchas veces son fundidas en bronce como homenaje a los que fueron y estímulo a las generaciones del presente. Ha sido por eso, que al pensar en esta fecha de gloria, hemos censurado íntimamente la manera cómo se celebra en nuestro terruño, casi, casi, como si fuera el día de los muertos, sin pompa, sin orgullo de la sangre...” *La Prensa Libre* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 16, 1915), 3.



filibuster William Walker.<sup>273</sup> Assessment by the media showed that this kind of nationalism did not appeal to society anymore and that there was a conscious decision to separate from this foundational discourse. Changes in the conformation of national identity were obvious by the 1920s.

At the turn of the century, social transformation and the economic base of the Costa Rican economy became the center of nationalistic rhetoric. The emphasis now was on land ownership, creating in the long run the myth of the “pequeño propietario,” which stated that everyone in Costa Rica owned a piece of land. Rhetoric of social justice started to focus on issues such as education, wages, work shifts, health care, and poverty. In addition, government officials and intellectuals such as two times president Cleto González Víquez stressed the “whiteness” of the Costa Rican population, erasing the impact of mestizaje, the product of centuries of miscegenation, and the obvious presence of indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese and Middle East populations.<sup>274</sup> In this context, officials and intellectuals made a new selection of patriots and founding fathers for the Centennial.

In an era where the stress was on social equality and justice, the National War represented values no longer in vogue. Costa Ricans needed not to win battles over

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<sup>273</sup> The creation of nationalism based on the National War has generated a number of studies. See the pioneer article of Steven Paul Palmer, “Sociedad Anónima. Cultura Oficial: Inventando la Nación en Costa Rica (1848-1900),” in *Héroes al gusto y libros de moda: sociedad y cambio cultural en Costa Rica (1750-1900)*, ed. Iván Molina Jiménez and Steven Paul Palmer (San José: Editorial Porvenir; Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1992), 169-205.

<sup>274</sup> Steven Palmer uses the term coined by González Víquez “auto-inmigración” (self-immigration) to analyze González Víquez “whiteness” discourse, cf. Steven Palmer, “Hacia la “auto-inmigración:” nacionalismo oficial en Costa Rica, 1870-1930,” in *Identidades nacionales y estado moderno en Centroamérica*, ed. Arturo Taracena Arriola and Jean Piel (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995), 75-86. Discrimination, Euro Centrism and racism in Costa Rica are studied by Omar Hernández, Eugenia Ibarra R, and Juan Rafael Quesada Camacho, *Discriminación y racismo en la historia costarricense*, 1. ed. (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1993).

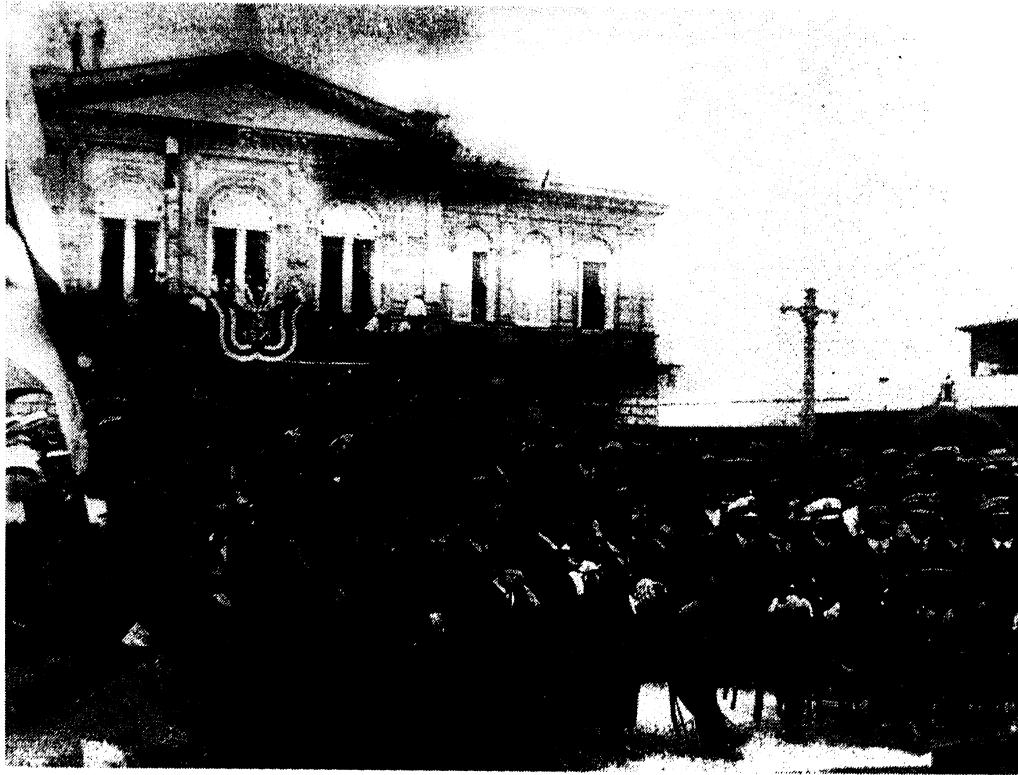
“foreign invaders” but over ignorance. The sole reference to the National War in 1921 was the traditional student visit and speech in front of the monument to the war at the National Park (Parque Nacional), San José. Only on this occasion, there was no governmental speech. This traditional visit on Independence Day had begun in 1895 when the monument was unveiled.<sup>275</sup> In 1921, the President made his official speech of Independence Day in front of the newly unveiled statue of the “benemeritus” first Chief of State, Juan Mora Fernández (1824-1825, 1825-1829, and 1829-1833) in the plaza named after him in front of the National Theatre in San José.<sup>276</sup> Citizens and officials remembered Mora Fernández for the expansion of public education and land reforms. Governmental officials, starting with President Julio Acosta García, members of the Court of Justice, diplomats, especial guests, students and citizens attended the activity in significant numbers.

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<sup>275</sup> See Palmer, "Sociedad Anónima. Cultura Oficial: Inventando la Nación en Costa Rica (1848-1900)." Patricia Fumero, *El Monumento Nacional. Fiesta y develización, setiembre de 1895* (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1998). Fumero, "La celebración del santo de la patria: la develización de la estatua al héroe nacional costarricense, Juan Santamaría, el 15 de setiembre de 1891."

<sup>276</sup> "...que es deber de la Nación celebrar alegremente tan fausto acontecimiento. 3- que entre los próceres fundadores de la República, descuella por su patriotismo, virtudes cívicas y eminentes servicios prestados a la patria el ciudadano don Juan Mora Fernández,... Art. 1- Erijase una estatua de bronce al eximio ciudadano... Art. 2- será colocada en la Plaza Mora Fernández.... Art. 3- En el pedestal se pondrá la siguiente inscripción: Al Benemérito ciudadano DON JUAN MORA FERNÁNDEZ en el primer centenario de la Independencia. La Patria Agradecida 1821- 15 de setiembre- 1921..." ANCR. Congreso, No. 21089, 1920. Media coverage and discussion can be found in the editorial of *La Prensa Libre* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 16, 1914), 3.

Illustration 4  
Unveiling of the Statue of Juan Mora Fernández  
San José, September 15, 1921



Source: ANCR. Manuel Gómez Miralles. N. 10693 (Sept. 15, 1921).

### Celebrations, Students and Popular Entertainment

Costa Rica, unlike the other Central American countries, focused the official celebrations for the Centennial on the school system and not in popular participation. For that reason, the honored were the benefactors of education. Besides Mora Fernández, the Centennial praised the support of education given by presidents

Doctor José María Castro (1847-1849, 1866-1868) and Doctor don Jesús Jiménez (1863-1866, 1868-1870), along with other intellectuals and politicians.<sup>277</sup>

School centered activities promoted the massive participation of students in parades and other activities; obviously, commoners also took part symbolically as spectators/participants interacting alongside. In schools, the programs included speeches and poetry, artistic representations and hymns. As published by the newspapers, officials or teachers distributed candies and refreshments to children when the program of activities ended. In addition, scholastic sports competitions were scheduled. The government of Costa Rica showed to its citizens and the world the advancement in the intellectual, artistic, and athletic capacity of their children.

Official emphasis on school-centered activities was not an obstacle for other actors to organize events. For example, the Chamber of Commerce prepared a dinner,<sup>278</sup> and some workers associations organized balls and inaugurated a new social club, the “Club Centenario” at the “Paso de la Vaca,” a workers suburb, northwest of San José.<sup>279</sup> Some citizens felt compelled to celebrate the Centennial privately and ads fostered consumption. Celebrations were highly hierarchical, but different groups and officials scheduled the events to create a sense of equality in subaltern groups when they participated in and organized similar competitions and public activities as the elites.

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<sup>277</sup> The government also honored the following intellectuals and politicians, Licenciado don Julián Volio and Licenciado don Mauro Fernández. *Diario de Costa Rica* (Sept. 07, 1921), 1.

<sup>278</sup> *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Aug. 26, 1921), 4.

<sup>279</sup> *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 15, 1921), 16.

Official investment for public activities was modest. The government devoted twenty five thousand colones for the events organized in San José. To encourage the participation of popular and middle sectors in the commemorations because the celebrations were school centered, the Congress declared September 12 through the 17<sup>th</sup> as days off for government workers.<sup>280</sup> Government efforts were not enough for some and editorials in newspapers commented on the government's disinterest in celebrating the Centennial of the Independence, as it deserved. Therefore, media called upon private actors to complement efforts with the embellishment of buildings and private dwellings. The reaction was favorable since reports from different cities and towns state that public and private institutions, business, and private houses placed national symbols and illuminated façades with allegoric designs performing a nationalistic stance.<sup>281</sup>

Festivities outside San José, especially in small towns, included diverse manifestations of public entertainment, such as cinema exhibitions in walls, parades and “carrera de cintas,” which is a horse race where the most appreciated young girls of each community embroidered the ribbons to win. National flags decorated houses and “iluminaciones” embellished public buildings.<sup>282</sup> In addition, parades and students went through “arcos de triunfo” (arcs of triumph) all over the country, and in some places, people created corner-stages for speeches.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> ANCR. Congreso, No. 12346, 1921. *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 07, 1921), 1.

<sup>281</sup> *Diario de Costa Rica* (Sept. 15, 1921), 68.

<sup>282</sup> For example at the small town of Belén, Guanacaste “también los pueblos desfilan ante el altar de la Patria... todas las casas de este pueblo adornadas con banderas...” *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 27, 1921), 3.

<sup>283</sup> For an example see *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 27, 1921), 3.

Diverse social groups or associations and cities all over Costa Rica organized balls and dances. Media reported on the dances and discussed changing cultural practices. Criticism focused on the inclusion of U.S. musical repertoire as the One Step and Fox Trot. Newspapers stressed that bands did not play traditional music anymore. Music viewed as traditionally Costa Rican was associated with the European musical tradition such as the mazurkas, polkas, waltz, schottish [sic] and “cuadrilla.”<sup>284</sup> For this reason, media highlighted the workers ball at the municipal warehouse because bands played music with traditional instruments such as the marimba and *quijongo*, and performed a local type of ballad called *tambito*.<sup>285</sup> Cultural practices and comments of this type provide the opportunity to explore social perceptions and concerns.

In Costa Rica, as in the other countries, committees organized balls and banquets by class. Workers planned two different balls in San José, one in the municipal warehouse and the other organized by clerks at the National Theatre on September 17. They held it only two days after the official *socialite* ball took place at the same theatre.<sup>286</sup> Workers rescued and used the same decorations that the elites had prepared for their activity. They gave the profits from this ball to the orphanages of San José, Cartago, Heredia and Alajuela, imitating the elites’ ball fundraising efforts for charity.<sup>287</sup> Even though it was a workers and clerks’ ball, the President, his

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<sup>284</sup> *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 11, 1921), 8.

<sup>285</sup> *Diario de Costa Rica* (Sept. 20, 1921), 1.

<sup>286</sup> The auction for the ball of September 15 collected 14,000 colones. This was an amazing amount at the time. *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 15, 1921), 1.

<sup>287</sup> *La Tribuna* (Costa Rica) (Sept. 11, 1921), 7. Nine hundred personal invitations were distributed. If women were single they received a separate personal invitation in lilac color.

ministers and some male *socialites* attended, making citizens perceive their social differences were of little consequence.

Class was a key issue for society at the time, even though the government promoted a sense of social equality. The workers' ball of September 17 is an example of the problems and social division. To this workers' ball some young male *socialites* attended and comments in editorials argued that it should never happen again because social classes should not mix, especially since women would prefer to dance with *socialites* rather than with men of their own class, and this could lead to the creation of expectations never met.<sup>288</sup>

## Conclusion

Preoccupations and interests differentiate Costa Rica from the rest of Central America. Notwithstanding the support received by groups of citizens and politicians, there was an obvious disinterest in the unionist ideals. For that reason, Costa Rican authorities and intellectuals stressed the specificity of national identity and did not elaborate a Central American identity. Second, Costa Rica promoted celebrations as institutionalized activities linked with the educational system rather than as a commemoration based upon popular activities and participation. Discussions produced by the centennial made evident that the national discourse based on the "Campaña Nacional" did not have lasting appeal, and that national identity was being

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<sup>288</sup> *Diario de Costa Rica* (Sept. 21, 1921), 1.

re-elaborated based upon land ownership, social justice, and race.<sup>289</sup> Moreover, the new identity formation promoted popular participation through the expansion of the public sphere. Participation in decision making through the electoral and education system enabled actors to address their concerns and funnel their demands through institutional instances providing relative social stability.

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<sup>289</sup> For a discussion of race see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). For a study of the negotiation of ethnic and racial identities see Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences on 'Spanish' Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America," 115-17. Stuart Schwartz, "Colonial Identities and the Sociedad de Castas," *Colonial Latin American Review* 4, no. 1 (1995): 185-200.



## Chapter 5. Nicaragua: Celebrations and Interventionism

In the case of Nicaragua celebrations of the Centennial were strongly affected by the country's experience with intervention. This chapter is divided in three. The first section studies the celebration and popular revolts that motivated a two-fold celebration, modest in September, official in December. Secondly, the construction of nationalism based on civic proposals and the effort to promote national identity and attract loyalties to the state is examined. Finally, some questions arising from the creation and reproduction of the national symbology are addressed in this chapter. The government of Emiliano Chamorro established the Oath to the Flag in 1917 and changed the National Anthem in 1918. His government organized a competition that concluded with the unusual decision that the anthem's music should have a colonial melody used by a friar to indoctrinate Indians. Did Chamorro see any similitude between religious indoctrination and nationalism? Was the institutionalization of the Oath to the Flag a political stand against interventionism?

### The Context

The Centennial was not only about commemorating independence. Outside the grip of seriality, the Centennial enabled Central American society to discuss, negotiate, and reshape identities and politics complicating society, and Nicaragua was no exception. After a successful experience of nation formation continued after the National War in 1856-57, José Santos Zelaya strengthened state institutions during his government and liberal ideology permeated the social tissue. The liberal

democratic rhetoric used by workers, especially artisans, as early as 1903 is an example of the extent of the appropriation of this ideology.<sup>290</sup>

The history of differences between political and economical elites did not end during the state formation process; rather, elites constructed an identity linked to the Nicaraguan nation-state as an expression of their understanding of and participation in geopolitics.<sup>291</sup> Elites arrived at this decision in two ways, the National War and the impact of foreign interests, and their participation in an increasingly export-led economy. Hence, they overcame their differences, transformed society, and its relations with the state.

Nicaragua had printed in its historical memory the destruction produced by the National War and the interference of foreign interests which created among elites a fear and distrust of foreign intervention. For that reason, by 1910 they let go the long coveted dream of an Interoceanic canal and embraced an export-oriented economy as a means to achieve development. Liberal reforms had expropriated the Church and communal lands and secularized education as ways to “civilize” citizens and promote capitalist development. The process of nation formation helped to integrate local and nationhood.

Nicaragua’s history of anti-imperialist sentiment were reflected during the celebrations of the Centennial. Only two years earlier, in 1919, three intense popular revolts against U.S. investment and interventionism arose in Masaya, Monimbó, and

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<sup>290</sup> Jeffrey L. Gould, *El mito de "la Nicaragua mestiza" y la resistencia indígena, 1880-1980*, 1. ed., *Colección Istmo* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997), 122.

<sup>291</sup> The construction of the elites identity as a national one is discussed by Wolfe, "Rising from the Ashes: Community, Ethnicity and Nation-State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua", 43-56.

Nindirí against the railway company. The revolts in Monimbó and in Sutiava, both semi-urban indigenous communities, had in common the support of artisans, which had a strong national and anti-imperialist identity. Jeffrey Gould concludes that these protests reflected pressures over land use, ethnic tensions and the control of national finances by U.S. bankers. In 1921, Nicaraguans considered these as the primary causes of economic depression.<sup>292</sup> These first three revolts centered on social issues, whereas revolts in the Zelaya period had been primarily political.

Two years later, in 1921, another social revolt started in northern Nicaragua that led the state to call for a state of war. In the middle of the revolt, Diego Manuel Chamorro took a nationalistic stance with the decision to commemorate the Centennial in December. A presidential decree emitted on August 30, transferred the celebrations to December 23, 24 and 25, 1921. The first question to ask and the one that is central for this chapter is why these dates? What do they represent?

In Nicaragua, historical accounts of the first popular pro-independence movement of 1811, in Granada began in December. Therefore, Chamorro's selection of dates was not a casual one. It responded to increasing nationalistic and anti-imperialist sentiment among the economic and intellectual elites. These Nicaraguan elites were nationalistic, anti-imperialist, and anti-modern by 1921.<sup>293</sup> After more than a decade of U.S. intervention, the elites symbolically challenged the modernization impulse of Dollar Diplomacy through an anti-imperialist stance.

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<sup>292</sup> See Gould, *El mito de "la Nicaragua mestiza" y la resistencia indígena, 1880-1980*, 124-37.

<sup>293</sup> See Michel Gobat, "Against the Bourgeois Spirit: The Nicaraguan Elite under United States Imperialism, 1910-1934" (Ph. D., University of Chicago, 1998). Chapter 5, "Forging an Anti-Bourgeois Spirit," and Chapter 6, "Revolutionizing the Anti-Bourgeois Spirit," 329-458.

Recent studies demonstrate that the vanguardist elites “opposed the peculiar U.S. efforts to democratize Nicaragua; advocated corporatist forms of governance; espoused anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois sentiments; and embraced an inward-looking, agrarian based nationalist imaginary.”<sup>294</sup>

## Celebrations and Revolt

In the midst of constant popular revolts, officials inaugurated a monument for the Centennial in the “Plazuela de Los Leones,” Granada, on September 15, 1921. The plaza was renamed as Independence Plaza to the Heroes of 1811. The Church participated and blessed the new monument.<sup>295</sup> Granada had the most powerful economic and regional elites, which dominated national politics during most of the period of the U.S. intervention, and it “spearheaded the development of the so-called ‘anti-bourgeois spirit’ that would so profoundly affect elites politics and culture.”<sup>296</sup> For this reason, local elites believed that it was necessary to construct a symbol of independence and sovereignty.

Granada’s stature in Nicaraguan politics was reflected in the attendance of an enormous group of citizens at the unveiling of the Centennial monument. Students sang the National Anthem and the “Banda de los Supremos Poderes” played the reveille. The director of the National Institute of the Orient (Instituto Nacional de

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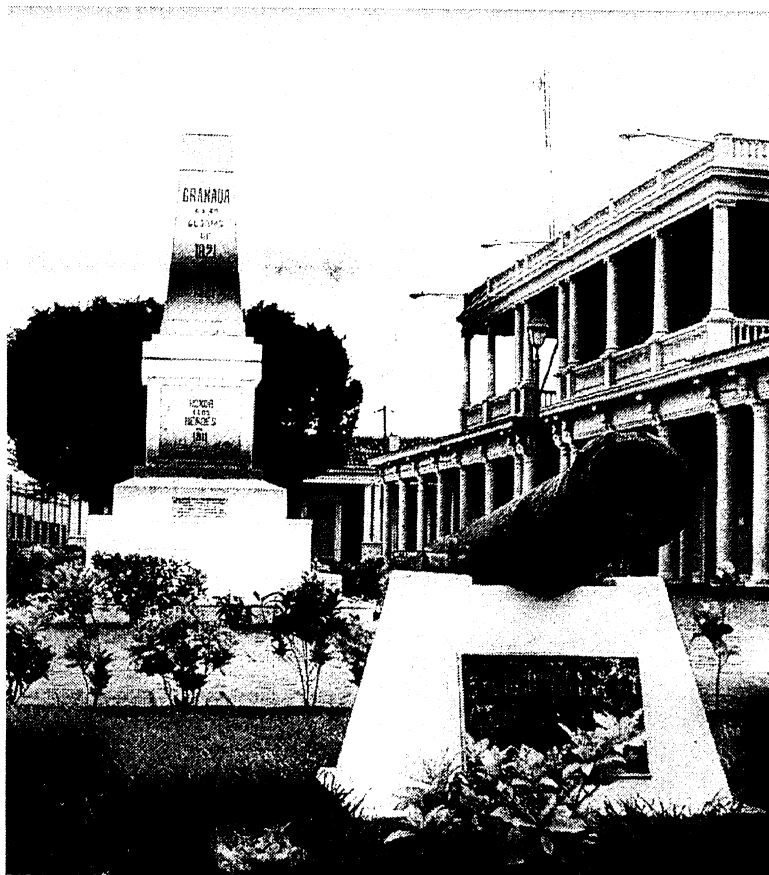
<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 11. Gould, *El mito de "la Nicaragua mestiza" y la resistencia indígena, 1880-1980*, 125-37. Wolfe, "Rising from the Ashes: Community, Ethnicity and Nation-State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua", Chapters 1-3.

<sup>295</sup> Oficial. Granada. *Acuerdos Municipales: 1920-1921* (Granada, Nicaragua: s.p.i. 1920-1921), 109-110.

<sup>296</sup> Gobat, "Against the Bourgeois Spirit: The Nicaraguan Elite under United States Imperialism, 1910-1934", 12.

Oriente) addressed students, citizens, and officials. The Church participated when the Bishop and high priests blessed the monument. Activities in Independence Plaza expressed social hierarchy and power. The program of activities first scheduled the participation of students, then the president of the committee, the “Alcalde Municipal,” and the “Jefe Político del Departamento.” Afterwards it was the moment for the army, the Church, the school director, and the official representative of the State.<sup>297</sup>

Illustration 5  
Independence Plaza to the Heroes of 1811. Granada, Nicaragua



View of the “Plaza a los Héroes de 1811,” Granada, Nicaragua. Picture by Patricia Fumero.

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<sup>297</sup> *La Tribuna*, Managua (Sept. 14, 1921), 2.

The revolt and official celebrations kept President Chamorro in Managua, so he sent the Sub-secretary of Finance (Hacienda), Alcibíades Fuentes, Jr. in to represent him and to give the keynote address. Fuentes gave a speech that acknowledged the role of Granada in the war against imperialism and every type of slavery, and the way locals had fought for sovereignty throughout national history. Those same ideals inspired rebel forces in northern Nicaragua for the next two decades. As Fuentes spoke:

“Son [President Chamorro] of this illustrious city [Granada] deep connoisseur of its annals, when he recalls each of the events that the city has authored, his heart burns with enthusiasm when thinking of her unshakable fidelity and spirit of sacrifice... [Granada] knew and has known how to maintain always a struggle for freedom, without ever finding pessimism in its history. Starting that memorable October of 1811, precursory of those rebellions seeking freedom in Central America, in which the Spanish authorities brought with readiness their cannon and formed their troops in the streets, in an effort to contain the rebellion of the ‘Granadinos,’ whose outbreak was impossible to avoid on December 23, of the same year; and soon, in 1823, its heroic resistance to the defeated imperialistic army in the republican walls of Jalteva. Their unshakable resolution in 1856 [against U.S. filibuster, William Walker], when they [citizens] preferred to see their beloved city devastated and reduced to ashes, before inclining their forehead to oppression and slavery.”<sup>298</sup>

This was not the only activity held to celebrate the Centennial on September 15. Official celebrations took place in public high schools such as the “Colegio de

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<sup>298</sup> “Hijo él [presidente Chamorro] de esta ilustre ciudad [Granada] profundo conocedor de sus anales, cuando rememora cada uno de los hechos de que ella ha sido autora, su corazón se enciende de entusiasmo al pensar la inquebrantable fidelidad y espíritu de sacrificio con que ella supo y ha sabido sostener siempre las luchas por la libertad, sin que nunca haya habido desmayo en su historia, desde aquel memorable Octubre de 1811, precursor de los demás de libertad en Centro América, en el cual las autoridades españolas aprontaron la boca de sus cañones y formaron sus tropas en las calles, en son de guerra, para contener la rebeldía de los granadinos y cuyo estallido fue al fin imposible evitar el 23 de Diciembre del mismo año; y luego, en 1823, su heroica resistencia a las huestes imperialistas derrotadas tras los muros republicanos de Jalteva, su resolución inquebrantable en 1856, prefiriendo ver arrasada y reducida a cenizas la ciudad amada, antes que inclinar la altiva frente ante la opresión y la esclavitud...” Nicaragua, *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores*, 140-41.

Varones de Managua” and the “Colegio de Señoritas” in Managua.<sup>299</sup> The “Banda de los Supremos Poderes” played in Central Park in Managua on September 14 and 15,<sup>300</sup> and the Embassy of Guatemala held a party on the 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>301</sup> These activities were partial celebrations compared to the ones officially programmed for late December 1921. In addition, the first part of Nicaraguan celebrations, as in El Salvador, had revisited the Nicaraguan heroes of 1811.

Although the government scheduled official activities for December, on Independence Day, President Chamorro received diplomats, members of the Court of Justice, military personnel, the police corps, and “prominent citizens” in his residence. In Managua, members of the army reproduced the rite of the Oath to the Flag in front of the President, the General Commander, and generals and chief officials of the Army. Afterwards Chamorro gave amnesty to those in jail accused of misdemeanors and fiscal frauds.<sup>302</sup> Days later the President received the gold medal commemorating the first Centennial of Central American Independence sent from Guatemala.<sup>303</sup> By celebrating in a modest way in September, the government showed citizens that the government was confident of the outcome against the rebel forces and that peace would come.

Popular rebellions and economic depression were not the only problems in Nicaragua. Diplomatic incidents persisted. Relations on the isthmus were tense, and a new problem arose between Guatemala and Nicaragua. President Chamorro sent a

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<sup>299</sup> *La Tribuna*, Managua (Sept. 13, 1921), 2, 4. *La Tribuna*, Managua (Sept. 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>300</sup> *La Tribuna*, Managua (Sept. 14, 1921), 4.

<sup>301</sup> *La Tribuna*, Managua (Sept. 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>302</sup> Oficial. Nicaragua, *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Nicaragua: s.p.i., 1922), 140.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 27.

committee to the official commemorations of the Centennial in Guatemala, chaired by his uncle and signatory of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty, Emiliano Chamorro. E. Chamorro was on his way to the U.S. in another diplomatic commission. Citizens in Central America disapproved of E. Chamorro because he was the signatory of the infamous treaty, and for this reason, they held a huge manifestation against his presence in Guatemala.<sup>304</sup> This demonstration was so well organized that the government and army did not know about it beforehand, or else they did not want to prevent it. Police and army forces were not present to prevent the manifestation and “bochinche” made by students and workers on August 31, 1921. This incident made international relations even more difficult, especially those related with the possibility of a federation or a unionist movement, and showed civic society’s stance towards the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty and interventionism.

By the time Nicaragua celebrated the official commemoration of the Centennial in late December, every country in Central America had already done so. Besides the magnificent celebrations held in Guatemala, Costa Rica had stressed education issues and proclaimed sovereignty with the end of the border war with Panama. Honduras celebrated the Federal Constitution along with the Centennial, and El Salvador had revisited and played homage to the heroes of 1811 and the martyrs of the union.

The three days of official celebrations in December 23, 24, and 25 included official activities, the participation of the Church and students, and entertainment for

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 29.



the masses. Government officials and the National Congress had no difficulties in ongoing joint activities with the Church. In the Congress, Don Carlos Cuadra Pasos, in representation of all the powers of the Nation read the Independence Act. After the “solemn session” of the Congress, and with the participation of all three powers, the Metropolitan Archbishop prayed for the future of Nicaragua. Following this activity, everyone left for the Metropolitan Cathedral to participate with citizens in the *Te Deum* presided over by the Metropolitan Archbishop.<sup>305</sup> In Nicaragua, it is clear that the government thought that the participation of the Church was important.

On the first day of celebrations the President, his officials and representatives of the Congress and the Supreme Court dedicated the day to official activities. After the *Te Deum* at 4:00 p.m., the President planted a tree to commemorate the Centennial, and later received at the Presidential House the Secretaries of State, magistrates of the Supreme Court, diplomats and consuls, Church members, municipal representatives and citizens, in this order. An hour later, everyone present, the army and students held a parade in front of the Presidential house showing Congress and governmental representatives, citizens, foreigners and Church officials their power and importance. At night, celebrations for the masses started with a concert in Central Park and public cinema in [Rubén] Darío Park.<sup>306</sup> The official committee designed popular entertainment for students and for poor children in Managua. For others, there were daily concerts, fireworks donated by the Chinese

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<sup>305</sup> *La Gaceta. Diario Oficial*, Nicaragua (Dec. 21, 1921), 2279.

<sup>306</sup> *La Gaceta. Diario Oficial*, Nicaragua (Dec. 21, 1921), 2279.

colony, and public cinema everyday.<sup>307</sup> In this way, politicians and intellectuals sought to rely on cultural hegemony expressed through symbols of hierarchy.

## National Identity and National War

The elites constructed a nationalism based on civic proposals, and in which citizens, through civic symbols, could find a collective identity at the same time that national institutions were consolidated. One approach the elites used was the selection and creation of a national hero. This effort shows the interest of organic intellectuals to fight against political and local divisions and to foment national identity among elites and citizens soon after the National War (1856-57) ended.<sup>308</sup> This does not mean that the nation formation process ended local loyalties; it means that local identities were woven into the national fabric.

The construction of José Dolores Estrada (1792-1869) as a national hero,<sup>309</sup> started as a private effort of Estrada himself and celebrations grew from then on. In the context of the National War, Estrada fought as commander in chief of a small unit against a better-equipped unit commanded by Byron Cole, outstanding member of the army of the Tennessee filibuster William Walker at the Hacienda San Jacinto.<sup>310</sup> On

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<sup>307</sup> Because of a history of archival and document destruction I did not find other documentation that referred of activities besides this ones and some in Rivas that were similar.

<sup>308</sup> Fumero, "De la iniciativa individual a la cultura oficial: el caso del General José Dolores Estrada en la Nicaragua de la década de 1870," 17.

<sup>309</sup> See Patricia Fumero, "De la iniciativa individual a la cultura oficial. El caso del General José Dolores Estrada en la Nicaragua de la década de 1870."

<sup>310</sup> Transcription of keynotes that refer to the Battle of San Jacinto are found in Ernesto de la Torre Villar, *La batalla de San Jacinto, Nicaragua, 1856. Advertencia y recopilación de Ernesto de la Torre Villar*, no. 231 (México: s.n., 1957).

September 14, 1856, Estrada won the battle when his unit literally threw rocks at the foreigners, and killed Cole.

The Battle of San Jacinto became symbolic in the nationalist rhetoric as a key battle for sovereignty and independence. With the institution of the celebration of Estrada and the Battle of San Jacinto a question arose, when to celebrate Independence? On September 14 or on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Should Independence Day celebrations start with the defeat of the invaders/foreigners? Should the “Guerra Nacional” symbolically represent the quest for independence and sovereignty? Cultural artifacts have meaning only if society endows them with attributions and motivations, and encodes them with significance.<sup>311</sup> This is the case of the Battle of San Jacinto and its cyclic representation on the eve of Independence Day in Nicaraguan cities, towns, and villages.

By the early twentieth century, Nicaraguans reenacted systematically the Battle of San Jacinto and it had become the starting point for the celebrations of Independence Day. It still is today. Governments and intellectuals decided to choose the war against the filibusters as representative/substitute of an independence war that never took place in Central America. Providence, as indicated by the editorial of the newspaper *Semanal Nicaragüense* in 1874,<sup>312</sup> made it possible to bring together these two very distant events, Independence Day (September 15, 1821) and the Battle of

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<sup>311</sup> Arjun Appadurai et al., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.

<sup>312</sup> *Semanal Nicaragüense* (Sept. 21, 1874), 1. For a discusión of the providencialismo see Andrés Pérez Baltodano, *Entre el Estado Conquistador y el Estado Nación: Providencialismo, pensamiento político y estructuras de poder en el desarrollo histórico de Nicaragua* (Managua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica-Universidad Centroamericana, Fundación Friederich Ebert, 2003).

San Jacinto (September 14, 1856). They had in common the defense of sovereignty and independence. The representation and celebration of the Battle of San Jacinto promoted national identity formation through the active participation of citizens in the rituals of the nation, and helped to internalize a new system of values and collective belonging. The National War provided both Costa Rica and Nicaragua with a foundational moment for national identity formation by late nineteenth century.

How can we assess the impact of the nation-building process through institutionalized efforts? Participation in the educational system can give us some insight to find an answer. Table 10 compares data on specific literacy rates in three of the Central American countries. It shows broader literacy in urban areas than in rural areas, which means that the majority of the population was not exposed to the official nationalistic rhetoric in school settings. The majority of those who went to school stayed in the classrooms only two to four years. The government's efforts to create national sentiment therefore had to rely on informal education and popular participation in the theatrical representations of the nation. The table is based upon time of birth and, it indicates if these citizens had gone through the educational system and learned basic history lessons in formal institutionalized settings.

Table 10  
Male and Female Literacy Rates in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and El Salvador  
Based on Birth  
(1896-1925)

Time of Birth	Urban Women			Rural Women			Urban Men			Rural Men		
	CR	Nic.	ES	CR	Nic.	ES	CR	Nic.	ES	CR	Nic.	ES
1896-1905	87,1	63,3	48,2	65,4	17,1	12,2	93,2	76,4	67,5	72,0	25,4	26,3
1906-1915	90,0	63,9	52,1	67,7	16,8	13,8	93,2	76,4	67,5	72,0	25,4	26,3
1916-1925	93,3	68,0	59,9	74,3	16,7	17,7	95,5	73,7	74,0	76,3	20,1	27,3

Source: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos de El Salvador, 1954, 298; Dirección General de Estadística y Censos de Nicaragua, 1954, 188; Dirección General de Estadística y Censos de Costa Rica, 1975, 267 y 269. Iván Molina, "La alfabetización popular en El Salvador, Nicaragua y Costa Rica: niveles, tendencias y desfases (1885-1950)," *Revista de Educación*. Madrid, No. 327 (Jan.-April, 2002), 377-393.

In comparison with Costa Rica, literacy rates were lower in Nicaragua and El Salvador. In the particular case of Nicaragua, the conclusion is that approximately 32 percent of urban and 83.3 percent of rural women did not participate in the school system circa 1921. Literacy rates differ for men, approximately 26.3 percent of urban, and 79.9 percent of rural men did not participate in formal education circa 1921. For this reason, the re-enactment of the Battle of San Jacinto, the representations and demonstration of national symbols and the public swearing through the Oath to the Flag became essential to promote the formation of national identity in those citizens that did not participate in formal education. Innovations as the Oath to the Flag and the National Anthem show the need to renovate the political culture.

Education is vital to achieve development and to "civilize" citizens. In his own way Emiliano Chamorro (president 1917-1921, 1926) was nationalistic. He considered that nationhood and identity had to be strong to be able to confront

Nicaragua's problems and improve society. For that reason, he promoted a literacy program. In Chamorro's words

"I promised free and compulsory education for the people, as the Constitution mandates, and I respected that promise. Common people must read; common people must be educated; they must know their rights and duties; they must acquire a clear and practical notion of good living..."<sup>313</sup>

The government of Emiliano Chamorro promoted education but stressed it for upper class members. His administration built twenty private schools and gave scholarships to study overseas. Table 11 compares different moments of the liberal educational project. The low student rates after 1910 have their origins in war, diseases and, economic and political crisis. By 1920, the illiteracy rate in Nicaragua was 72 percent for those over 10 years of age.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> "que todo el pueblo lea; que el pueblo se instruya; que conozca sus deberes y derechos; que adquiriera la noción clara y práctica de bien vivir." Chamorro, *El último caudillo: autobiografía*, 243.

<sup>314</sup> Harold Playter, Andrew J. McConnico, and Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce United States, *Nicaragua: A Commercial and Economic Survey* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927).

Table 11  
Schooling in Nicaragua  
1899-1922

Year	Schools	Professors	Students	Average of Students per School
1899	230	356	15,297	66.5
1906	278*	n/d	16,444*/25,830	59.15
1908*	278	n/d	20,840	74.96
1910	n/d	n/d	127,269	--
1916*	194	n/d	2,215	11.41
1917*	274	n/d	n/d	--
1921	278	593	19,182	69
1922	344	730	21,642	62.91

\* only primary schools

Source: Nicaragua. *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1917), xviii-xix. Oficial, Sección Estadística. "Cuadro demostrativo de las escuelas oficiales que existen en la República, curso de 1921-1922," in: Nicaragua. *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1922), vi, 35. Enrique Ferrey B. and Armando Torrentes, "Historia Económica de Nicaragua, 1914-1925," Tesis para optar el grado de Licenciatura, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, Managua, 1973, 4. Isolda Rodríguez, *Educación durante el liberalismo, Nicaragua: 1893-1909* (Managua: HISPAMER, 1998), 234-238.

Nicaraguan governments were contradictory in some of their stances. In the case of Chamorro, he knew and spoke about the importance of the education of citizens to achieve "progress" and "civilization." The contradiction starts when class and ethnicity differentiate citizens. To achieve development, Chamorro also knew that for an export-led economy a large cheap labor force was necessary; therefore, it was not profitable to invest in the education of mestizo workers, Afro-Caribbean or indigenous communities.

## National Symbolology

The ultimate replica is every country's national flag, and statues. As explained by Anderson "the statue and its settings are replicas, and peculiar replicas at that, because there is no original."<sup>315</sup> The placement of statues and the systematic creation of national symbols was a process reinforced in Central America in the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, in the first decades of the twentieth century, late official nationalism was still struggling to teach citizens what national symbols represented. Therefore, appropriation of national symbols was a process, which officials needed to reinforce. For that reason, it was necessary for citizens to learn their symbolic meaning, and one way was through the reproduction and recognition of the flag. In Central America, Nicaragua and El Salvador instituted the Oath to the Flag in the 1910's, and in Nicaragua this civic ritual was imposed by the government of Emiliano Chamorro in 1917 and from then on the Oath was repeated on certain occasions as required by law.<sup>316</sup>

In his memoirs Emiliano Chamorro explains why during his government, Nicaraguan officials united both political landmarks, the Battle of San Jacinto and Independence Day, by choosing to celebrate the Oath to the Flag on September 14. This date served two different objectives: to honor the national flag as the symbol of the nation-state, and to give homage to the fathers of liberty, specifically those of the

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<sup>315</sup> Highlight is from the original. Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons. Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, 48.

<sup>316</sup> Oficial. Nicaragua, *Jura de la Bandera Nacional. Ley creadora y reglamentaria* (Managua: Tipografía Nacional, 1917).



second independence who defeated the foreign invaders represented by filibuster William Walker.<sup>317</sup> The decree stated that it

“...is the duty of the State to instill in school children the idea of love and respect for the national flag, making them feel as if they owe irrefutable fidelity...”<sup>318</sup>

In the context of the celebration of the Centennial four years after the institutionalization of the Oath to the Flag, another Chamorro, Diego Manuel, had to decide when to celebrate it due to sociopolitical problems. The official decision was to make the Oath on December 23, however, the ceremony occurred in two different moments, some schools swore on September 14, as required by law since 1917. Another group did the same on December 23, as suggested by the State for that year.<sup>319</sup> This division is evidence that the State was not yet centralized because its decisions were not necessarily observed.

The Oath of the Flag followed the “Reglamento.” It started with a gathering of students in their schools, or in public spaces chosen for that purpose; afterwards the national flag was raised and students were required to sing the National Anthem. Third, an address; fourth, a delegate asked students to swear fidelity to the flag repeating the following words:

“Nicaraguan youth and children: the white and blue ensign that in this moment soars over our heads, the same one that you proudly exhibit on your chests, is the sacrosanct emblem of the Motherland [Patria], to which you must love even more than your own mother, because the ‘Patria’ is the mother of all the mothers. She [the Patria] synthesizes the independence and freedom,

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<sup>317</sup> Chamorro, *El último caudillo: autobiografía*, 256.

<sup>318</sup> “...que es un deber del Estado inculcar a los niños de las escuelas la idea de amor y respeto a la enseña nacional, haciéndoles sentir cómo se le debe fidelidad indeclinable...” Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Nicaragua, *Memoria de Instrucción Pública*, 211. Nicaragua, *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores*, 72-75.

which with sacrifice was bequeathed by our founding fathers. We must, then, with our love and veneration, offer even our lives if it is necessary. Do you consequently swear eternal fidelity to the white and blue flag that is the live representation of the 'Patria'? Then, all the students, raising their hand in oath attitude, will answer in chorus. 'Yes, I swear.'"<sup>320</sup>

Afterwards, students sang the school hymn, and finally a parade started. During this civic ritual, only the official speech or address was permitted; the activity could not be longer than, sixty minutes; no other emblem was allowed but a cockade could be used with the uniform. No other recitation or anything else could be performed if the commission created to organize the activity did not previously approve it.<sup>321</sup> The most distinguished members of each community gave the address, and they spoke of the flag as a representation of the "patria" (motherland) and explained to the community and students how the flag was the emblem and symbol of collectivity. The rite promoted loyalty to the nation and distant places such as Bluefields, a Miskito community in the Caribbean coast, performed it.<sup>322</sup> On the eve of Independence Day, the army also renewed vows, as they also honored the Battle of San Jacinto.<sup>323</sup> Nicaraguans repeated this ritual again on December of 1921.

General Emiliano Chamorro went further in his interest to continue the nation building efforts started by liberal governments in the late nineteenth century. For that

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<sup>320</sup> "Niños y jóvenes nicaragüenses: la enseña blanca y azul que en estos momentos flamea sobre nuestras cabezas, la misma que ostentáis ufanos en nuestros pechos, es el emblema sacrosanto de la Patria, a la que debéis amar todavía más que a vuestra propia madre, porque la Patria es la madre de todas las madres. Ella sintetiza la independencia y la libertad, que a costa de sacrificios nos legaron los próceres de nuestra historia. Le debemos, pues, con nuestro amor y veneración, hasta la ofrenda de la vida si es necesario. ¿Juráis, en consecuencia, eterna fidelidad a la bandera blanca y azul, que es la viva representación de la Patria?' Todos los alumnos, alzando la mano en actitud de juramento, contestarán en coro: "Si, lo juro." Nicaragua, *Jura de la Bandera Nacional. Ley creadora y reglamentaria*, 7.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>322</sup> Nicaragua, *Memoria de Instrucción Pública*, 266-69.

<sup>323</sup> *Diario del Salvador* (Sept. 21, 1921), 4.

purpose, he also instituted the national hymn. To do so, Chamorro commissioned the Ministry of War to call a competition to create the words for the national hymn through a law emitted on April 23, 1918. The specifications of the competition established that the words of the hymn should only speak about peace and work, and that the prose should conform, as nearly as possible, to the musical structure introduced by Friar Castinove when he set music to the sacred scriptures while teaching the Christian doctrine to Indians in Sutiava, near León in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The winner of the contest was the poet Salomón Ibarra Mayorga.<sup>324</sup>

The creation of national symbols, their reproduction, and the re-enactment of specific moments of national history promoted in formal and informal settings the creation of a national community. By 1921, only three or four years apart from the beginning of these practices of the political culture, students and society needed their reproduction to appropriate them.

## Conclusion

Informal institutions such as commemorations and Independence Day and celebrations enable and bind political, social, and cultural activities, and establish implicit rules of behavior and interaction.<sup>325</sup> These cultural practices become a

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<sup>324</sup> República de Nicaragua and Casa Presidencial, *Símbolos Patrios* (2004 [cited Nov. 11 2004]); available from [http://www.presidencia.gob.ni/Presidencia/files\\_index/simbolos%20patrios/himno%20nacional.htm](http://www.presidencia.gob.ni/Presidencia/files_index/simbolos%20patrios/himno%20nacional.htm).

<sup>325</sup> Beezley and Lorey, *Viva Mexico! Viva la Independencia!: Celebrations of September 16*, xii. See Steven Haber's comments on historical approaches to culture in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 13, No. 2 (Summer 1997): 18.

complement to power when they help to shape collective memory as they provide a locus to express loyalties and shape individual and collective perceptions.

Through the theatrical and narrative role, celebrations teach society history, actualize individual and collective memory, and help citizens identify the sites of memory. As argued by Beezley and Lorey “Independence Day parades served as public theater. In this capacity, they reflected the social structure and presented appropriate norms of social interaction, proper behavior in the public arena, and the relationship of individuals to the government.”<sup>326</sup>

Nicaragua was reconstructing its identity in the face of changing economic relations and shifts in the international political scenario. In Nicaragua, intervention changed nationalistic rhetoric to seek moments in the past when society fought for sovereignty and against foreign intervention. Rebel sociopolitical movements gave the correct excuse to celebrate the Centennial on the same dates that commemorated the first struggle for independence. Secondly, the National War of 1856 and the battles held against the foreign intruder were revisited. However, the need to create national identification created a contradiction, the promotion of an anti-imperial and anti-modern stance.

The political commotion produced by the rebel forces divided in two moments the celebrations of the Centennial in Nicaragua. Some activities continued as planned and were held in September, and other participants respected the government’s decision to celebrate it on December. This shows, not only fragmentation in the

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., xi.

educational system, but also shows lack of support for the government, given that some institutions thought that the commemoration should be held in September and not December, or should be celebrated on both dates.

## Chapter 6. The Celebration of the Centennial in El Salvador

The possibility of creating a participatory public changed the political culture of the period and made feasible a process of democratization.<sup>327</sup> The Centennial provided workers and women with an institutionalized space in the public sphere. Participating in voluntary associations, and in the organization of official events, balls, keynotes, and competitions provided new opportunities for subalterns in the political arena. Social forces beyond subalterns determined their participation in the public sphere, but the same social structures enabled them to act.<sup>328</sup>

In El Salvador, the official committee for the Centennial organized complex activities comparable to those held in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The committee did not centralize the organization of the civic program as in those two countries but instead opened participation to organized groups. Salvadoran citizens felt that they could participate in the scheduled activities and were granted spaces for discussion and expression. Some examples are the political support given to workers to participate in the conference held in Guatemala, and the initial governmental support for the creation of the Central American Worker Confederation (COCA) in the context of the Centennial. Another is the all women list of “capitanes de los barrios” in charge of the organization of the activities for the Centennial at the barrios of San Antonio, Belén, Candelaria, and Calvario, all from Santa Tecla.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 7.

<sup>328</sup> The discussion of the ‘duality of structure’ proposed by Giddens, who argues that structures constrain and enable can be found in: Barker and Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity*, chapter 2. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>329</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (July 7, 1921), 5.

This chapter examines popular participation in the celebrations of the Centennial in El Salvador. It is divided in three sections. The first outlines the celebration of the Centennial, citizens' expectations and the role of political changes throughout Central America. Second, a close look at national symbols is made to broaden our understanding of the formation of national identity in El Salvador. Finally, the education system is examined to conclude that because of the exclusion of vast majorities from the school system the Salvadoran state centered the celebrations on workers' organizations and the army.

### Centennial Celebrations and Expectations

The celebrations of the Centennial in El Salvador began as in the rest of Central America with the formation of governmental committees amidst constant review by the media. In El Salvador, citizens looked forward to the celebrations, fueled not only by the Centennial itself, but also by political expectations created by the meeting of the Central American Federal Council in Tegucigalpa and, by the students and workers' meetings in Guatemala. Political changes in the region were key motivations for workers' participation in the organization and in activities. Some of these motivations were the ouster of Estrada Cabrera in Guatemala and the granting of freedom of the press and speech region-wide; manifestations against the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty as the symbol of imperialism, and the ideal of the Federation supported and endorsed by the Pact of San José. Moreover, to foment the federal feeling the official newspaper reproduced a complete version of the Constitution of

the Central American Republics.<sup>330</sup> Locally, the political openness of the Meléndez-Quirón dynasty promoted the creation of workers' associations in El Salvador and provided them with spaces for discussion and free expression.

The government named an official committee to organize all the celebrations. It was called the "Comisión Municipal de los Festejos del Centenario 1821-1921." The openness of the government provided the committee the possibility to follow the example of Guatemala and invited diverse interest groups to attend its meetings. By doing so, they opened *public fora*. Therefore, the committee received an ample response from society and from the "Centro Estudiantil Universitario,"<sup>331</sup> "Sociedad de Profesores de El Salvador,"<sup>332</sup> editors from the *Opinión Estudiantil*, and the *Revista Cultura*.<sup>333</sup> The initiative from the committee went even further and started to delegate activities to interest groups making their participation more effective and visible. For example, they asked the "Ateneo de El Salvador" to organize a literary competition that took place at the "Juegos Florales on September 18<sup>th</sup>."<sup>334</sup> Workers also participated actively as did the "La Liga de Defensa y Protección de Trabajo" (League for the Defense and Protection of Work)<sup>335</sup> and the "Sociedad de Artesanos de El Salvador 'La Concordia'" (Artisan Society of El Salvador 'The Concord') which summoned its members for a meeting to determine their participation in the

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<sup>330</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 20, 1921), 1.

<sup>331</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>332</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 9, 1921), 6.

<sup>333</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>334</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 11, 1921), 6.

<sup>335</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (August 15, 1921), 4.



celebrations.<sup>336</sup> The “Sociedad de Obreros de El Salvador Confederada” (Confederate Workers’ Society of El Salvador) went even further when it created its own committee for the Centennial and democratically named its representatives to the official committee.<sup>337</sup> The degree of organization, the space provided by the Salvadoran government and workers’ active contribution during the Centennial shows that their participation in the public sphere had grown through the years.

Media highlighted meetings of different social groups. Media played a key role, creating expectations and promoting participation and making society aware of the importance of Independence Day and the singularity of the Centennial. Moreover, it not only pressured those municipalities that had not arranged programs for the celebrations by exposing them publicly, but also media put pressure on the economic elites to provide funds required for the organization of the events. Funds were a problem in El Salvador. National government officials knew that it was necessary to design activities to promote bonding with the nation, but they had not or could not provide funding. There was not enough money at the “municipalidades,” as expressed by editorials many treasuries were as “clean as a paten.”<sup>338</sup> Therefore, each town had to organize its own committees to schedule activities and to fund the commemoration as others did in Central America. Cases such as the following were common. A newsagent for the *Diario del Salvador* at Llobasco, wrote that the community was waiting for the “municipalidad” to show some initiative for the celebrations.<sup>339</sup> The

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<sup>336</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 11, 1921), 1.

<sup>337</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (August 26, 1921), 4.

<sup>338</sup> “...tan limpias como una patena.” *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (July 7, 1921), 3.

<sup>339</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Aug. 01, 1921), 5.

State and the media emphasized that the commemoration of the Centennial was the responsibility of society as a whole.

To fund the activities, the State used traditional practices, calling on civil society organizations, such as workers' and social interest associations. These interest groups collected money through donations, subscriptions, concerts, cinema, balls, and the like.<sup>340</sup> The need to fund local activities for the Centennial also promoted bonding between different social actors and related them to the secular cyclical representations of the nation. Workers and society as a whole felt they were active participants and responsible for the commemorations even though they were denied real citizenship.

Fundraising was a joint activity between the State and society. In this process, the Church participated actively in the organization of events and fundraising through different laypersons' associations in which women had a key role. Media highlighted the collaboration of women through their positions in charitable institutions and as schoolteachers in distant semi-urban and rural settings and in San Salvador. For example in Sensuntepeque, a small community near the border with Honduras, the "Alcaldía" organized, among other committees the "Comité de señoras y señoritas Pro-Centenario" (Pro-Centennial Committee of Women and Young Women) to fundraise and schedule activities. The influential newspaper *Diario del Salvador* published their names.<sup>341</sup> Women's participation in the public sphere was of interest to the media. They participated in socially acceptable ways when creating new public

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<sup>340</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Aug. 09, 1921), 3, *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 02, 1921), 6, *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 06, 1921), 4.

<sup>341</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (August 24, 1921), 4.

spaces through voluntary associations, and as members of diverse committees for social, charitable, or political activities. In Central America, women participated in governmental programs collaborating and as social engineers through charitable institutions such as “La Gota de la Leche,” symbolically inaugurated on September 15, 1921,<sup>342</sup> and from their positions as teachers in El Salvador. As social engineers, teachers, speakers, organizers, and jurors women made themselves visible.

Late official nationalism promoted the reconstruction of the indigenous past in the 1920s. El Salvador honored the figure of a mythical Indian chief who resisted the Spanish invasion in 1525, Atlacatl, Señor del Cuscatlán, during the Centennial. This effort did not build up in the following years; the revalorization of the indigenous past had to wait until the end of the decade.<sup>343</sup> However, the festivities of the Centennial society did honor the Indigenous community a few times as well as their contribution to national history. In general, authorities wanted to concentrate attention on the festivities associated with the Centennial and nation building, which did not include the indigenous heritage.

During the months of August and October, El Salvador traditionally celebrated two other activities. In August, Salvadorans celebrated the “Fiestas Agostinas” (August Festivities), a popular commercial and religious holiday to commemorate the “Divino Salvador del Mundo” (Divine Savior of the World), that is to Jesus and his transfiguration. This popular festivity still takes place on the first

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<sup>342</sup> The “Gota de Leche” was inaugurated in El Salvador on September 15, 1921. *La Patria*, Guatemala (Sept. 10, 1921), 7.

<sup>343</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (May 7, 1921), 1.

week of August and combines religious celebrations with strong commercial activity. On October 12, El Salvador traditionally celebrated the arrival of Columbus as in other Central American countries; it was called “Día de la Raza” (Columbus Day in the U.S.). To concentrate efforts, funds and popular interest officials decided to celebrate the former two during the Centennial commemorations. Notwithstanding, October 12, 1921 was additionally celebrated at schools because of its powerful rhetoric that stressed the benefits of the European culture and miscegenation.<sup>344</sup>

Workers were of special interest for the government and their participation was essential for the outcome of the celebrations. To enable the participation of a larger pool of private and public workers the government gave a few days off.<sup>345</sup> For this reason, many small town and village residents went to San Salvador for the celebrations,<sup>346</sup> and as many as two hundred went to Guatemala for the Centennial.<sup>347</sup> The attendance at celebrations scheduled in the capital city motivated complaints from places such as the port of “La Libertad,” which argued that there was almost nobody left to celebrate; therefore, the “Comandancia” organized a reception for those left behind.<sup>348</sup> Workers’ participation was active, and media personnel had a special place as indicated by the order of the official civic parade at San Salvador

“1- Abre la Banda de los Supremos Poderes. 2- Carruaje de la ‘Sociedad de Empleados de Comercio.’ 3- *Diario del Salvador*, con su Cuerpo de Redacción y su Estandarte. 4- *Diario La Prensa* con su Cuerpo de Redacción y su Estandarte. 5- *Diario Latino* con su Cuerpo de Redacción y su Estandarte. 6- *Diario La Palabra* con su Cuerpo de Redacción y su Estandarte.

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<sup>344</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (May 27, 1921), 4.

<sup>345</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 19, 1921), 6.

<sup>346</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 19, 1921), 6.

<sup>347</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 7, 1921), 4.

<sup>348</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 22, 1921), 3.

7- Sociedad "La Concordia". 8- Las Sociedades de la Unión Obrera Salvadoreña. 9- La Unión de Mecánicos de El Salvador. 10- Gerardo Barrios 29 de Agosto. 11- Obreros Gerardo Barrios. 12- Defensa Obrera. 13- La Cruz Blanca. 14- La Unión de Panaderos. 15- Unión de Sastres. 16- Previsión de Zapateros. 17- Alianza Tipográfica. 18- Unión de Barberos. 19- Sociedad de Profesores con su estandarte. 22- Cuerpo Estudiantil Universitario. 23- Escuelas Pestalozzi, Goicoechea y Padre Delgado. 24- Escuelas de Artes Gráficas; la mitad de los alumnos a cada lado de la calle. 25- Escuela Complementación de Señoritas, bajo la dirección de la señorita Carmen Álvarez. 26- Cuerpo de Boy-Scouts, del Colegio Santa Cecilia, de Santa Tecla. 27- Escuelas Municipales de la capital."<sup>349</sup>

The conclusion from this description of the parade is that workers were more important than students, and their participation was valued more than education. The extensive participation and presence of workers during the celebrations made them feel included and responsible for the happenings. They had a voice.

## Symbols of Liberty and Independence

The promotion and creation of symbols of liberty, independence, and sovereignty helped to create a sense of identity among citizens. Recent studies indicate that by the early twentieth century in El Salvador, the state and the elites had not been able to consolidate an imagined community. This is explained by the lack of significant investment in education, and limited politics of representation.<sup>350</sup> This

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<sup>349</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 16, 1921), 3, *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 18, 1921), 5. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 2, 1921), 4. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 3, 1921), 1. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 5, 1921), 6. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 6, 1921), 2. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 5, 1921), 2. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 7, 1921), 1, 4. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 8, 1921), 6. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 9, 1921), 1-2, 6. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 20, 1921), 1. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 24, 1921), 2. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 28, 1921), 4.

<sup>350</sup> See López Bernal, "El proyecto liberal de la nación en El Salvador: 1876-1932". Alvarenga Venutolo, *Cultura y ética de la violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932*, Fumero, "Intellectuals, Literacy and History Textbooks in Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador, 1884-1927." Iván Molina Jiménez, "La

particularity limits the appropriation of national symbols because public representations of national rites enables even citizens who do not participate in the educational system to appropriate them. Precisely, the systematic representation of the rites of the nation is a component of informal education that promotes the creation of a sense of belonging and acknowledgment of what is national. Patricia Alvarenga's study reveals that the army initially promoted nation building in El Salvador in the late 1800s, which is explained by the fact that army personnel was formally educated by the Salvadoran state.<sup>351</sup> López Bernal argues that even though there are indications of an interest in nation building in the 1911 celebration of the Centennial of the first cry of independence of 1811, the process of the construction of the cultural complements to the State only started in the 1920s.<sup>352</sup>

The selection of national symbols was so recent that all Salvadorans were not conscious of them by the early 1920s. It was during the government of Manuel Enrique Araujo (1911-1913) that officials adopted national symbols such as the flag and the "escudo." Officials used the national emblem for the first time on September 15, 1912,<sup>353</sup> along with the national flag.<sup>354</sup> It is worth noting that Salvadorans chose the Federal flag as their own and placed the national emblem on it, intertwining both identities making nation-building more complex.

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alfabetización popular en El Salvador, Nicaragua y Costa Rica: niveles, tendencias y desfases (1885-1950)," *Revista de Educación*, no. 327 (2002). Molina Jiménez, *La estela de la pluma. Cultura impresa e intelectuales en Centroamérica durante los siglos XIX y XX*.

<sup>351</sup> Alvarenga Venutolo, *Cultura y ética de la violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932*, 146-47.

<sup>352</sup> López Bernal, "El proyecto liberal de la nación en El Salvador: 1876-1932".

<sup>353</sup> El Salvador, *Escudo Nacional* [electronic] (Asamblea Legislativa, [cited Nov 8 2004]); available from <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/elsalvador/escudo.htm>.

<sup>354</sup> El Salvador, *Bandera Nacional* (Asamblea Legislativa, [cited Nov 8 2004]); available from <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/elsalvador/bandera.htm>.

The creation of national symbols in El Salvador depended upon who was in power. For that reason, the process of appropriation of these symbols was disrupted from one generation to the other. An official decree commissioned the first National Anthem in 1866 and it remained the official one until 1871.<sup>355</sup> On September 15, 1879, students sang a second hymn accompanied by the Military Band when they commemorated the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence.<sup>356</sup> Political changes led the government of General Carlos Ezeta (1890-1894) and Rafael Antonio Gutiérrez (1894-1898) to prohibit the second anthem in official settings from 1891 to 1895. During these governments, officials chose another anthem that was war related and dedicated it to the Salvadoran Army.<sup>357</sup> Information is not clear as to whether Araujo changed it or not in 1921, but for the centennial, another anthem circulated. Belisario Calderón wrote the lyrics and Pedro J. Guillén the music of this National Anthem.<sup>358</sup> During the celebrations of the Centennial, students sang this version for the first time. Furthermore, this was the first generation of Salvadorans to represent national symbols chosen during the government of Araujo. People had yet to learn the lyrics.

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<sup>355</sup> “Por acuerdo oficial de 8 de octubre de 1866 fue adaptado el primer Himno Nacional de El Salvador, con letra del Doctor Tomás M. Muñoz, de Nacionalidad Cubana, y música de don Rafael Orozco, entonces Director de la Banda Militar.” El Salvador, *El Himno Nacional* [electronic] (Asamblea Legislativa, [cited Nov. 8 2004]); available from <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/elsalvador/himno.htm>.

<sup>356</sup> “El himno Nacional fue estrenado en la mañana del 15 de septiembre de 1879, aniversario LVIII de nuestra independencia, en la explanada del antiguo Palacio Nacional. Con acompañamiento de la Banda Militar lo cantaron alumnos de las Escuelas y Colegios de la Capital, quienes lo habían ensayado por espacio de tres meses.” Juan José Cañas composed the lyrics and Juan Aberle the music. On December 14, 1953, this anthem was chosen by legislative decree as the official one. Ibid.([cited]).

<sup>357</sup> “Por acuerdo del 3 de junio de 1891, fue declarado Himno Nacional “el guerrero compuesto por César Georgia Vélez y dedicado al Ejército Salvadoreño”: Desempeñaba la Presidencia de la República el General Carlos Ezeta y la Secretaría de Guerra Don G. De Machón.” Ibid.([cited]).

<sup>358</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 5, 1921), 3.

For this reason, it was vital for authorities to invest the circulation and reproduction of the National Anthem.

To promote identification with the nation and create its unique political community, El Salvador established the Oath to the Flag in 1915. From then on, every student was required to swear on September 15, and repeat: “¿Prometéis respeto y fidelidad a la bandera salvadoreña, símbolo de la Patria?”<sup>359</sup> The editorial in the official newspaper, *Diario Oficial* on September 1915, explains the objective of this ritual:

“To instill in the heart of the children the cult to the ensign of the Motherland [Patria], is to wake up in their hearts the love for their nationality, is to teach them the cult of those ideals considered by our founding fathers and our heroes, and to indicate them the objective of our historical mission, in the affirmation of the creed of democracy and in the perfection of our republican institutions.”<sup>360</sup>

Nation building efforts in the school system included other strategies. One of these was the establishment of the “Semana Cívica” in 1915.<sup>361</sup> Costa Rica had also created the “civic week” to celebrate Independence Day in the same period. The purpose of the week was to reinforce students’ knowledge of national history related to independence movements and to re-visit heroes and martyrs. Consequently, officials organized activities to promote awareness of the nation and national symbols

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<sup>359</sup> “Do you swear respect and fidelity to the Salvadoran flag, symbol of the motherland? “Decreto del supremo Poder Ejecutivo estableciendo el homenaje al pabellón,” in *La Semana Cívica*. Publicación Anual de la Dirección General de Educación Pública Primaria. Año 1, No. 1, 1915 ( San Salvador: Imprenta Nacional), 14.

<sup>360</sup> “Infundir en el corazón de los niños el culto a la enseña [the flag] de la Patria, es despertar en sus corazones el amor a la nacionalidad; es enseñarles el culto a los ideales que desfilaron en la mente de nuestros próceres y nuestros héroes, y señalarles el oriente de nuestra misión histórica, en la afirmación del credo de la democracia y en la perfección de nuestras instituciones republicanas.” *Diario Oficial* (El Salvador) (Sept. 16, 1915), 1893.

<sup>361</sup> López Bernal, “El proyecto liberal de la nación en El Salvador: 1876-1932”, 148.



in the educational system and by the time the government held the celebrations of the Centennial in 1921, students knew what was celebrated and how to honor national symbols and heroes.

In early twentieth century El Salvador, women had limited educational opportunities. Many of the institutions that educated young women were Catholic. These schools were interested in supporting national identity formation, and for that reason they promoted the “instilment of the national feeling” in girls. The private high school at Santa Tecla, is one example of these efforts. This all girls school organized the “Religious-Patriotic-School Celebrations” to “encourage the national feeling that also lives in the heart of young women.”<sup>362</sup> Women were also invited to identify as citizens.

Women not only participated in balls and as an element of attraction on parades, they also contributed decisively in committees where they organized different activities and raised funds. Women were key actors as reproducers of ideology. For example, schoolteachers organized students and prepared them to perform and reproduce the rituals of the nation. Throughout Central America, woman’s virtues represented the nation. Notwithstanding women were denied real citizenship.

Identity formation in El Salvador was complex. The state emphasis was on national symbols, heroes, and values at the same time that students and citizens

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<sup>362</sup> “Se organizaron Fiestas Religiosas-Patrióticas-Escolares, conducentes a fomentar el sentimiento patrio que también anida en el corazón de la juventud femenina.” *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 10, 1921), 6.

honored symbols associated with the Federation.<sup>363</sup> Salvadorans sang the National Anthem along with the Central American hymn<sup>364</sup> and the hymn for Morazán.<sup>365</sup> Officials provided copies of the National Anthem, the Central American and Federation hymns to students, which for the few literate citizens circulated in flyers, and newspapers printed them. This effort promoted Federal ideals in a generation of students that could identify themselves as having a dual nationality, Salvadoran and Central American.

Rites make possible the appropriation of symbols by groups excluded from the educational system, especially in countries where the percentage of illiteracy is high and the use of national symbols was recent. Citizens acquire knowledge of the main dates of the national calendar when commemorations represent and reproduce them publicly and when symbols are displayed. Rites are one of the cultural complements of power.

Statues were another cultural complement to power. The placement of statues in public spaces (*monumentalia*) helped to teach citizens their national symbols, history, and heroes. Through an inventory of the statuary and names of buildings and streets, and year of placement, an analysis of political or ideological trends can be made. Plazas and parks are spaces that can be re-symbolized, such as some of those

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<sup>363</sup> “Y no olvidéis que al jurar en este día solemnemente la Bandera salvadoreña, juráis también los ideales de Unión, de confraternidad centroamericana; juráis, digo, la Bandera de Centroamericana unida como nos la legaron nuestros antepasados, como la soñara Morazán y la falange luminosa de tantos héroes como brillan en el cielo límpido de la Patria Historia.” *Diario Oficial* (El Salvador) (Sept. 17, 1917), 1726.

<sup>364</sup> “hoy reproducimos el himno a Centro América, escrito por el poeta guatemalteco Rafael Arévalo Martínez.” *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 4, 1921), 4, taken from *Diario Latino*, El Salvador.

<sup>365</sup> “Circuló impreso Himno a Morazán que estrenárase en las fiestas del Centenario, música maestro Alberle y letra de Carlo-Bustamante.” *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 1, 1921), 3.

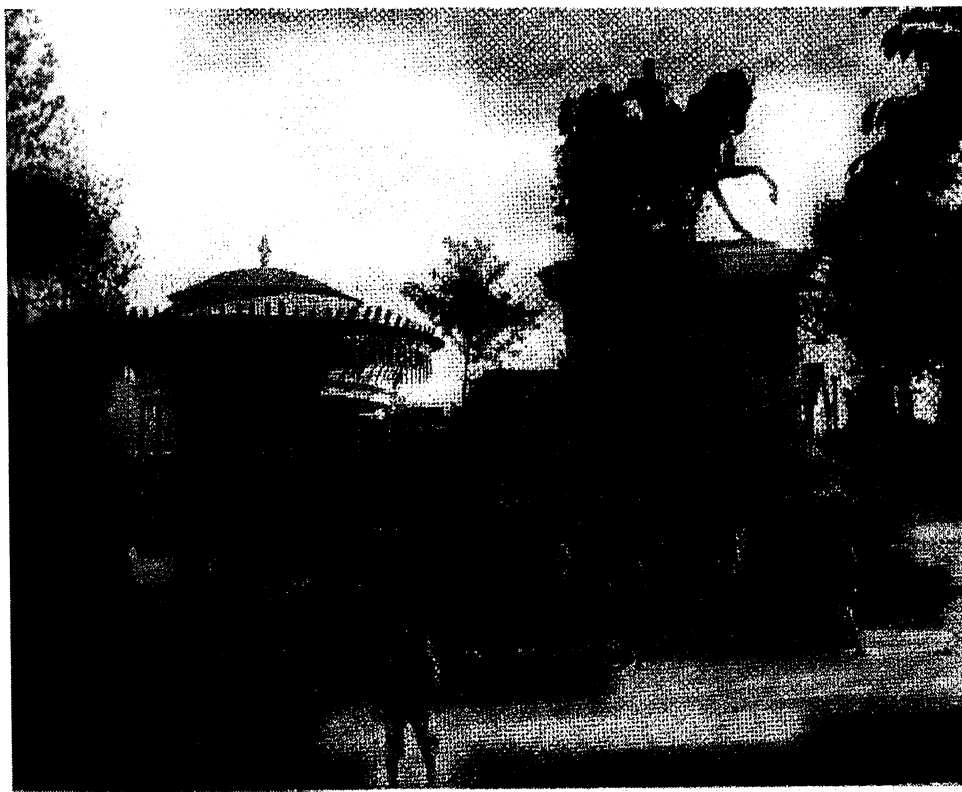
described above in 1921. Former Plaza de Santo Domingo later called “Parque [Simón] Bolívar” (1867) was renamed as “Parque Barrios” in 1909 and has the statue of President Gerardo Barrios (1858, 1859-1860, 1861-1863). The formerly Plaza de Armas, renamed in 1902 as “Parque Dueñas,” [for President Francisco Dueñas (1851-1852, 1852-1854, 1856, 1863-1865, 1865-1871)] was renamed as “Plaza de la Independencia” in 1921. That year officials placed a new monument to the founding fathers. The “Parque Morazán,” (1882) has a Francisco Morazán statue. Germans residents in San Salvador provided the statue of one of the founding fathers priest José Matías Delgado in 1921 for the “Parque San José.” On Independence Avenue, several busts of founding fathers were placed.

Other sites chosen by the state in San Salvador to enact the rituals of the nation and which at the same time were symbolic and socialization sites were the “Campo de Marte” (1892), and the “Quinta Modelo.”<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> López Bernal, “El proyecto liberal de la nación en El Salvador: 1876-1932”, 96-97. Carlos Urrutia, *La ciudad de San Salvador* (San Salvador: s.p.i., 1904), 81-96. The “Campo de Marte” was constructed as the site for military practices but by the turn of the century it had become an important socialization space. América Rodríguez Herrera, *San Salvador: historia urbana 1900-1940*, 1. ed., 1 vols., *Ciudad y Memoria; volumen 3* (San Salvador, El Salvador: Dirección de Publicaciones e Impresos, CONACULTURA, 2002), 45-46.

Illustration 6.  
Parque Dueñas, circa 1912



Source: George Palmer Putnam, *The Southland of North America. Rambles and Observations in Central America during the Year 1912* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Son, 1913)

The Centennial afforded the opportunity to consolidate a late official nationalism. The State organized activities in which citizens could see themselves and learn from the past when re-enacted in public spaces or at the school system. To do so, they remembered, commemorated and honored some of the founding fathers: the liberator of slaves, José Simeón Cañas,<sup>367</sup> independentist priest José Matías Delgado,<sup>368</sup> first president of the United Provinces of Central America, Manuel José

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<sup>367</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 8, 1921), 3.

<sup>368</sup> See Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, *José Matías Delgado, prócer centroamericano* (San Salvador: CONCULTURA, 2000).

Arce (1825-1827) and independentist leader Juan Manuel Rodríguez.<sup>369</sup> The State even re-named some of the streets after them.<sup>370</sup> Arce also received a memorial stone at the place where the building of the “Ayuntamiento” (town hall) was located.<sup>371</sup> Father Nicolás Aguilar had a statue placed at San Salvador,<sup>372</sup> and unionist advocates promoted a special homage for unionist Morazán.<sup>373</sup> For renewing bonds with Morazán, the committee circulated a hymn especially composed to honor him that students sang during the festivities.<sup>374</sup> The government argued that through the example and devotion shown by Morazán to the ideals of a “Patria Grande,” Salvadorans could find inspiration and build their identity and patriotism. El Salvador, in the context of the Centennial, gave privilege over military symbols to those founding fathers who had direct involvement in independentist movements or those associated with unionist ideals.

## Students

Students participated in the celebrations at different levels. Academically they showed communities their intellectual advances in exhibitions and literary competitions throughout the country. They showed their physical development through sports competitions and their civic commitment in parades. The government and the committee for the Centennial took students into consideration in every

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<sup>369</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>370</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>371</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 2, 1921), 4.

<sup>372</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 13, 1921), 6.

<sup>373</sup> *La Patria*, Guatemala (September 13, 1921), 3.

<sup>374</sup> Circuló impreso Himno a Morazán que estrenárase en las fiestas del Centenario, música maestro Alberle y letra de Carlo-Bustamante. *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 1, 1921), 3.

activity but they were not the focal point. At the official activities held in San Salvador, students marched in the parade behind several delegations of workers and the army. To demonstrate their respect and commitment to society and the nation, officials, diplomats and citizens repeated the Oath of the Flag directed by a high ranking official and marched in military parades and military such as exercises at the “Campo de Marte.” This provided the students with a reality; they had to learn to respect the army.

Officials were interested in the education of specific social groups, not the masses. Contradictorily, elites believed in education as a means for development but the Salvadoran government failed significantly. The number of closed schools shows this contradiction, 56.46 percent of municipal schools were closed from 1918 to 1919, as were 65.75 percent of private schools, while private elementary schools grew to 65 percent. There is also a significant difference with this phenomenon and enrollment, while the number of schools diminished; student enrollment grew from 69,496 in 1918 to 85,135 in 1919.<sup>375</sup> These figures could be misleading because the earthquake in 1917 damaged or destroyed 75 percent of the buildings. Table 12 shows schools in El Salvador to show the exposure of students to national symbols and national rites in formal settings.

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<sup>375</sup> *Centro América. Órgano de Publicidad de la Oficina Internacional Centroamericana* (Guatemala: 1920) Vol. XII, No. 1, 72-73. Vol. XII, No. 2, 408-409.

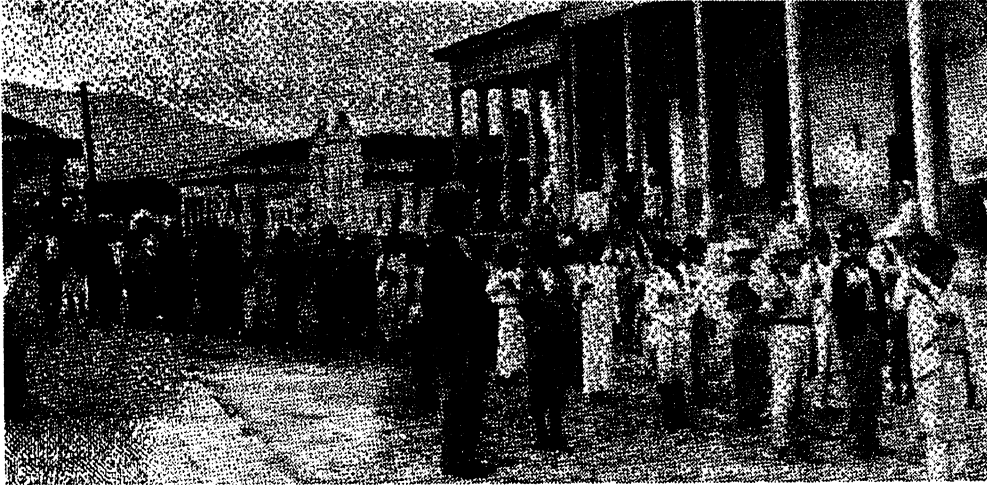
Table 12  
Schools in El Salvador  
1918-1919

Year	Urban Schools	Rural Schools	Night Schools	Municipal Schools	Private Schools	Private w/ Ele- mentary	Kinder- garten	Total
1918	529	200	67	147	73	35	4	1055
1919	511	203	68	84	47	58	n/d*	971

Source: *Centro América. Órgano de Publicidad de la Oficina Internacional Centroamericana* (Guatemala: 1920) Vol. XII, No. 1, 72-73. Vol. XII, No. 2, 408-409.

Literacy rates for those born from 1896 to 1915 were low in El Salvador. Table 10 (see page 155) shows that illiteracy was approximately 50 percent for urban women and 33 percent for men, while in rural settings it was approximately 87 percent and 74 percent respectively. These figures show that the exposure of citizens to institutionalized formal settings was very low. This can explain why the government of Jorge Meléndez stressed the open participation of citizens; especially adults linked to workers' organizations. By doing so, officials tried to weave them into the national fabric. The focus on the Centennial at El Salvador was the army and workers', not the school system because vast majorities were excluded.

Illustration 7  
Civic Parade. Elementary Students, San Salvador  
El Salvador circa 1901



Source: Guatemala. *Souvenir de la Exposición Pan-Americana (Buffalo, N.Y., May 1-November 1) y directorio mercantil de Centro América, el jardín del hemisferio Occidental* (New York: The Stephenson Co., 1901).

## Conclusion

The process of re-symbolization provides insight for political trends. San Salvador became at the turn of the century the political, cultural, and economic center of El Salvador after a long struggle with Santa Ana, the second largest city, a processing and marketing center for coffee, sugar, and grain. The earthquake of 1917 destroyed 37.5 percent of the buildings in San Salvador, and badly damaged another 37.5 percent of them.<sup>376</sup> The earthquake made it possible to reorganize, rebuild, and re-symbolize spaces with new political and architectural languages, and the

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<sup>376</sup> Rosa Orellana, et. al., "Historia e incidencia de la arquitectura de lámina troquelada en el desarrollo de la arquitectura salvadoreña" (San Salvador, Universidad Albert Einstein, 1986), 84. Cited by Rodríguez Herrera, *San Salvador: historia urbana 1900-1940*.



Centennial permitted the renewal of loyalties and consolidated San Salvador as the capital city.

Workers, women, and civic organizations seized public spaces where they manifested interest and active participation as citizens. The expansion of the economy diversified the social spectrum, enabling them to get involved. Collective action is a rational act of establishing common identities. This explains why workers' and women's organizations participated in the Centennial in different official committees when summoned by the Government. Therefore, these actors appropriated the space offered or opened when they organized different activities. Citizens also participated when they improved the facades of buildings,<sup>377</sup> and when they cleaned, painted, and repaired houses to prepare for the "magnificent" celebration of independence. Thus, citizens shared the State's belief, when considering that these activities demonstrated culture, modernization, and development.<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, their identification with the cause led workers to ask their women to dress in white and blue, the colors of the Salvadoran national flag and the Federation, for the Centennial celebration ball of the "Sociedad de Artesanos El Porvenir" at Santa Tecla.<sup>379</sup>

The corollary of the liberal argument over education was that education was a means to "civilize" and modernize society. However, in El Salvador elites preferred

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<sup>377</sup> "Concurso ornamental de fachadas. Se excita al público san salvadoreño para que ponga todo su esmero en la ornamentación de las fachadas de sus habitaciones con cortinas, alegorías, follajes, flores artificiales y naturales, banderas federales, españolas e hispano-americanas, colgantes artísticos, etc. El día 14 de septiembre por la mañana, una comisión especial nombrada por la Oficina General Organizadora, saldrá, juntamente con las personas que al efecto se inviten, para examinar las fachadas y adjudicar premios a las más artísticas." *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 14, 1921), 1.

<sup>378</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 06, 1921), 4.

<sup>379</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (July 8, 1921), 2.

to have a population of illiterates that they thought could be easily dominated. Contradictorily, they knew that education was an effective means to create efficient and disciplined workers in the capitalistic sense. This contradiction is explained because the Central American economy relied heavily in agriculture and industrialization started late.

## Chapter 7. Honduras

Honduras participated differently in the celebrations of the Centennial because of decisions made at the Pact of San José. On December 16, 1920, delegates declared that all five countries would be part of the Federation, and a constituent assembly had to be organized, which afterwards would become the “Consejo Federal Provisional” (Provisional Federal Council) and draft the Federal Constitution. The Federal Council was instructed to meet in Honduras and write the Federal Constitution.<sup>380</sup>

This chapter studies the two-fold role of Honduras during the celebrations of the Centennial. Honduras became host of the Federal Council meetings as established in the Pact of San José. The Federal Council wrote the Constitution that promoted sociopolitical changes in Central America. At the same time, Hondurans celebrated the Centennial as national citizens and as Central Americans. This chapter covers the complex dual celebrations held in Honduras, those related to the Centennial and the work of the Federal Council.

The first section addresses citizen participation through public celebrations and the impact of modernity shown through sports competitions, airplane rides, and traditional activities such as horse races and “carreras de cintas.”<sup>381</sup> In the two following sections, I show the importance of the participation of foreign communities, women, intellectuals, workers, students and the Church for the organization of activities, the provision of urban decorations and fundraising. Next, unionism is examined to provide insight on how the Federal Council meeting

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<sup>380</sup> “Pacto de Unión de Centroamérica.” Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 209-19.

<sup>381</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 08, 1921), 1.

promoted a two-fold identification. Finally, the importance of the Federal Constitution for the sociopolitical and economic reorganization is examined.

## Public Celebrations

Newspapers started to provide the setting and create expectations for the activities during the official celebrations of the Centennial from September 13 through the 18<sup>th</sup>. The role of the media in Honduras was similar to its role throughout Central America. In early September, the Honduran newspaper *Excelsior* wrote

[The official program] "...offers popular joy through diverse genres of entertainment, useful gifts to those in the Penitentiary and poor children, sumptuous *Tedeum* [sic], a grand airplane ride, [festivities] charged with laurel crowns, which will be placed over the statue of the Hero [Morazán], general and obligatory illuminations..."<sup>382</sup>

This excerpt from the newspaper also provides information of the symbolic meaning of the "Hero" of the Centennial. From the perspectives of Hondurans and other Central American countries, Francisco Morazán embodied the ideal of the Union. This fact explains the number of hymns and homage given to him. For that reason, on September 9, Costa Rican intellectual, and politician, José Antonio Astúa Aguilar, "Jefe de las Oficinas de la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente,"<sup>383</sup> symbolically presented the Federal Constitution to the Honduran society at the

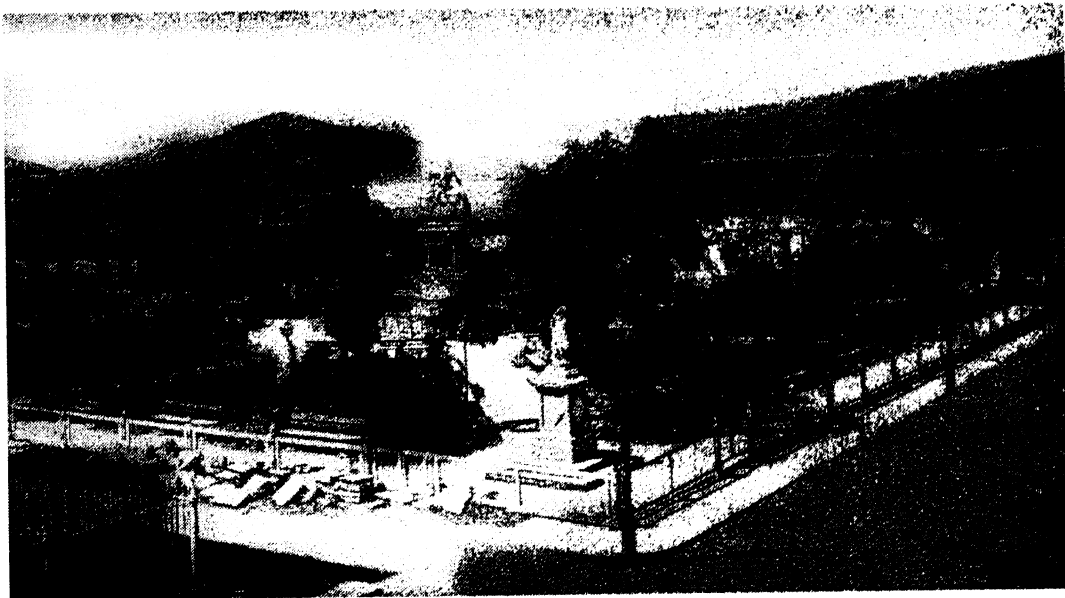
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<sup>382</sup> The program "...promete regocijos populares de diversos género, obsequios útiles a los reos de la Penitenciaría y a los niños pobres, suntuoso *Tedeum*, soberbio vuelo del aeroplano, cargado de coronas de laurel, y las cuales serán arrojadas sobre la estatua del Héroe, iluminación general y obligatoria, etc... fiestas 13-18... Para tales días la Comisión ha pensado dirigirse al Poder Ejecutivo en solicitud de la más rigurosa supresión de venta de bebidas alcohólicas a fin de que no haya sucesos graves que lamentar..." *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 03, 1921), 1.

<sup>383</sup> The Costa Rican government did not appoint Astúa Aguilar officially, because the Costa Rican congress did not endorse the Federal pact.

Central Park, in front of the statue of Francisco Morazán.<sup>384</sup> On Independence Day, Congressional representatives sent copies of the Constitution to El Salvador and Guatemala via airplane, where they received very emotional greetings.<sup>385</sup> The decision to send the Constitution via airplane proved to the region the triumph of modernity by using novel means of transportation, and through a reinterpretation of the political history of Central America.

Illustration 8  
Parque Morazán, Tegucigalpa  
c. 1898



Source: Perry, G.R. *Directorio nacional de Honduras, América Central* (New York: Spanish-American Directories Co., 1899).

At the same time, Honduras organized the Federal Congress held in Tegucigalpa, and prepared for the festivities associated directly with the Centennial as stated by the newspaper *Excelsior*. The “Ministerio de Gobernación,” in Tegucigalpa

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<sup>384</sup> *Diario del Salvador* (Sept. 10, 1921), 2.

<sup>385</sup> *Diario del Salvador* (Sept. 27, 1921), 1.

created the official committee.<sup>386</sup> The committee met in its reception room and in the Chamber of Commerce, which provided a strategic link for fundraising and organization. At the first meeting expectations were shared and everyone present agreed to eliminate from the official program “everything inadmissible that is traditional in our popular festivities and we need to strive in this opportunity to show the country’s activities and the development it has achieved to this time.”<sup>387</sup> Therefore, officially they did not consider popular entertainment, although some towns and villages scheduled activities, such as public cinema and fireworks. Every event represented social and political hierarchy, as in each of the five countries. Diverse types of committees organized activities differently for each social group. Local committees were organized everywhere, from cities to small towns, villages and at schools. In all these committees’ women – single and married – shared positions on the board with men.<sup>388</sup>

Committees worked hard and weeks later, they planned an elementary school exposition in every town, an art exhibition,<sup>389</sup> public cinema,<sup>390</sup> as well as a national agriculture and industry exposition as a symbol of culture and development.<sup>391</sup> The artisan guild “Sociedad de Artesanos El Progreso,” organized the National Art, Agriculture, and Industry Exposition funded by subscriptions collected by the guild

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<sup>386</sup> *Excelsior* (Honduras) (April 21, 1921), 4.

<sup>387</sup> “aquello impropio que se estila en nuestras fiestas populares y procurando que constituya una oportunidad para que se pongan de manifiesto las actividades del país y el progreso que han alcanzado hasta la fecha.” *Excelsior* (Honduras) (April 23, 1921), 1.

<sup>388</sup> For example in Ocotepeque, the creation of the committee for the Centennial was made up by “con directiva extensa de señoritas y caballeros. Gran entusiasmo en el asunto.” *Excelsior*, Honduras (April 30, 1921), 1.

<sup>389</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (July 22, 1921), 4.

<sup>390</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 21, 1921), 1.

<sup>391</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 05, 1921), 4.

because the government could not afford it.<sup>392</sup> These support to the official celebrations provided by workers' show the capability of officials to involve subalterns by opening public fora. Another example is the competition to create a patriotic speech as an homage to the federal flag organized by "La Liga Nacional de Empleados del Comercio" of Honduras. The League invited national and Central American poets to participate.<sup>393</sup> Professionals also called for competitions as the medical –doctors, pharmacist, and dentists,<sup>394</sup> guild did. The fundraising capability and the power workers' associations had to draw participants to diverse activities during the celebrations, shows the importance and level of organization workers had at the time and their presence in the public sphere.

Governments throughout Central America relied on traditional fundraising efforts to make the Centennial a "magnificent event." Governments did not only rely on workers' associations and the school system but also on the Church and on foreign colonies. Honduras was no exception. Middle Eastern citizens such as Syrians and Palestinians donated urban art in La Ceiba,<sup>395</sup> a park called "The Delight" (Las

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<sup>392</sup> *Excelsior* (Honduras) (July 15, 1921), 3. *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 02, 1921), 3.

<sup>393</sup> "...Liga Nacional de Empleados de Comercio, y deseando dicho centro rendir un homenaje a la Insignia nacional, acordó abrir un concurso para una oración patriótica a la Bandera Federal, que deberá constar de un coro y 3 estrofas de 4 versos decasílabos cada uno./ ...se permite excitar muy atentamente a los poetas centroamericanos, para que se sirvan tomar parte en tal certamen, enviando sus trabajos a esta Secretaría a más tardar el 2 de Septiembre próximo, pues dicho Himno será cantado por las escuelas de esta capital el 3 de octubre entrante aniversario del nacimiento de nuestro Héroe Francisco Morazán. El autor de la mejor composición, que el Jurado calificador designe, recibirán un premio de 100 pesos..." *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 30, 1921), 1. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (August 30, 1921), 2.

<sup>394</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 17, 1921), 1.

<sup>395</sup> "...la Colonia Siria obsequiará a La Ceiba un Cristo, que es una magnífica obra de arte, para que en la fecha del centenario, sea colocado frente al mar, a semejanza del Cristo de los Andes." *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 2, 1921), 4.

Delicias) in San Pedro Sula,<sup>396</sup> and a five thousand dollar park called “Palestine.”<sup>397</sup> As in other countries in Central America, the Chinese colony donated fireworks directly and specifically imported from China for the Centennial.

Media played a key role throughout Central America when highlighting the participation of foreign-born citizens or residents. For example, while explaining the donation the newspaper correspondent from *Excelsior* showed Honduran gratitude by exalting the role Chinese had in commerce as well as their honorable behaviour.<sup>398</sup> This comment is important because many foreigners such as the Chinese and Middle Easterners received silent discrimination and were not considered as full citizens by society. Other foreign communities such as Europeans and U.S. citizens finally decided to contribute after the publication of several articles inviting all foreign communities to participate.<sup>399</sup> Mexicans donated a theatrical presentation.<sup>400</sup> Through their contributions, foreign communities made themselves visible as supporters of their host nation or showed by doing so their loyalty to their country through active participation and donations during the Centennial.

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<sup>396</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 5, 1921), 1.

<sup>397</sup> “La colonia palestina y siria, para conmemorar el Centenario ofreció al pueblo de esta ciudad la construcción de un parque al Sur de la población que llevará el nombre ‘Parque Palestina.’ Calcúlase que el valor de aceras y el jardín valdrá cinco mil dólares.” *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 09, 1921), 1.

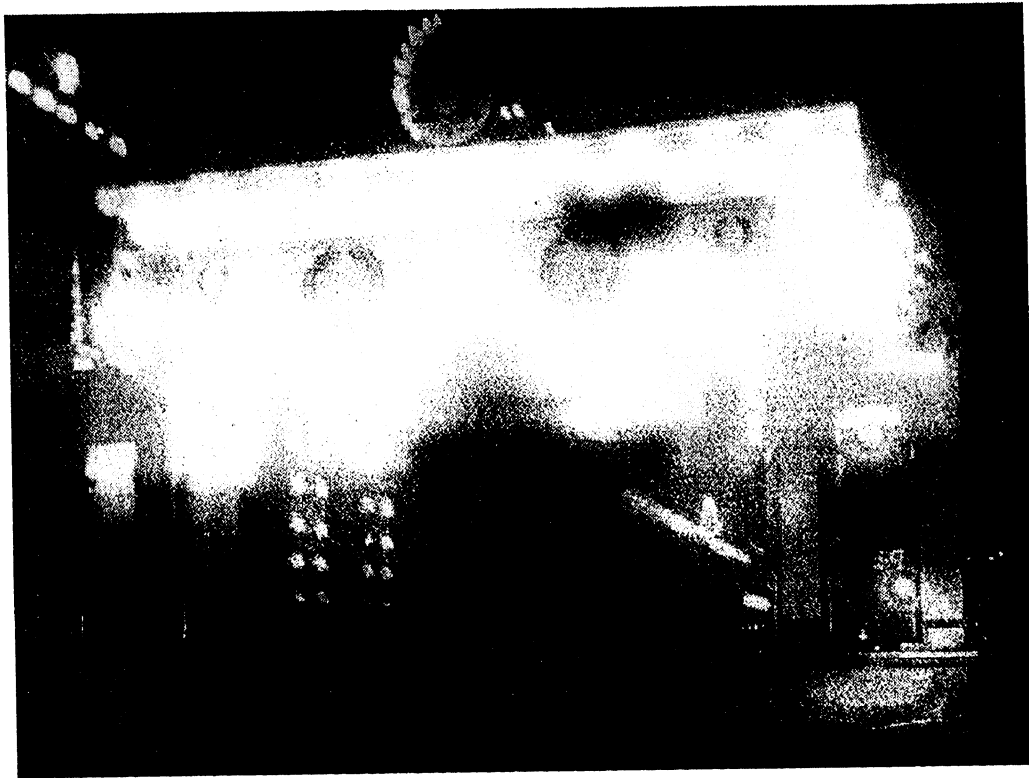
<sup>398</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 13, 1921), 1.

<sup>399</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 26, 1921), 2. *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 18, 1921), 1.

<sup>400</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 10, 1921), 2.



Illustration 9  
Illuminations Arc Donated by Middle Easterns.  
Celebration of the First Cry of Independence. San Salvador, 1911.



Source: El Salvador, *El Álbum del Centenario del Primer Grito de la Independencia de Centroamérica. Conmemoración del primer centenario del nacimiento del eximio Dr. Manuel Enrique Araujo* (El Salvador: s.p.i., 1911).

Celebrations promoted a national and Central American feeling. This explains the importance of music during the Centennial in the conformation of identities, albeit national and traditional music competed with foreign tunes. For this reason, poets and musicians composed several hymns for the Centennial in Honduras –as in the other countries. Committees established competitions to create hymns, others such as Dr. Emeterio Lanza Ramos, reminded society that his brother Santos Lanza created a hymn for Independence Day. Students in Colón and Olancho sang the hymn on

Independence Day.<sup>401</sup> In sum through competitions, poets and musicians created a hymn for the Arts, Agriculture, and Industry Exhibition, a hymn and a waltz for the Centennial, and a “Marsellesa Unionista.”<sup>402</sup> In addition, they also composed two marches, one for the “Patria Grande” (Great Nation), and the other honoring emancipation. Obviously, the local, national, and school bands played the Central American Hymn which citizens and students sang everywhere, along with each of the five National Anthems. During the celebrations of the Centennial, Honduras promoted identity as two-fold, national, and Central American, showing an incomplete nation building process.

Intellectuals and professionals in Central America sought improvement through education, a focus not stressed by the Honduran government. Poets,<sup>403</sup> doctors,<sup>404</sup> and writers<sup>405</sup> called for participation in collective books written nationally and others to participate in regional efforts. Other intellectuals such as writer Jesús Aguilar dedicated two of his works to the Centennial of Central American Independence,<sup>406</sup> and the State commissioned intellectuals Jorge Valladares Márquez

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<sup>401</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 25, 1921), 3.

<sup>402</sup> *Excelsior* (Honduras) (April 30, 1921), 1. The hymns and marches included a patriotic hymn saluting Independence Day, September 15, composed by Dr. Emeterio Lanza Ramos. The “Himno a Centro América” composed by the poet Alonso A. Brito, music by Nicolás Zúñiga and the “Marsellesa Unionista” composed by Brito, music by Leo Rodríguez. Hymn for the “Exposición de Artes, Agricultura e Industrias,” composed by Brito, music by don F. Varela B. Waltz “Centenario” and march “Emancipación” both composed by Marcial Maradiaga. *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 25, 1921), 3. *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 17, 1921), 1. *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 12, 1921), 4. For hymns and poetry composed for the Centennial refer to the Appendices.

<sup>403</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 20, 1921), 1.

<sup>404</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (May 30, 1921), 3.

<sup>405</sup> *Excelsior* (Honduras) (May 20, 1921), 1

<sup>406</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 25, 1921), 3.

y Rafael Valle, to start the “Centennial Collection.”<sup>407</sup> Besides this commission, the government also hired Toribio Ponce to make an edition of an album for the centennial.<sup>408</sup> Regional governments promoted this initiative but few prospered.

The Honduran media did not highlight student participation. Scarce information leads to the conclusion that their participation was mostly limited to classroom settings, singing the National Anthem and diverse hymns and some exhibition in local parks.<sup>409</sup> The young adult association “La Juventud” tried to support education efforts by promoting the celebration of September 15, as the day of the teachers because of their important role as mentors of children, but no further comments was found in newspapers.<sup>410</sup> Officials approached university students differently. The Ministry of Education temporarily closed the University from September 10 to 20<sup>th</sup>,<sup>411</sup> and gave the university student association two thousand gold pesos to send five representatives to the Panamerican student conference held in Guatemala.<sup>412</sup> The first representatives chosen were from the schools of Law, Medicine, and Engineering.<sup>413</sup> Through the support given to the students to participate in democratic deliberations the government promoted changes in the political culture.

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<sup>407</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (July 28, 1921), 4.

<sup>408</sup> The edition was of 5000 books. Profits were split between the State and the author. *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 10, 1921), 4. *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (May 12, 1921), 3.

<sup>409</sup> In Tegucigalpa students from the “Mondragá” high school danced dresses as in the 1860s. News by *La Patria*, Guatemala (Sept. 22, 1921), 3.

<sup>410</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 05, 1921), 4.

<sup>411</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 20, 1921), 4.

<sup>412</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 26, 1921), 4.

<sup>413</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 26, 1921), 4.

The official program was not limited to intellectual activities and exhibitions. Diverse associations and foreign communities<sup>414</sup> organized balls throughout Honduras. The Italians in La Ceiba celebrated a *fiesta* to honor nationalist revolutionary leader Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) as the main activity to end the celebrations of the Centennial and it was successful.<sup>415</sup> Hondurans saw Garibaldi's fight for the unification of Italy, as similar to the challenge of the unification of Central America. In addition, three hundred people attended and danced in San Pedro Sula at the New York Hotel on the 17<sup>th</sup>, until sunrise next day.<sup>416</sup> However, social celebrations were not the only ones; *socialites* organized charitable activities for prisoners,<sup>417</sup> and provided 2000 thousand poor children with clothes.<sup>418</sup> In addition, students from the School of Medicine organized two lyric and literary activities at the national theatre to raise funds to cure tuberculosis.<sup>419</sup> Social problems and appearances were a concern among elites and intellectuals. These preoccupation was manifested also in their interest and approval of a "dry state" during the Centennial to avoid inconveniences and regrettable incidents.<sup>420</sup>

The Honduras celebrations were similar to those in the other Central America states. Women participated as *socialites* in charitable activities, in the organization of

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<sup>414</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 12, 1921), 4.

<sup>415</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 23, 1921), 4.

<sup>416</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 23, 1921), 4.

<sup>417</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 19, 1921), 2.

<sup>418</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 12, 1921), 1.

<sup>419</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 13, 1921), 1.

<sup>420</sup> The program "...promete regocijos populares de diversos género, obsequios útiles a los reos de la Penitenciaría y a los niños pobres, suntuoso *Tedeum*, soberbio vuelo del aeroplano, cargado de coronas de laurel, y las cuales serán arrojadas sobre la estatua del Héroe, iluminación general y obligatoria, etc... fiestas 13-18... Para tales días la Comisión ha pensado dirigirse al Poder Ejecutivo en solicitud de la más rigurosa supresión de venta de bebidas alcohólicas a fin de que no haya sucesos graves que lamentar..." *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 03, 1921), 1.

school centered and municipal activities, and in balls and banquets. Society was changing and women's roles and participation with it. This was even more obvious in the workers' movement as they chose delegates for the Central American Workers Conference. An indication of a change in the mentality among workers' and social practices, workers' elected Ernestina Mejía, representative of the Sociedad de Artesanos "La Fraternidad" (San Pedro Sula), as one of their delegates and sent her to the Central American Workers' Conference held in Guatemala.<sup>421</sup> The Honduran workers' organizations financed these delegates.<sup>422</sup> Mejía was the only women at the Conference and her fellow workers acknowledged her role. Women's participation was growing slowly and effectively and their participation in society was acknowledged.

## Unionism

Unionism was a driving force for diverse sectors in El Salvador and Honduras. Newspapers received many telegrams sent by citizens, diplomats, and officials declaring the importance of the Centennial, the "resurgimiento de la Unión,"<sup>423</sup> the importance of those who fought for freedom and the founding fathers.<sup>424</sup> The effervescence of the Federal Congress meetings was felt everywhere.

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<sup>421</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 02, 1921), 3.

<sup>422</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 18, 1921), 1.

<sup>423</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 09, 1921), 4.

<sup>424</sup> For example see the arguments in "La República de Centroamérica," in: *Revista de la Universidad*. Vol. XI, No. 9 (Tegucigalpa: Sept 15, 1921), 513.

Even in Juticalpa, Olancho, distant from Tegucigalpa, locals organized a demonstration to support the “Union” on September 15.<sup>425</sup>

Intellectuals linked with the State promoted official nationalism with less success in Honduras, because of the influence of Unionism and the stress over a regional identity. For example, at the same time citizens performed the oath to the Honduran flag, in towns such as Danlí, after the *Te Deum* and with a feverish unionist sentiment, the priest blessed the Federal flag, and took it to the plaza where thousands swore fidelity to the “sacred Federal flag.”<sup>426</sup> Definitively, Honduras had not consolidated the nation-building process by 1921.

To renovate and promote a national feeling in Honduras in cities such as Tegucigalpa, La Ceiba,<sup>427</sup> and San Pedro Sula,<sup>428</sup> authorities placed statues to Morazán. Symbolically officials decided to replace the statue of General Bonilla with one of Morazán in San Pedro Sula.<sup>429</sup> Ironically, by stressing the figure of Morazán besides renovating nationalistic feelings, officials renovated Federal allegiances.

Honduran liberals revision of history included diverse activities to try to show their efforts and to appeal citizens. For example, officials organized a civic activity in which the remains of General Manuel Rosa, a renowned liberal leader, were relocated. Media highlighted Rosa as one of the “most important heroes” of the Liberal Revolution of 1894.<sup>430</sup> In other places such as Juticalpa, local authorities

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<sup>425</sup> *Excelsior* (Honduras) (July 16, 1921), 1.

<sup>426</sup> “...sagrado estandarte federal.” *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 14, 1921), 6.

<sup>427</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (June 16, 1921), 1.

<sup>428</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 25, 1921), 4.

<sup>429</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (June 17, 1921), 1.

<sup>430</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 27, 1921), 1.

placed a monument in the central plaza and commissioned a geographical, historical, and sociopolitical monograph.<sup>431</sup> Santa Rosa de Copán and Tegucigalpa decided to place obelisks.<sup>432</sup> Some towns and villages stressed their local identity during the Centennial, fragmenting national identity formation.

Liberal Reforms in the late nineteenth century tried to separate public and private spheres. Liberal governments in Honduras stressed the separation of Church and State and the secularization of society during their governments, but after four or five decades of reforms, the influence of the Church in society was not seriously undermined. Differently from Guatemala, and similar to other countries, Honduras gave the Church a visible role. *Te Deums* and Church bell ringing, as well as masses and the active participation of the Archbishop, priests, and laypersons were important.

However, the Federal Congress was considered a secular organization for the Federation meaning that at the Central American level there was a total and definitive separation from the Church. In contrast, the emblem of the Federal Republic read, “Dios, Unión, Libertad” (God, Union, and Liberty).<sup>433</sup> Nevertheless, the Honduran government organized a religious activity where Archbishop Dueñas gave the keynote speech,<sup>434</sup> and invited the Federal Council, diplomatic representations, Secretaries of State, Supreme Court, and citizens, all knowing that the music would be religious.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (May 31, 1921), 1. *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 14, 1921), 6.

<sup>432</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (Sept. 12, 1921), 4.

<sup>433</sup> Título XI. Del Escudo de Armas y de la Bandera Nacional. Art. 184. *Constitución Política de la República de Centro-América*, Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 256.

<sup>434</sup> *Diario de Centro-América*, Guatemala (August 25, 1921), 7.

<sup>435</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 16, 1921), 1.

Illustration 10  
Federal Emblem



Honduras also shared the same expectation of the other four countries: to consolidate national identity through the promotion of symbols of the nation-state. After years of nation building, they learned that power by itself did not mean much, thus, national identity needed a cultural complement provided by symbols and rituals. Hierarchy was also unfolded in its symbolic representation through parades that expressed the essence of society. But, society is not reproduced on the parades. Women took hold of the space and participated organizing collateral activities, such as giving food and clothing to prisoners, preparing their houses and children or students for the magnificent event, and because they were involved actively in unionist committees and delegations, and other types of interest groups.



## The Federal Council Meetings

Honduran unionist Alberto Ucles explained the importance of the Union in 1921:

“The objective that we set out to obtain by means of the National Union is to reach all those benefits which, domestic and foreign, a great Nation can enjoy, and which small states necessarily lack, [because they are] powerless and weak. Which are these benefits? First, to provide for the common defense of the State. Second, to conserve public peace, so much inside the Confederation, as against foreign attacks. Third, the regulation of commerce, between ourselves [the five members of the Federation] as with foreign nations. Fourth, the superior tendency of foreign relations, political and commercial ones... We must unite, if we want to enjoy the great benefits that the consolidation of our small States in a great Nationality will bring.”<sup>436</sup>

Was Ucles correct? Did everyone in the region share his assessments? Union meant to seek a common good, but key issues were at stake. One of them was the threat of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. Obviously, the delegates did not approve in the first instance Nicaragua's request for acceptance of the treaty. Later, Costa Rican delegate and former president Cleto González Víquez (1906-1910, 1928-1932) created a formula accepted by everyone, but the Nicaraguan delegate responded that he had to consult his government.

Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras did not approve the clause proposed by Nicaragua because their officials believed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was

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<sup>436</sup> “El fin que nos proponemos obtener por medio de la Unión Nacional, es el de alcanzar todos aquellos bienes de que puede gozar, en el interior y en el exterior una gran Nación, y de que carecen necesariamente pequeños Estados, débiles e impotentes. ¿Cuáles son estos bienes? 1º- Proveer a la defensa común de los Estados. 2º- Conservar la paz pública tanto en el interior de la Confederación, como contra los ataques del exterior. 3º- La reglamentación de comercio, tanto de los Estados entre sí como con las Naciones extranjeras. 4º La superior tendencia de las relaciones exteriores, tanto políticas como comerciales... Si queremos gozar de los grandes bienes que trae consigo la consolidación de nuestros pequeños Estados en una gran Nacionalidad...” Luis Batres, “La cuestión de la Unión Centroamericana,” *Revista de la Universidad-Tegucigalpa* XI, no. 9 (1921): 532.

harmful to their interests. Although, governments' representatives knew that the Federation was the only institution that could negotiate a new agreement with the U.S. that could fit everyone's interest.<sup>437</sup> Costa Rica approved this option, as did El Salvador and Honduras. Nicaragua did not accept this new clause nor signed the treaty because the U.S. pressured the government to stick with the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty and its clauses, and delegates withdrew from the conference. Nicaragua expressed interest in becoming a member of the Federation if decisions related to this problematic issue changed to fit theirs and U.S. interests. Besides this issue, the possibility of new dispositions related to national armies bothered Nicaraguan officials.

Certainly Ucles was correct. A Federal government was the only kind competent to "conserve public peace" inside Central America, because it was a way solve the cross-border politics. Regional commercial discrepancies could only be addressed by unifying codes, and military power could only be limited if it gave the power to a supranational organization such as the Federation would be. Politically, with the exception of Nicaragua, Central American states thought that the only way to negotiate with the U.S. was through an unified political force. The problem is that Central America's historic political organization promotes localism, and the efforts to consolidate a nation-state failed. The nation-state is yet an unfinished process.

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<sup>437</sup> Honduras, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licdo. Don Antonio R. Reina, Secretario de Estado, por Ministerio de la Ley. 1920-1921*, 10-11.

Delegates sent to the Conference of San José, Costa Rica were among the conspicuous intellectuals and politicians of the isthmus. In addition, workers' leaders and advocates such as Honduran Coronado García, and Costa Rican Joaquín García Monge were included. Noticeable is the participation of Salvadoran intellectual Alberto Masferrer, unionist and anti-imperialist, and who founded the Labor Party in 1930 and advocated workers' rights and moderate social-welfare programs.<sup>438</sup> Table 13 shows official delegates to the Conference of San José and their positions.

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<sup>438</sup> A close look at Masferrer's ideological stand can be found in "Alberto Masferrer," *Humanidades* Revista de contenido Científico-Humanístico de la Facultad de Ciencias y Humanidades, Universidad de El Salvador. Special issue (Jan-March, 2003, No. 2).

Table 13  
Delegates to the Conference of San Jose  
December 1920

Country	Name of Delegate	Position
Costa Rica	Alejandro Alvarado Quirós*	Minister of Foreign Affairs
	Cleto González Víquez*	President (1906-1910, 1928-1932)
	Joaquín García Monge	Minister of Education
	Teodoro Picado	President to be (1944-1948)
	Ricardo Fournier Quirós	(Costa Rica?)
El Salvador	Miguel Tomás Molina*	Presidential candidate in 1920s
	Reyes Arrieta Rossi*	Former Minister of Economy
	Alberto Masferrer	Intellectual and journalist
Guatemala	Salvador Falla**	
	Carlos Salazar*	
	Ricardo [Ernesto] Viteri***	Intellectual, Lawyer and Diplomat
	José Falla	(Guatemala?)
Honduras	Carlos Alberto Uclés*	Minister of Foreign Affairs
	Mariano Vázquez*	
	Coronado García	Former President of the “Liga de la Defensa Nacional”
Nicaragua	Manuel Pasos Arana*	
	Ramón Castillo C.*	
	Enrique Chamorro Solórzano	
	Alberto Chamorro Pasos	

Sources: Honduras. *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licenciado don Antonio R. Reina H. Secretario de Estado por Ministerio de Ley: 1920-1921* (Honduras: Tipografía Nacional, 1922), 10. “Pacto de la Unión de Centro-América. Celebrado en San José de Costa-Rica el 19 de enero de 1921.” Honduras. *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licenciado don Antonio R. Reina H. Secretario de Estado por Ministerio de Ley: 1920-1921* (Honduras: Tipografía Nacional, 1922), 60. *La Prensa* (Costa Rica) (Nov. 23, 1920), 2. Ernesto Viteri Bertrand. *El Pacto de Unión de 1921, sus antecedentes, vicisitudes y la cesación de sus efectos* (Guatemala, Guatemala: Editorial e Imprenta Apolo, 1976).

\* Delegate. Oficial representative.

\*\* No specific data of the citizenship of José Falla (Guatemala?), and Ricardo Fournier Quirós (Costa Rica?).

\*\*\*Viteri also represented university students.

The Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was a sensitive issue, especially for Costa Rica. The Congress did not approve of the proposal as it was, even with the strong effort and compromise of President Acosta. The Costa Rican Congress decided to wait to see what happened, and as they thought months later, the effort collapsed. Therefore, only El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala started arrangements for the “Congreso Federal Centroamericano,” held in Tegucigalpa, which ended with the signing of the Federal Constitution by September 15, 1921 and the creation of the “República Tripartita.”

## Federal Constitution

Central America was eager to receive information related to the decisions made by the Federal Council, especially because it meant the possibility of the desired political reorganization. During the meetings, delegates to the Federal Congress discussed issues related to sovereignty, citizenship, and especially woman's rights. The Federal Council began its deliberation on June 13, 1921 at Tegucigalpa.<sup>439</sup> The Federal Council mandated that the “Asamblea Nacional Constituyente” had to start its work on July 20 and communicated them to approve the Federal Constitution by September 15, 1921. Definitely, the Centennial and the emotions it inspired were the perfect context in which to propose a Federation. Throughout the region, there was a strong belief that a supranational government could revise some of the practices

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<sup>439</sup> Article XI. “Pacto de la Unión de Centro-América. Celebrado en San José de Costa-Rica el 19 de enero de 1921.” Honduras, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licdo. Don Antonio R. Reina, Secretario de Estado, por Ministerio de la Ley. 1920-1921*, 55.

of the political culture that went wrong and that it could change the way society was organized.

The Pact of San José and the Federal Constitution discussed key issues such as freedom of association, speech, thought, and press, equality of conditions before the law and the need to protect those less favored by society and economy. Representatives also discussed the need to respect individual liberties, suffrage, and the alternation of political power. The day of the installation of the Congress students and common citizens held demonstrations and sang the hymn of Central America proving support for the Federal Constitution on the streets of many cities and towns in Central America.<sup>440</sup> Definitively, unionism had a broader popular support than expected in Central America.

The Federal Constitution legislated diverse aspects that were key concerns for civil society. One was the need to guarantee to citizens that governments would alternate. Another was the army; after the organization of the Federation, only the Federal government could have an army. After a history of repression and military interference in politics, delegates discussed their interest into putting limits on national armies. Congress legislated to limit the army's influence in politics and as a repressive force; therefore each country had to create or reorganize local police corps. Starting on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1921 when the Constitution was to come into force, the army's scope of action was limited; a military could not be an elector;<sup>441</sup> a member

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<sup>440</sup> *Diario del Salvador* (June 10, 1921), 6. *Diario del Salvador* (June 11, 1921), 5.

<sup>441</sup> Article V. Incisos f, i, g. "Pacto de la Unión de Centro-América. Celebrado en San José de Costa-Rica el 19 de enero de 1921." Honduras, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licdo. Don Antonio R. Reina*,

of the army could not be elected for public office and individual states could not buy armaments or military supplies because that became a sole faculty of the Federal government.<sup>442</sup> These articles threatened the power militaries had previously held in the region.

Official delegates to the Central American Federal Congress were conspicuous unionist politicians and intellectuals. It is noteworthy that former Honduras President Policarpo Bonilla participated as a delegate, as well as Nicaraguan unionist intellectual Salvador Mendieta, and were elected as president and pro-secretary of the committee in charge of creating a Federal constitution. Interestingly, Mendieta represented Guatemala since there is neither official representation nor participation of Nicaragua. Table 14 shows positions of the delegates in the Congress.

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*Secretario de Estado, por Ministerio de la Ley. 1920-1921, 53. "Capítulo III. De los ciudadanos." Art. 30. Constitución Política de la República de Centro-América decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921. Herrarte, Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana, 226.*

<sup>442</sup> Title II, Art. 10..Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 222.

Table 14  
Delegates to the Central American Federal Congress  
Tegucigalpa, July-September 1921

Position	Name	Country
President	Policarpo Bonilla	Honduras
I Vice-President	Manuel Delgado	El Salvador
II Vice-President	Carlos Salazar	Guatemala
I Secretary	José Matos	Guatemala
II Secretary	Manuel Castro Ramírez	El Salvador
I Pro-Secretario	Salvador Mendieta	Guatemala
II Pro-Secretario	Ángel Zúñiga Huete	Honduras

Source: Honduras. *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores presentada al Congreso Nacional por el Licenciado don Antonio R. Reina H. Secretario de Estado por Ministerio de Ley: 1920-1921* (Honduras: Tipografía Nacional, 1922), 17.

### Native-born Federal Citizen

Whom does the Federal Constitution consider as a national citizen? How are citizens to participate in politics regionally? A national was anyone born in Central America including a native-born Salvadorans, Hondurans, or Guatemalans. Any Nicaraguan and Costa Rican living in El Salvador, Honduras or Guatemala would be considered citizens of the Federation, if they did not state otherwise.<sup>443</sup> The Federal Constitution established that any Central American had the right to participate in elections and was able to pursue public office. The most outstanding achievement was the decision to grant women the right to vote. This issue opened a huge discussion throughout the region. The Constitution granted women the right to pursue

<sup>443</sup> "Capítulo III. De los ciudadanos." Art. 18. Ibid., 224.



any public office not decided through elections.<sup>444</sup> However, women did not achieve the exercise of full citizenship since they could not access all public offices and had limitations to vote as many men did at the time.

“Art. 29. Married women and widows over twenty-one years of age who can read and write can exert the right to vote; single women over twenty-five years who can prove they had gone to elementary school, and those that have a capital or rent in the quantity that the Electoral Law indicates. Women can also opt for any public office that are not of popular election or do not have annexed jurisdiction.

Art. 31, the active vote is personal, secret, can not be delegated and obligatory, except for women’s, which is voluntary.”<sup>445</sup>

Suffrage links to questions of power, as do identity and cultural representation. Power enables “some kinds of knowledge and identities to exist while denying others.”<sup>446</sup> Therefore, Congressmen were acknowledging woman’s decisive political role and participation in Central America’s public sphere when they granted women the rights to participate in politics with their votes,<sup>447</sup> because “the language of citizenship legitimates the place of women in business and politics.”<sup>448</sup> The Federal Congress, pioneered in Latin America with this debate and decision to discuss

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<sup>444</sup> “Capítulo III. De los ciudadanos.” Art. 27-29. Ibid., 226. Also see Rina Villars, *Para la casa más que para el mundo: sufragismo y feminismo en la historia de Honduras*, 1 ed., Colección Códices (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras, 2001), 186-99.

<sup>445</sup> “Art. 29. Podrán ejercer el derecho de sufragio las mujeres casadas o viudas mayores de veintiún años que sepan leer y escribir; las solteras mayores de veinticinco que acrediten haber recibido la instrucción primaria, y las que posean capital o renta en la cuantía que la Ley Electoral indique. Podrán también optar a cargos públicos que no sean de elección popular o no tengan anexa jurisdicción. Art. 31. El voto activo es personal, secreto, indelegable y obligatorio, salvo el de la mujer, que es voluntario.” “Capítulo III. De los ciudadanos.” Art. 29, 31. Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 226-27.

<sup>446</sup> Barker and Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity*, 57.

<sup>447</sup> The discussion of the right to vote for women can be found in the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudio Legislativo de la República de Honduras (CIEL), *Libro de Actas de la Asamblea Legislativa* (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudio Legislativo de la República de Honduras (CIEL), 1922), 127-39.

<sup>448</sup> Barker and Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity*, 57.

women's rights, notwithstanding the limitations placed on women citizenship. To defend the right of suffrage for women, former Honduran president Policarpo Bonilla argued that women's political support for the 1899 revolution was a decisive force and that women provided a significant support for his government at the time. This statement was important due to the fact that in El Salvador and Guatemala women's right to vote was granted in 1944,<sup>449</sup> in Costa Rica in the Constitution of 1949,<sup>450</sup> Honduras in 1957 and Nicaragua a year later.<sup>451</sup>

The Federal Constitution tried to legislate on aspects despised by citizens in order to create a new social contract. Illusions and idealism were what motivated elites to embark on the creation of the Constitution. Delegates to the Federal Council knew that some of the articles were not going to be accepted, especially those that limited military and political power. Notwithstanding, the Federal Constitution granted free, compulsory and secular education, individual rights, liberty of

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<sup>449</sup> Constitución Política de la República de El Salvador, 1939. Título IV. Artículo 18. "Se reconoce el derecho de sufragio a la mujer. Una ley constitutiva determinara las condiciones para el ejercicio de este derecho." D. C. No. 5, emitido el 25 de febrero de 1944. Publicada en el D. O. No. 47, Tomo No. 136 de 25 de febrero de 1944. <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/constitucion/1939.htm>. Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno de Guatemala. Decreto 17. Artículo 1, IX. "Sufragio obligatorio y voto secreto para el hombre alfabeto. Sufragio obligatorio y voto público para el hombre analfabeto, limitando su ejercicio a las elecciones municipales. Reconocimiento de la ciudadanía a la mujer preparada para ejercerla." This decree meant to those women older than 18 years of age and who new how to read and write. Luis Mariñas Otero, *Las constituciones de Guatemala, Constituciones Hispanoamericanas*, 11 (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1958), 606.

<sup>450</sup> Constitución Política de Costa Rica, 7 de noviembre de 1949. Título VIII, Capítulo I. Artículo 9. "La ciudadanía es el conjunto de derechos y deberes políticos que corresponde a los costarricenses de uno y otro sexo, mayores de 21 años." Oficial. Costa Rica. Marco Mena Brenes, *Colección de Constituciones de Costa Rica: del Pacto de Concordia a la Constitución Política de 1949*, 1a. . ed. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 2000, 511.

<sup>451</sup> Decreto Legislativo del 15 de abril de 1950, Nicaragua. Artículo 18, 8. "La habilidad de la mujer para elegir y ser electa de acuerdo con la legislación que se dicte sobre la materia." Emilio Álvarez Lejarza, *Las Constituciones de Nicaragua, Constituciones Hispanoamericanas*; 9 (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1958), 904. Constitución de 1957, Honduras. Capítulo III. Artículo 35. "Son ciudadanos todos los hondureños, varones y mujeres mayores de 18 años." Luis Mariñas Otero, *Las Constituciones de Honduras. Recopilación y estudio preliminar, Constituciones Hispanoamericanas*, 15 (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1962), 382.

association and meeting, and freedom of press and speech. Monopolies were not allowed. This is an article that would have directly affected foreign investment in the region. All citizens had the right to ask for accountability from their governments, every worker must receive a wage and every worker could decide freely where to find a job, and no one could be sent to prison because of a debt.<sup>452</sup> Many Central Americans were sure that society and politics had to change, for this reason they supported the Federation as the only possibility available.

A coup in Guatemala ended the quest for the “Patria Grande,” after the creation of the “República Tripartita.” It ended when liberal General Jesús María Orellana (1921-1926) ousted unionist president Carlos Herrera Luna in Guatemala in December 15, 1921, and a new era of repression started again.

## Conclusions

The 1920s in Central America was a moment in which public opinion was manifested in the form of urban social movements when citizens challenged authoritarian regimes. They funneled some of these demands through the unionist movement and the ideal of the construction of the “Patria Grande.” The possibility of reorganizing the five republics as a Federation was a liberating process for many. Notwithstanding, identities were not created as regional. The historical lack of good roads that prevented communication and cooperation between neighboring states and within each country reinforced local identity rather from regional construction.

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<sup>452</sup> Título IV. De los Derechos y Garantías. Art. 35, 36, 38, 41, 45, 46, 49. *Constitución Política de la República de Centro-América*, Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 228-29. The Federal Constitution has 14 titles and 209 articles.

The emergence of public opinion, new forms of sociability and mass culture are associated with the appearance of a modern national identity.<sup>453</sup> Consequently by the early twentieth century citizens knew they belonged to an imagined community, a political society, and demanded the right to exercise their citizenship.<sup>454</sup> Modernization and higher standards of education made possible an increase of the middle class, and opened the space for higher involvement and public participation for women and workers in the public sphere.

Despite the high ethnic differentiation in Central America, we did not find specific information about participation of indigenous groups; they appear to have been excluded from official programs and rhetoric, even though we may presume that they were there as active participants and spectators during the celebrations throughout the region. The lack of their presence also shows the importance of the national discourses in which States had constructed, discursively, a mestizo society.<sup>455</sup> The only revalorization of the indigenous past in Honduras, were some references from Comayagua, where they reproduced some historical passages on the

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<sup>453</sup> For a discussion of the creation of a public sphere in Latin America see Guerra and Lempériere, *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX*.

<sup>454</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New nationalism and the invention of traditions are analyzed in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. For a critique of Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism see, Lomnitz-Adler, "Nationalism as a Practical System. Benedict Anderson's Theory of Nationalism from the Vantage Point of Spanish America," 289-308.

<sup>455</sup> Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Die in this Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965, Latin America Otherwise* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998). Jeffrey L. Gould, *Orgullo amargo: el desarrollo del movimiento obrero nicaragüense (1912-1950)* (Managua, Nicaragua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica Universidad Centroamericana, 1997). Darío A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Darío A. Euraque, *Estado, poder, nacionalidad y raza en la historia de Honduras: ensayos* (Obispado de Choluteca, Honduras, C.A.: Ediciones Subirana, 1996).

way Indians lived in Pre-Colombian times.<sup>456</sup> However, nothing was said of the living indigenous populations. We did find important participation highlighted by the media of some minorities such as Palestinians in Honduras, Chinese in all five countries, and European colonies involved in charitable activities.

It is also through symbolic cultural activities and commemorations that new systems of values and behaviors are disseminated. For example, in the discussions for the Centennial, we find that some Central American “municipalidades” banned all types of liquor from the celebrations. In El Salvador, as far as port La Libertad, the celebrations held at the “Cabildo Municipal,” had the total exclusion of any strong alcoholic drink that is in “estado seco” (dry state).<sup>457</sup> In addition, the “Partido Unionista Centroamericano” (Honduras) asked that the celebrations for the Centennial of the Independence be held in a rigorous “estado seco.”<sup>458</sup> These attitudes show elites concerns towards social practices.

After traveling through the celebrations of the Centennial of Central American Independence, can we argue that there was a democratic participation in the celebrations? We know that popular sectors participated actively and, as spectators and active participants used the public sphere in an attempt to bring about important changes promoting a process of democratization.

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<sup>456</sup> *Excelsior*, Honduras (August 16, 1921), 1.

<sup>457</sup> *Diario del Salvador*, El Salvador (Sept. 22, 1921), 3.

<sup>458</sup> *Diario del Salvador* (June 8, 1921), 5.

## Chapter 8. Unionism and Citizenship

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed changes in the public sphere and the political culture in Central America. These changes reflected the increasing participation in the public space of diverse social groups differentiated by class, gender, age, and ethnicity. This socio-political openness provided the opportunity for citizens to create certain democratic procedures and to transfer their concerns from the civic to the political level.<sup>459</sup> Elites indirectly promoted the participation of subalterns in the political arena when they tried to link nation building and modernity, as they believed that mentalities would change when modernization would be achieved as a product of new economic practices, education and modernization. Despite changes in the public sphere, Central Americans did not address systematically the needs of Afro-Caribbean or indigenous communities. In the case of women's needs, they were just starting to deal with them.

Women's participation in the economy in Central America was growing in the 1920s in areas not explored before. Women were not only incorporated and participating in the economy, but also women were active through charitable institutions and diverse social and political organizations. Hence, women supported social policies and institutions created by the liberal state to address the "social problem/question," that is the growing pressure and cultural changes made by the rising working class and the expansion of poverty. Changes in the liberal period include the importance given to women's role as shapers/formers of new citizens

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<sup>459</sup> For an explanation of how these democratic procedures promote the creation and consolidation of the public sphere see Uwe Hohendahl, "The Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries," 99-108.

through nursing, education, and charitable and health care institutions and organizations. Therefore, women played a key role in the process of nation identity formation.

Some of the questions asked in this chapter are those of identity construction. Was identity in the early 1920s Central America regional, national or even local? Was national identity crossed by a regional or corporate one? How were development and other future possibilities perceived? We will address these preoccupations through the analysis of a group of published discourses found in the editorial page of newspapers, pamphlets and in official sources. Why discourses and editorial pages? Because through the analysis of these texts approached as constructions of signs, we can examine the generation of meaning. Discourses are a form of social practice and interact with the context that produces them. As argued by Barker and Galanski,

“Discourse is constitutive of and constituted by social and political ‘realities.’<sup>460</sup> [Because] we have to be concerned with how representations signify in the context of social power and with what consequences,<sup>461</sup> ... [since] discursive acts are socially constitutive in a number of ways: They play a decisive role in the genesis and construction of social conditions. They can restore, justify, and perpetuate the social status quo. They may be instrumental in the transformation of the status quo.”<sup>462</sup>

This chapter studies the unionist ideal, and examines how media and different public discourses refer to unionism. Rhetoric surrounding unionism is a topic found in almost all the discourses collected. Other groups not associated with unionism also shared some of its ideals. The need for regional collaboration when it comes to

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<sup>460</sup> Conferencia Episcopal de Costa Rica, *Mensajero Del Clero* (San Jose: Cedor, 1980), 65.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>462</sup> Barker and Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity*, 65.

commerce and foreign trade is especially important. Finally, legal language that reformulates the definition of citizenship and nationality is revised.

## The Federal Constitution and the Unionist Ideal

Cultural identities undergo constant transformation, are negotiated, and identity is what people choose or are ascribed with. How we define ourselves provides actors with the capacity of making sense of their being together, not only as a product of a rational decision but as the result of the intuitive capacity of mutual recognition.<sup>463</sup> The public presentation of new identities contests the political. Unionism challenged governments in Central America through the discussion of problems, not as exclusively national concerns but as regional ones, and through the introduction of subalterns' concerns into the legal realm. These public discussions broadened the political sphere.

The numerous attempts and discussions to organize the union of Central America and the abundance of agreements signed since independence in 1821 demonstrate regional preoccupation with the need to coordinate, cooperate, and unify economic activities, promote democracy, and improve social indicators. As an example from 1900 to 1915, Central American countries signed five different agreements to establish a monetary union, customs tariffs, united consular service, legislation, education, road infrastructure and so on, but these were not enforced or

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<sup>463</sup> Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, 66. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," 70.



little was done.<sup>464</sup> Although each individual country's Congress ratified these agreements, there was no political will to honor them.

Changes in the economy and political interests at the turn of the century gave new life to the Unionist ideal. This time grassroots organizations organized gendered political associations which were influenced by a Central American nationalist sentiment against U.S. capital and politics boosted by U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty.

The increasing political and economic intervention of the U.S., in addition to corruption, and unpopular or repressive governments, stimulated the creation of political parties that discussed solutions of regional problems. Representative of these were the Partido Unionista Centroamericano (El Salvador, 1903),<sup>465</sup> Partido Unionista (Costa Rica, 1904),<sup>466</sup> Partido Unionista Centroamericano (Diriamba, Nicaragua, 1904),<sup>467</sup> Partido Unionista Centroamericano (Honduras, 1917) and the Partido Unionista in Guatemala (1919). The unionist movement sought to fight against capitalist imperialism and the promotion of public participation, and unionist congressional representatives in each country supported these initiatives.<sup>468</sup> Members and promoters of these groups were young intellectuals, middle class men and

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<sup>464</sup> "Patrióticas iniciativas de la Delegación del Partido Unionista Centroamericano en Honduras," *La Prensa (Costa Rica)*, Nov. 29 1920, 3.

<sup>465</sup> Salvador Mendieta et al., *Nacionalidad Centroamericana* (Nicaragua: Tipografía Diriamba, 1906), 6.

<sup>466</sup> Karnes, *The Failure of Union. Central America 1824-1975*, 205.

<sup>467</sup> "Acta de Inauguración del Partido Unionista Centroamericano," in Mendieta et al., *Nacionalidad Centroamericana*, 12.

<sup>468</sup> For the opposition to the oil treaties in Latin America see, Jonathan C. Brown and Peter S. Linder, "Oil," in *The Second Conquest of Latin America. Coffee, Henequen, and Oil during the Export Boom, 1850-1930*, ed. Steven C. Topik and William V. Wells (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998), 125-87.

women, and some workers. They represented a new generation educated under the liberal creed and democratic principles.

## Autonomy and Supranational Organization

The Central American public sphere in the 1920s was semi-independent of the state, and debates in the public realm democratized the political culture. “An active public sphere separated from public administration becomes the arena where new issues are thematized, new identities are presented, and institutional innovation emerges,”<sup>469</sup> therefore, the use of the public space is an important component of democracy and democratic practices. An example is the participation of Costa Rican lawyer, member of the Congress, politician, and unionist José Astúa Aguilar in the Federal Congress. Astúa represented Costa Ricans who believed in unionism even though the government of Costa Rica did not send official representatives to the Federal Constitution meetings. One of Astúa’s opinions published by the press explains the importance and the meaning of a united Central America

“To make possible a more intense and comprehensive development of its sources of wealth, the Republics of Central America are hoping to merge. To exist and to be able to protect itself against any external threat Central America needs to become one active body formed by all its defense elements. These elements are today dispersed and detached. Separatist pessimism could argue that these nations can be destroyed one by one, even if the same flag covered them. They can say it because evidence shows that any attempt against the Federation is always possible, but there is no doubt it will be more difficult. Can they deny that five million men can make themselves be heard by the world, in such a way as to be sheltered by the universal voice of

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<sup>469</sup> The argument is based on Habermas’ reconnection of reason and will. Reason results from public debate in a sphere located between the market and the state. See Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*, 39.

decorum and Justice? Can they deny that the power of conservation of Central America has to be greater than each one of its States?"<sup>470</sup>

It is interesting to notice the new concepts included in the words of Astúa. He is speaking of universal voices and recognition. In our opinion, the Treaty of Versailles (June 28, 1919) and the international recognition of the Central American countries as allies and nations, that is, as sovereign states, changed the perception of impotence that the failure of the Central American Court of Justice had left and gave the countries a new venue to address U.S. interventionism.<sup>471</sup> The creation of the League of Nations (1920-1946), an organization that promoted justice and peace in an international setting, reinforced this perception.<sup>472</sup> In a way, the League of Nations proved to Central Americans that they were right to seek the organization of a supranational entity such as the Federation was intended to be. Both the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations recognized Central Americans' right to autonomy, providing them with new elements for their nationalist rhetoric.

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<sup>470</sup> "Para posibilitar un desarrollo más intenso y comprensivo de sus fuentes de riqueza, las Repúblicas de Centro América pretenden unirse; para ser u mantenerse ante cualquier amenaza externa necesitan formar un solo caudal activo, con todos sus elementos de defensa, hoy dispersos y desligados. ¿Y dirá el pesimismo separatista en cuanto a lo último, que lo mismo pueden ser arrolladas una a una estas naciones, que cobijadas bajo una misma bandera? Lo dirá ante la evidencia de que si el atentado contra la Federación es siempre posible, sería sin duda menos fácil. ¿Desconocerá que cinco millones de hombres se hacen sentir en el mundo suficientemente para ser amparados por la voz universal del decoro y de la Justicia? ¿Negará que el poder de conservación de la América Central tiene que ser mayor que el de cada uno de sus Estados?" "Opinión del Lic. [José] Astúa Aguilar sobre la Unión Centroamericana," *La Prensa (Costa Rica)*, Dec. 14 1920, 2.

<sup>471</sup> Only Costa Rica did not sign the Treaty of Versailles because the U.S. did not recognize the dictatorship of Federico Tinoco (1917-1919). The application of the Wilson (1913-1921) policy explains this non-recognition policy. See Hugo Murillo Jiménez, *Tinoco y los Estados Unidos: génesis y caída de un régimen*, 1a ed. (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1981), 89-113. Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 54.

<sup>472</sup> Even though Costa Rica did not sign the Treaty of Versailles, all Central American countries were original members of the League of Nations. Costa Rica withdrew in 1925. Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras in 1936. El Salvador in 1937.

The public discussed and pushed openly for the need to promote a unionist movement throughout the Americas. The Honduran editor of the newspaper *Excelsior* was convinced that the Federation would have the support of people and governments worldwide. He considered that unionism was a movement not driven by political interests but by a democratic communion. Furthermore, the editor believed that unionism would lead to the creation of a republic with order, liberty, and progress.<sup>473</sup> They were not wrong when it came to international support. Declarations of U.S. Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes expressed sympathy towards the ideal, even though he did not make any official declaration.<sup>474</sup>

The idea of supranational organizations was familiar to the U.S. government. The U.S. had promoted the Pan-American Conferences since 1889-1890, even though, due to the Monroe Doctrine, it did not participate in the first one convened in Panama in 1826.<sup>475</sup> The Pan-American ideal owes much to the longed-for dream of Simón Bolívar (1783-1830).

The Pan-American Conference of 1889-1890 discussed economic issues such as the need to unify customs procedures and taxation, port taxes, the metric system,

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<sup>473</sup> "Ya varias veces hemos insistido en la necesidad de una propaganda en la América en relación al movimiento unionista para obtener lo que nos es indispensable, la simpatía de pueblos y gobiernos continentales mediante la demostración de que la unión no estriba en el interés de grupos políticos ni obedece a combinaciones personales tendientes al disfrute del Poder, sino que la propician los pueblos y los gobiernos en una comunión democrática sin precedentes en nuestra historia, para hacer una República de orden, de libertad y de progreso y por tales atributos, digna de ser considerada en el mismo nivel que las demás nacionalidades americanas constituidas en forma idéntica." *Excelsior* (Honduras), Aug. 23 1921, 1.

<sup>474</sup> "Importante conferencia. Preparativos para el Centenario. Intensificaránse los trabajos pro-Nicaragua," *Excelsior* (Honduras), Aug. 23 1921, 1.

<sup>475</sup> This first conference was attended by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the U.S., Uruguay, and Venezuela.

and the construction of an Interoceanic railway. The conference delegates recommended arbitration as the means to solve problems. Central America created the Tribunal of Central American Arbitration in 1902 influenced by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, created by The Hague Peace Conference of 1899. Another conference took place in Mexico (1901-1902) and a third one in Rio de Janeiro in 1906, just a year earlier than the Washington Conference of 1907, and the Second International Peace Conference at The Hague. These conferences, promoted by the U.S., shaped relations with Latin America.

The Costa Rican press published an article that expressed some of the thoughts after various Pan-American Conferences had been held and the creation of the League of the Nations. It also gives insight on how the future and prosperity could be achieved:

“...if Central America were united, wars between countries would be abolished forever. It is known that the century’s long painful and irrefutable experience in that war is the most unfortunate of our evils. With the reign of peace, undoubtedly the development of our natural resources would come, and this development would place us in the first rank among the most flourishing of the nations of the world.”<sup>476</sup>

The press in Honduras shared the same perception of future development and enhancement of the Central American experience in July 1921. An opinion article argued that the abundance of resources, geography, history, political, economic, and commercial interests, autonomous life, peace, international affairs and sociological

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<sup>476</sup> “...si Centroamérica estuviera unida, quedarían abolidas para siempre las guerras entre país y país. Y bien sabido es, que la dolorosa e irrefutable experiencia de un siglo, que las guerras han sido el más funesto de nuestros males. Con el reinado de la paz, vendría, indudablemente, el desarrollo de nuestras riquezas naturales, acopiadas sobre nuestro suelo en cantidad y variedad fabulosas; y ese desarrollo nos asignaría, bien pronto, uno de los primeros lugares entre los pueblos más florecientes del mundo.” “Centroamérica y su porvenir,” *La Prensa (Costa Rica)*, Nov. 29 1920, 3.

laws all pointed towards the political union of the five states.<sup>477</sup> Even though not everyone agreed with the unionist movement, many politicians, economists and workers, thought that Central America could only achieve development through a regional organization.

To achieve peace and end the practice of coup d'états in Latin America, the Tobar Doctrine was established at the Washington Conference of 1907.<sup>478</sup> Its corollary was the Wilson Doctrine of 1913 created by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921). The new doctrine went a step further when calling for a nonrecognition policy toward all unconstitutional governments in Latin America.<sup>479</sup>

There were thirty-four U.S. military and diplomatic interventions in the Caribbean Basin from 1898 to 1934, and fifteen in Central America alone.<sup>480</sup> Obviously, interventionism made citizens and governments in the region fearful of the U.S. A newspaper opinion article in *La Prensa* called "La hora solemne de Costa Rica" (The Solemne Hour of Costa Rica), publicly discussed this dread in 1920. This article asked,

"Citizens' think about what would happen to an isolated Costa Rica, whose citizens and rulers did not have a clear view of their future, a country that had no international respect, and with no international support to protect it from future conquests, that is, exposed to any type of danger."<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> "Elementos Básicos de La Unión Centro-americana," *Excelsior (Honduras)*, Jul. 8 1920, 3.

<sup>478</sup> *Tratado de Paz y Amistad celebrado en Washington por los delegados de las cinco Repúblicas de Centro América el 20 de diciembre de 1907*, in: Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 190.

<sup>479</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 54. For Central America cf. Stansifer, "La aplicación de la doctrina Tobar a Centroamérica."

<sup>480</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 53. Murillo Jiménez, *Tinoco y los Estados Unidos: génesis y caída de un régimen*, 135.

<sup>481</sup> "Costarricenses: medita en lo que significa Centroamérica unida; medita en lo que sería Costa Rica aislada, sin una mejor y más sabia conciencia de su futuro, sin consideraciones internacionales

The fear of isolation and the dread of intervention came after the U.S. did not recognize Costa Rica in the Treaty of Versailles and before the League of Nations was organized. The experience with the U.S. was of intervention in Central America in diverse political and economic circumstances.

Other arguments expressed a different view of the relations with the U.S. Some thought that a federated Central America could reverse the influence of the U.S. and change the political and economical interests in its own benefit.<sup>482</sup> Nevertheless, not every association or political party supported the Union. Because of the resistance found in different interest groups, allies to the union created organizations such as the “Liga Federalista Nicaragüense” to fight against those opposing it; in this case, against President Diego Manuel Chamorro who they thought did not support the cause because of the prevailing U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.<sup>483</sup> Notwithstanding, Chamorro had publicly given a pro-union speech at a banquet in Masaya.<sup>484</sup> Ironically, the discourse given on behalf of Chamorro in Granada on September 15, 1921, proved to be very provocative in the sense that it called citizens to fight for freedom, sovereignty and independence as Nicaraguans had done before. Chamorro tried to give a different response to his alleged opposition. He argued that unionism should be fought because the Federation was the excuse used by the

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que nos pongan al abrigo de conquistas, expuestos en fin, a peligros sin cuento!” “La hora solemne de Costa Rica,” *La Prensa (Costa Rica)*, Nov. 20 1920, 2.

<sup>482</sup> “...el ascendiente norteamericano sobre el país de los lagos puede convertirse en tratado general de Centro América, del cual derive bienes todo el Istmo si sabemos aprovechar dignamente la amistad del fuerte sin comprometer la soberanía nacional,” *Diario del Salvador* (El Salvador), Aug. 30 1921, 1.

<sup>483</sup> *Excelsior, Honduras* (Set. 28, 1921), 1.

<sup>484</sup> *Excelsior, Honduras* (Oct. 04, 1921), 4.

rebellious movement to fight against his government. Even though rebellious movements before Sandino have not been studied in detail, a possible conclusion for this particular movement is that it fought for better living standards, jobs, sovereignty, autonomy, and against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.

The unionist movement ended in 1921, months after the celebrations of the Centennial was over. The unionist movement separated itself from the turn-of-the-century liberal ideology after assessing its incapability to achieve social advancement, political maturity, and economic growth. The most outstanding achievements of the unionist movement were consciousness raising on international issues, discussions over national identity, the promotion of the public sphere and the inclusion of women as political subjects.

## Citizenship and Nationality

Different groups used the public space to address their differences and discuss issues and problems addressed previously only by symbolic institutions. Unionism used the public sphere to start debates over political issue, which in the case of Guatemala, ended with the overthrow of Estrada Cabrera in 1920. Students, workers, and women used the space provided to introduce new topics and to discuss their interests and concerns, expanding the public domain and changing social relations. This type of debate gave society the opportunity to seek a political and social change not driven by particular interests or on behalf of the concentration of power, but for the sake of societies' needs.



Influenced by anarchism, socialism, and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, workers organized to fight for better working conditions and talked about them publicly. New forms of organization also led to a new type of identity formation. Workers created corporate identities in accordance with changes in the economic system. They defined themselves within their occupation, for example as members of the “Gremio de Pureras”<sup>485</sup> (Union of Female Cigar Makers, Costa Rica) and started to organize and define their class identity through broader national organizations such as the Federación de Obreros de Nicaragua (Workers Federation of Nicaragua),<sup>486</sup> or regional ones, as they did in the Central American Worker Confederation (COCA, 1921).

The new forms of organizations invited workers to identify themselves in multiple and crossed ways, and not spirally or concentric as suggested by Acuña.<sup>487</sup> They identified within the type of occupation, such as bakers or shoemakers, as a local/national worker, or as a regional/Central American one, or a combination of them. For example, a banana worker from Limón, Costa Rica could identify himself as a Central American banana worker, or only a banana worker, but in other settings as a Costa Rican, as Afro-Caribbean or even as a subject of the English crown. Regional identity formation aligned with the unionist ideals.

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<sup>485</sup> *La Tribuna*, Costa Rica (July 19, 1921), 2.

<sup>486</sup> *Excelsior, Honduras* (April 15, 1921), 2

<sup>487</sup> See, Acuña Ortega, "The Formation of the Urban Middle Sectors in El Salvador, 1910-1944."

## Two-fold Identity: Regional vs. National

Central Americans contested identity and nationality. Sociopolitical context gave meaning to citizenship. Notwithstanding the public debates on issues of identity and citizenship in 1920s Central America, we did not find any discussion related to excluded groups such as the indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities or references to them except, in the Federal Constitution of 1921 that we will address later. Nationality was not a stable concept in Central America constitutions, because those considered nationals/native-born changed from one constitution to the other.

To be able to discuss the instability of the legal definition of nationality a close look at the chronology of the constitutions is needed. Table 15 shows the Federal and national constitutions and their reforms. As discussed before, the Federation could include all five countries or a combination of them.

Table 15  
Constitutions and Reforms  
Central America, 1821-1949

Federal	1821, 1822, 1823, 1824, 1832 <sup>a</sup> , 1835 <sup>a</sup> , 1836 <sup>a</sup> , 1839, 1842,* 1873, 1885, 1889, 1895, 1898,* 1907, 1921,** 1947
El Salvador	1824, 1841, 1864, 1871, 1872, 1880, 1883, 1886, 1939
Guatemala	1824, 1825, 1838, 1839 <sup>a</sup> , 1851, 1855 <sup>a</sup> , 1879, 1885 <sup>a</sup> , 1887 <sup>a</sup> , 1897 <sup>a</sup> , 1903 <sup>a</sup> , 1921 <sup>a</sup> , 1927 <sup>a</sup>
Honduras	1825, 1839, 1848, 1865, 1873, 1880, 1894, 1906, 1908, 1924
Nicaragua	1823, 1826, 1830 <sup>a</sup> , 1837 <sup>a</sup> , 1838, 1848, 1854, 1858, 1893, 1893 <sup>a</sup> , 1896, 1905, 1911, 1939
Costa Rica	1823, 1825, 1827 <sup>a</sup> , 1830 <sup>a</sup> , 1841, 1842 <sup>a</sup> , 1844, 1847, 1848 <sup>a</sup> , 1859, 1869, 1871, 1882 <sup>a</sup> , 1917, 1949

Source: Emilio Álvarez Lejarza, *Las Constituciones de Nicaragua* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1958). Antonio Egueva Gómez, recopilador. *Las Constituciones Políticas y sus reformas en la Historia de Nicaragua* (Managua: Editorial El Parlamento, 1994). Alberto Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana* (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1957). Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre, *Las Constituciones de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Editorial Piedra Santa, 1984). Luis Mariñas Otero, *Las Constituciones de Guatemala* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos,

1958). Salvador Mendieta, *La Nacionalidad y el Partido Unionista Centroamericano* (San José: Imprenta de Avelino Alsina, 1905), 45-48. Hernán Peralta, *Las Constituciones de Costa Rica* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1962). Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, *Recopilación de las Constituciones de Honduras (1825-1865)* (Tegucigalpa: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 1977). <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/constitucion/>.

<sup>a</sup> indicates reforms to the Constitution.

\* Signed by El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In 1848 known as the Pact of Chinandega.

\*\* Signed by El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

The five countries or a combination of them made federal constitutions and reforms. The Federal constitutions up to 1838 included all five countries. Later it depended on which countries signed the different pacts. For example, in the Federal Constitutions of 1842 and 1895, a national was someone born in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, and these constitutions considered people from Costa Rica and Guatemala nationally born when they voluntarily declared themselves to belong to the Republic of Central America.<sup>488</sup> With the Federal Constitution of 1921 and the creation of the “República Tripartita” a national was anyone from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, and Costa Ricans or Nicaraguans had the option of declaring themselves nationals or refraining from doing so.<sup>489</sup>

I argue that the definition of nationality has a link to the initial unionist ideals starting in 1824, with the first constitution of the United Provinces of Central America. The link can be found between constitutions and unionist efforts throughout the century of independence. For instance, Costa Rica has always differentiated itself because its constitutions consider anyone from any other Central American republics as foreigners. This feeling is not reflected in the other constitutions in the region

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<sup>488</sup> Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 153.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 226.

where a policy of inclusion for other Central American constitutions exist. In many cases, national was someone born in any of the five countries.

## Gendered and Ethnic Citizenship

As society is not a realm of nature, it can be modified to fit the interests of groups that sought reforms or not. To do so, agents use different types of avenues. One approach to the study of the transformation of the world social agents live in, is to examine the way beliefs are reshaped in the political language of a given time. Looking at constitutions shows how the use of language facilitates the connection between “those changes conventionally understood as ‘social,’ on the one hand, and those changes understood as ‘cultural,’ on the other hand.”<sup>490</sup> The Federal Constitution of 1921 steps aside from earlier constitutions in three areas, first, it refers to citizenship, indigenous population, and education. Second, it is contradictory because on the one hand it acknowledges that women also have the right of citizenship but it does not grant it fully. Third, it limits the role and power of national armies. The context of the Centennial provided the time needed to entertain and renovate nationhood. The Centennial also provided the context for public discussion of the concerns of subaltern groups’ and their introduction into institutionalized settings.

The Federal Constitution restructured existing principles of the political culture with the inclusion of sensitive issues. The Centennial provided the setting for

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<sup>490</sup> Jay M. Smith, “No More Language Games: Words, Beliefs, and the Political Culture of Early Modern France,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1416.

evaluation of the performance of the region and shows that there was a collective recognition of the need to renovate and reshape the political culture and civic values. The Federal constitution of 1921 gave citizenship to those older than 21 years of age or 18 if married and able to read and write.<sup>491</sup> Seven years after the promulgation of the Constitution, everyone would be required to know how to read and write. This provision meant that the states had to make an effort to provide vast majorities with real citizenship.

The analysis of Tables 9 (see page 130), 10 (see page 155), and 11 (see page 157) helps us to conclude that in 1923 Guatemala 86.82 percent of the population did not know how to read and write Spanish, meaning that vast majorities of indigenous populations were disenfranchised. By 1925, figures for El Salvador (27.3%) and Nicaragua (20.1%) show that only a small percent of rural male population were literate while Costa Rica had a 76.3 percent literacy rate. Table 10 (see page 155) also shows that for rural women literacy rates were even lower than those of men: Costa Rica (74.3%), Nicaragua (16.7%), and El Salvador (17.3%). As Table 16, shows more Central Americans lived in rural areas. The numbers reveal that a majority of the population was excluded from citizenship and from the formal educational system, which again indicates the importance of informal education for the acquisition of national values and identity.

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<sup>491</sup> Capítulo III. De los Ciudadanos. Art. 27. "Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921." Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 226.

To understand the difference between urban and rural settings, Table 16 indicates the differences between rural and urban populations in Central America during the 1920s. No data is available for Honduras.

Table 16  
Urban and Rural Population in Central America  
1920-1950

	Year	Total Population	Urban Population	%	Rural Population	%
Costa Rica	1927	471.524	88.608	18.8	382.916	81.20
Nicaragua	1920	638.119	129.501*	20.29	508.618	79.70
El Salvador	1930	1.434.361	548.721	38.3	885.640	61.70
Guatemala	1921	2.004.900	534.176	26.90	1.470.724	73.10

Sources: Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda. Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. *Censo de Población de Costa Rica. 11 de mayo de 1927* (San José: Oficina de Publicaciones, 1960), 40. Oficial. Dirección General del Censo. *Censo de Población del Municipio de San Salvador levantado el 15 de octubre de 1929* (San Salvador: Taller Tipográfico "La Unión", 1930), 49. Oficial. Dirección General de Estadística. *Población de la Republica de El Salvador. Censo del 1° de mayo de 1930* (San Salvador: Taller Nacional de Grabados, 1942), 7. Oficial. República de Guatemala. Ministerio de Fomento. Dirección General de Estadística. *Censo de población de la República levantado el 28 de agosto de 1921. 4to. Censo Parte I* (Guatemala: Taller Guttenberg, 1924), 42. Oficial. *Censo General de 1920. Administración del General Chamorro* (Managua: Tipografía Nacional, 1920), 141, 169, 197.

\* Only, the following "Municipios" are taken as urban: Managua, León, and Granada because there is no differentiation made in the census between urban and rural population.

To solve the problem of high illiteracy rates each member country of the Federation had to guarantee its citizens the ability to read and write in a seven-year period.<sup>492</sup> The Constitution shows a conscious decision to include the indigenous populations in Art. 168, because it established that all states must provide these communities with an adequate elementary education as well as industrial and agricultural education.<sup>493</sup>

<sup>492</sup> Capítulo III. De los Ciudadanos. Art. 27. "Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921." Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Título VIII. Trabajo, Cooperación Social. Art. 168. "Los Estados deben proveer de enseñanza adecuada a los indios, para que adquieran una amplia instrucción primaria, industrial y agrícola." "Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921." Ibid., 254.

For women some of the articles in the Federal Constitution show persisting limitations in the exercise of citizenship while conceding them others. No constitution in Central America had granted women full citizenship at the time. Governments and interest groups by 1920 addressed publicly the possibility to acknowledge womens' participation in the political arena, and the Federal Constitution pulls together these discussions and demands. The importance of the inclusion of these articles into the Federal Constitution is that it gives recognition to actors traditionally disenfranchised and acknowledges their demands.

The Federal Constitution of 1921 provided the right to vote to women. However, it was not mandatory, nor did they have the right to be elected for a post. Despite this advancement, women did not acquire full citizenship.<sup>494</sup> The inclusion of this clause recognizes the long tradition of women's participation in politics and their struggle for citizenship throughout the region.<sup>495</sup> It also responds to an interest to

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<sup>494</sup> Capítulo III. De los Ciudadanos. Art 29. "Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921." Ibid., 226.

<sup>495</sup> Many studies in the region have addressed this topic. See Ana Patricia Alvarenga Venutolo, *Las mujeres del Partido Vanguardia Popular en la constitución de la ciudadanía femenina en Costa Rica (1952-1983)* (Vol. 5, No. 1 Mar-Aug. 2004) (Diálogos Revista Electrónica de Historia, 2004 [cited]; available from <http://historia.fcs.ucr.ac.cr/dialogos.htm>. Macarena Barahona Riera, *Las sufragistas de Costa Rica*, 1. ed. (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1994). Victoria González, "Las feministas, el sexo y la nación en Nicaragua (1920-1992)" (paper presented at the V Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, San Salvador, 2000). Lehoucq and Molina Jiménez, *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica*. Yolanda Marco, "El feminismo de los años veinte y la redefinición de la feminidad en Panamá," in *Entre silencios y voces: género e historia en América Central, 1750-1990*, ed. Eugenia Rodríguez Sáenz, Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, and Universidad de Costa Rica (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica: Centro Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Familia, 1997), 183-96. Virginia Mora, "Las luchas de las obreras urbanas en Costa Rica (1900-1930)," *Nueva Sociedad* 135: 138-49. Eugenia Rodríguez Sáenz, "La lucha por el sufragio femenino en Costa Rica (1890-1949)," in *Un siglo de luchas femeninas en América Latina*, ed. Eugenia Rodríguez Sáenz and Congreso Centroamericano de Historia (San José: Universidad de Costa Rica Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, 2002), 87-110. Villars, *Para la casa más que para el mundo: sufragismo y feminismo en la historia de Honduras*.



incorporate women and children into the social reforms' agenda of early twentieth century.

The influence of liberalism and moralizing campaigns in society also promoted changes in the political language. The family and motherhood were keystones in the creation of a new society based on these principles. The role of women and the increasing participation of children in the educational system and workplace gave them front stage; therefore, society prepared legal language to protect them. The Federal Constitution addressed two of these concerns. One relates to the increasing participation of women and children in the labor force and the other one stresses the need to protect them from the abuses of the capitalist system. Article 165 argues that the work of women and young men under fourteen years of age deserved special protection and that law must regulate it. Article 167 stated that special institutions must protect maternity and helpless children.<sup>496</sup>

Women and children's participation in the economic arena was not the only preoccupation. It went further. Women's participation in the public space also brought other moral preoccupations: children born out of wedlock. The first constitution that establishes the difference between children born from a married couple and one born out of wedlock is the 1879 Constitution of Guatemala when it defined nationality in Article 5, clause 2. Subsequent reforms to the constitution

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<sup>496</sup> Título VIII. Trabajo y Cooperación Social. Art. 165. "El trabajo de las mujeres y el de los hombres menores de catorce años merece protección especial. La ley deberá reglamentarlo. Art. 167. "Instituciones especiales deben amparar la maternidad y a los niños desvalidos." "Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921." Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 254.

maintain this article.<sup>497</sup> It considers that a legitimate son of a Guatemalan father and/or a child born out of wedlock to a Guatemalan mother born overseas is considered a native-born citizen. With this article, the constitution links nationality to the individual country (*Ius solis*) and to genetics (*Ius sanguinis*).

The Costa Rican constitution of 1917 also takes into consideration the difference between a legitimate and illegitimate (born out of wedlock) child. However, the discussion is important not because illegitimate children were denied citizenship, but because the social perception of them as a different kind of person is made public in the wording of these articles. The first clause of article 39, which defines a “natural or original” (native-born) Costa Rican, considers that any legitimate son of a Costa Rican father or a child born out of wedlock to a Costa Rican mother, regardless of the place of birth, is considered native-born in this Constitution. The discussion reaches even farther to consider also as native-born those children born out of wedlock to foreign women inside national territory, and those born out of wedlock recognized by a Costa Rican father with the consent of the women.<sup>498</sup> This clause empowers women to make a decision about the citizenship and or nationality of their children.

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<sup>497</sup> Título Primero. De la nación y sus habitantes. Art. 5, 2. Los hijos de padres guatemaltecos, o hijos ilegítimos de madre guatemalteca, nacidos en el extranjero, desde el momento en que residan en la República, y aun sin esta condición, conforme a las leyes del país del nacimiento, tuviesen derecho a elegir nacionalidad y optaren por la guatemalteca.” “Ley Constitutiva de la República de Guatemala, decretada por la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente en 11 de Diciembre de 1879.” Mariñas Otero, *Las constituciones de Guatemala*, 424.

<sup>498</sup> Capítulo III. De la nacionalidad y ciudadanía. Art. 39, 1, 2, 4. “Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica (8 de junio de 1917),” Peralta, *Las Constituciones de Costa Rica*, 505-06.

The preoccupation for illegitimacy arose because of relaxed sexual practices, religious beliefs, and patriarchal domination and also follows colonial example. The interest in solving this moral dilemma made the Federal Constitution legislate on it in title VIII, “Work, and Social Cooperation.” Article 169 provides the foundations for paternity laws and alimony. This article establishes that law must grant a paternity investigation with the purpose of providing children born out of wedlock with the necessary means to obtain their physical, moral, and intellectual education.<sup>499</sup>

Changes in society compelled the region to reformulate the legal definition of identity, and through the constitutional definition of nationality, society created new categories when recognizing differentiated social practices. We can argue that changes in the categories of citizenship and the incorporation of the discussions of social problems in the Federal Constitution makes it impossible to separate gender and ethnic issues from the political sphere.

## The Expansion of Nationality

Individual country’s constitutions extended the definition of nationality when stating that anyone born in Central America could be a native-born citizen. This type of clause found in some constitutions also fit the unionist and federal ideal, which sought a regional identity. Table 17 shows the way Federal and national constitutions define nationality and the requirements for citizenship. Notice that only in the 1880s did reading and writing become a pre-requisite for citizenship in all the constitutions

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<sup>499</sup> Título VIII. Trabajo y Cooperación Social. Art. 169. “Constitución Política de la República de Centroamérica decretada el 9 de Septiembre de 1921.” Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana*, 254.

with the exception of Costa Rica, and there was no minimum income required, again with the exception of Costa Rica. It means that exclusion in Costa Rica was made by income and not by literacy because of its high literacy rates by the turn of the century, while in the rest of Central America literacy rates was so low that it could be used as the category to differentiate and deprive vast majorities from the exercise of citizenship.

Table 17  
Nationality and Citizenship in selected Constitutions and Reforms  
Central America 1824-1921

Country	Constitution/ year	Nationality Requirements			Requirements for Citizenship					
		Born in country	Born in any country in CA	Naturalization	Age	Age Exemption	Sex	Read	Write	Income
Federal	1824	yes	yes	yes	18		male	no	no	yes
	1895	ES, H, N	yes	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	no
	1921	ES, H, N	yes	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	no
	1921	ES, H, N	yes	yes	21	yes	fem	yes	yes	yes
El Salvador	1880	yes	no	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	yes
	1883	yes	no	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	yes
	1886	yes	no	yes	18	yes	male	yes	yes	no
Nicaragua	1893	yes	yes	yes	18	yes	male	yes	yes	no
	1911	yes	no	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	no
	1911*	yes	yes	yes	18	yes	male	yes	yes	no
Honduras	1894	yes	yes	yes	21	yes	male	no	no	no
	1904	yes	yes	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	no
	1906	yes	yes	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	no
Guatemala	1879	yes	yes	yes	21	yes	male	no	no	yes
	1887	yes	yes	yes	18	yes	male	yes	yes	no
	1921	yes	yes	yes	18	yes	male	yes	yes	no
Costa Rica	1869	yes	no	yes	21	yes	male	yes	yes	yes
	1871	yes	no	yes	20	yes	male	no	no	yes
	1917	yes	no	yes	21	yes	male	no	no	yes

Source: Emilio Álvarez Lejarza, *Las Constituciones de Nicaragua* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1958). Antonio Egueva Gómez, recopilador. *Las Constituciones Políticas y sus reformas en la Historia de Nicaragua* (Managua: Editorial El Parlamento, 1994). Alberto Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana* (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1957). Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre, *Las Constituciones de Guatemala* (Guatemala: Editorial Piedra Santa, 1984). Luis Mariñas Otero, *Las Constituciones de Guatemala* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1958). Hernán Peralta, *Las Constituciones de Costa Rica* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1962). Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, *Recopilación de las Constituciones de Honduras (1825-1865)* (Tegucigalpa: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 1977). <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/constitucion/>.

\* Reform to the 1911 constitution.

Individual countries managed the definition of a native-born national differently, and the search for the Federation can explain changes in the constitution. I

refer to natural or naturally born because as observed in Table 17 not everyone born in each country was a citizen because some born inside the country could not exercise full citizenship, therefore they were not citizens. In Nicaragua, a national was a person naturally born in the country and any Central American who declared so with the exception of the 1854 constitution. The 1911 reform changed it and limited the definition of a national to those naturally born, but a new reform made that same year gave Central Americans the option of declaring themselves nationals.<sup>500</sup>

In the Honduran 1873 constitution, nationals also were those Central Americans who had lived in the country for at least one year.<sup>501</sup> Starting in 1880, constitutions considered any Central Americans who wanted to become Hondurans as “natural.”<sup>502</sup> This was the same case in the Guatemalan constitutions from 1879 to 1921. In all the cases anyone could be naturalized if requirements were filled, including years of living in the country, by declaring so, being born to a national outside the country or to a foreigner with a national, with possession of property or a combination of any of these conditions.<sup>503</sup>

Costa Rican and Salvadoran constitutions only considered as nationals those born in the country. Anyone born in a Central American country could only become Costa Rican or Salvadoran by naturalization. Therefore, the institutionalized

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<sup>500</sup> Antonio Egueva Gómez, *Las Constituciones Políticas y sus reformas en la Historia de Nicaragua*, I-II vols., vol. I (Managua: Editorial El Parlamento, 1994), 472, 567, 651.

<sup>501</sup> Universidad Autónoma de Honduras, *Recopilación de las constituciones de Honduras, 1825-1965, Publicación del Instituto de Investigación Jurídicas*; 7 (Tegucigalpa: Instituto de Investigación Jurídicas, 1977), 299.

<sup>502</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>503</sup> For example see, “Ley Constitutiva de la República de Guatemala, decretada por la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente en 11 de Diciembre de 1879.” Mariñas Otero, *Las constituciones de Guatemala*, 423-24, 54, 69.

definition of a naturally born national in the constitutions of Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua included everyone born inside Central America who stated so. This definition promoted a sense of regional identity as the primary one over individual nationality.

## Conclusions

The legal discussion that started with the Pact of San José as an interest of all five countries to create political and economic stability in the region ended with the Federal Constitution. The public discussions during the process show another aspect of the importance of the Centennial as a political landmark because it enabled further negotiations and a search for solutions to the social problems of Central America. The problem faced after this period was that society and politics changed overnight when the authoritarian and military governments that came into power closed the space opened to subalterns and closed any possibility of negotiation, ending a process of democratization. From then on, the public sphere was restricted, workers experienced an increase in repression, and many of their organizations were outlawed.

The failure in the creation of the Federal state is accompanied with a failure in the institutionalization of political practices promoted by subalterns. They had to wait many decades to see their concerns included in national constitutions.

## Chapter Nine. General Conclusions

At the regional level, the governments of Guatemala and Honduras proclaimed and invited Central American governments to perform the ritual of the oath of the flag, not to the national flag but to the Federal Flag, complicating identification and appropriation of national symbols. The armies of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador made the oath to the Federal Flag the same day at the same time on October 1, 1921.<sup>504</sup> Through simultaneity, this practice promoted an imagined community, which in this case was a regional one.

Public celebrations are important as they help to communicate civic values, symbols and national achievements, and promote political consolidation at the same time as they provide informal education and entertainment to citizens. The theatrical representation of the nation is important in those countries where literacy rates are low and national identity is not consolidated, because through the example of heroes and history, and the systematic representation of national symbols societies identify themselves. Therefore, the study of the political culture of the period gives a better understanding of sociopolitical and economic development.

Independence Day has a strong symbolic significance for Central America. For this reason, officials traditionally choose September 15 as the day in which treaties and agreements were signed, conferences organized, institutions inaugurated, and regional meetings celebrated. Furthermore, Independence Day was the starting point for new constitutions, regional organizations and the like.

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<sup>504</sup> *Excelsior, Honduras* (Oct. 05, 1921), 1.



Social unrest, cross-border politics, intervention, and export led economies were some of the problems Central American governments were facing in early 1920s. Central American countries had learned the limitations in their economic potential and international capability to negotiate due to their fragmentation. For this reason, they sought a new sociopolitical alliance when arranging a new Federal Council and Constitution in 1921. Congressional representatives shaped the Federal Constitution to find a better way to perform economically as a region, and as an attempt to re-organize governments, change the social contract, and to protect the proletariat, especially children and women from the abuses of the capitalistic system. Representatives of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras signed the Federal Constitution on September 9, 1921.

The Centennial was a hierarchized activity however, officials provided subaltern groups with institutionalized spaces to participate and discuss their concerns and identity. Interest groups were pressuring for changes that could lead to a democratic process, which explains the support the process had from workers, intellectuals, students, economic interest groups and women organizations. Social actors had transformed the cities to include diverse type of spaces such as public and private or semi-private (social, interest and political organizations) as places for debate, which promoted the development of a democratic public sphere and politicized society. Other voices such as those of workers and women started to use the spaces available to debate openly important issues of the day. Active female participation in politics and in the economy shows the broadening of the public

sphere in the region. Precisely the increasing participation of women in diverse areas made them ask for full citizenship and equal opportunities.

By 1921, social actors such as students, workers, and feminists had systematically incorporated into the public sphere issues related to social, political, and economic conditions. In this context, workers could organize a regional meeting to discuss gender equality and rights. Politically, men fought for real citizenship, and claimed the right to have education, protection by the State, access to health services, housing and credit, and the like. Men also fought for gender equality and protection for women's and child labor, and supported women's rights movements. In addition to the former, women also fought to achieve full citizenship and equal rights in the workplace with men. There was an open discussion of the needs of children and their participation in the labor market in order to find ways to protect them from abuses in the private and public spheres. Finally, all, including the governments, thought that families should be protected for the wellbeing of society, because the increasing participation of women and children in the workplace challenged the classic notion of family as the cornerstone of society. Speeches, editorials in newspapers, books, and pamphlets addressed these topics publicly.

Through the study of the participation of workers in public activities, we can understand how discourses enabled them to construct, negotiate, and transform social and political conditions. Workers and those with unionist ideals tried to promote regional identity, but they failed to acknowledge heterogeneity when not recognizing differences, especially ethnic ones. This limitation made it even more difficult to

create a regional identity and supranational organization. Through the Central American Workers' Conference and with the creation of a regional organization, workers sought class formation. Their starting point was their shared problems and concerns. In sum, the importance of the institutional space given to workers in the context of the Centennial was that it provided workers the opportunity to speak for themselves instead of being spoken of.

Subalterns, intellectual elites, feminists and reformist politicians' public discussion and identification of social problems made possible the incorporation of the workers' conference agreements into the Federal Constitution and later, into national constitutions. By the 1940s individual liberties, inviolability of human life, social guarantees, the right to vote, and the guarantee of free and regular elections were included in almost all the constitutions in the region. Discursively, the constitutional realm incorporated many of the demands. Another whole issue was their enforcement.

Identity is not stable. With the celebrations of the Centennial, officials and intellectuals promoted identity as two-sided. One linked with individual nation-states and another regional identity linked with the concept of the United Provinces of Central America. National and regional symbols were reproduced, and poems, hymns and oaths performed by students, the army and civil society, and many of them were created especially for the event. By calling national and regional competitions to create poetry, hymns and oaths, committees invited everyone to feel a member of a

Central American community first and secondly to their particular national-based one.

The public presentation of identities challenged and broadened the political. This is the case when unionist parties, intellectuals, and followers discussed problems regionally and not only nationally. Unionists made it clear by supporting the idea that Central America could achieve a better economic performance through the elimination of national barriers and reorganization of political and military power. Another problem unionism encountered was that identity formed in Central America was based on local political communities rather than on a regional or in some cases a national basis. By 1921 each country had gone through a state-building process, successful or not, and for some it was difficult to reorganize and become members of a supranational entity. Despite the fact that national identity was not yet consolidated in many of the five countries, new forms of sociability and politics had made citizens realize they belonged to a nation-based political community.

Unionist advocates thought that only through a united and centralized federal government in control of the military could Central American countries gain better capability to negotiate, and could a viable government be established. For that reason they discussed limitations to the army and its personnel. Unionist arrived to this conclusion after separating themselves from the late nineteenth century liberal ideology and assessing the socioeconomic and political failure. The problem unionists encountered is that militaries had achieved such power in some of the countries and they were not willing to conform to new rules promoted by articles in the *Federla*

Constitution. Unionists received support from diverse social actors because their rhetoric stressed sociopolitical changes, international issues, national identity and the inclusion of women as political subjects, while not recognizing indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities' problems.

Meaning is given through language, which means problems, concerns and identities do not exist if they are not presented publicly. States were interested in the construction of a national community to create citizens who felt some commitment to a national project, but at the same time, large ethnic groups were excluded from the benefits of development in order to have a large pool of workers. In Central America, despite the high percentage of indigenous population, they were erased from public discussion, as Afro-Caribbeans communities also were. It is explained only by elites' interests to keep them that way. The economic and politically dependent elites when constructing discursively a mestizo society reinforced the process. Although indigenous populations were not spoken of, I argue that they were participants and spectators in diverse activities that represented and reproduced nationhood. The objective of the theatrical representation of the nation was to make citizens feel they belonged to the imagined community, which explains the importance of including large amount of communities such as indigenous populations.

Differences between celebrations are found. The northern triangle, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras celebrated the Centennial in a magnificent way. Celebrations stressed popular participation and entertainment, and the unionist ideal. It does not mean that student participation was not important. It was, but activities

were not school centered. In Nicaragua, foreign intervention and rebellious movements made the event low profile and centered on official and educational system activities. In Costa Rica, the government's disinterest in a supranational organization hurt the celebrations, and activities were centered in the educational system. Costa Rica and Nicaragua organized limited official activities. In both countries celebrations also included some popular entertainment activities and all sought popular participation. The difference in attitudes towards the Centennial between southern countries and the northern triangle is their political position in relation to the Federal or unionist movement.

Finally, in relation to the Catholic Church, two governmental approaches are found. After fifty years of liberal reforms and governments, and a strong policy to secularize society, the Church still had an active role in all the countries with the exception of Guatemala. In these four countries, the official committee organized protocol and activities in such a way as to provide the Church with spaces of participation. Therefore, citizens went back and forth from secular to religious activities. In Guatemala, the government excluded the Church from any official participation. By doing so, a parallel religious celebration of the Centennial started with the appointment of Archbishop Luis Javier Muñoz y Capurón who came to fill a vacancy of fifty years. The competition for loyalties proved that the Church had strong popular support in Guatemala.

The limited political opening reflects an institutional capacity to include some of the demands of subaltern groups. This strategy prevented even further

radicalization at the time; because it gave subalterns the illusion that something was done. Political inclusion, although relative and limited, made civil society feel as participants in policy-making deliberations, created expectations over the possibility to make reforms and made subalterns think that the state was not an instrument of narrow based elites. However, the opening of the public sphere had a short life and repression escalated through the decade, resulting in the closure of spaces for discussion and the impossibility to negotiate thereafter in an increasingly politicized Central American society.

The growing social unrest throughout the decade is explained by the limited political opening, semi-competitive elections and near to no socioeconomic reforms. In the case of Costa Rica institutional development and a broader participation in decision making provided subalterns with the possibility to incorporate their demands in the long-term. In repressive and authoritarian regimes as those of El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, subaltern participation in the public sphere ended in political violence in the form of state terrorism. In Honduras, the lack of strong local economic elites and the importance of the banana economy made possible a shift towards a conservative reign that hindered political opening and led to a strong military dictatorship.

Notwithstanding, September 15, 1921 was perceived as time for renewal and assessment.

## Epilogue. Workers Legal Heritage

The inclusion of the agreements of the Central American Workers Conference into the Federal Constitution of 1921, raised a question. To what extent did the introduction of topics that jeopardized the actual balance of power into the Federal Constitution promoted or inhibited their inclusion in each country's constitutions? To answer it we need to go beyond our period because we found traces in individual constitutions from 1924 to 1946.

The first constitution to include workers' preoccupations and ordinances was the Constitution of the Republic of Honduras of 1924. Title XX, "Social Cooperation and Work," establishes savings institutions at work places. Most importantly, it incorporates the Institute for Social Reforms. The Institute had tasks that included mediation of the relations between work and capital; promotion of the creation of production, savings, consumption, and credit cooperatives; construction of social interest housing; creation of accident and life insurance, and the creation of poorhouses. This clearly reveals the extent of the anarchist influence into this constitution. Other articles refer to the eight-hour workday; one day of rest for every six worked, and establish that any accident in the working place would be the responsibility of the employer. Finally, women's and child labor were under special protection and the constitution created a special law to regulate this practice.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Título XX. Cooperación Social y trabajo. Articles 174-177. "Constitución de la República de Honduras de 1924," in Honduras, *Recopilación de las constituciones de Honduras, 1825-1965*, 421-22.



Guatemala was the second country to incorporate some issues proposed by the Federal Constitution in the reformed constitution of 1927. The reform introduced social concerns in Title II, called “Constitutional Guarantees.” It declared that it is the duty of the state to create credit and social prevision institutions. The purpose of these institutions was to provide adequate solutions to conflicts between capital and work.<sup>506</sup>

The new Guatemalan constitution of 1945 regulated labor relations with some detail. It incorporated the forty-eight hour labor week, as well as vacations and salary regulations. It includes special protection for child and women’s labor, establishes minimum work place conditions and the foundation of special housing projects for rural workers. It also contains an article that creates an obligatory “social security fund” (seguro social). Workers, the State, and employers would subsidize this social security fund through joint liability.<sup>507</sup> Moreover, legislation incorporated protection against disabilities, aging, sickness, and accidents occurred in the working place.

El Salvador and Nicaragua included in their 1939 constitutions some of the issues presented above and expanded them. El Salvador included specific articles related to family, motherhood and children. The State would provide protection to assure equal gender conditions, and justice in workers and employers’ relations and inside the work place. This constitution established a special regulation for women’s

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<sup>506</sup> Título II. De las garantías constitucionales. Art. 16. “Reforma a la Constitución de la República de Guatemala, decretada el 20 de Diciembre de 1927.” Mariñas Otero, *Las constituciones de Guatemala*, 569.

<sup>507</sup> Título III. Garantías individuales y sociales. Capítulo II. Garantías sociales. Sección 1ª Trabajo. Articles 58-69. “Constitución de la República de Guatemala, decretada por la Asamblea Constituyente en 11 de marzo de 1945.” Ibid., 625-31.

and child labor. Finally, it stated that the solution to conflicts between capital and labor or between employers and employees was by arbitration or conciliation, according to a law that would determine it.<sup>508</sup>

The Nicaraguan constitution of 1939 had a detailed chapter of social guarantees. It started with legislation related to property ownership, homestead<sup>509</sup> and then discussed State protection to marriage, family, maternity, and children born out of wedlock. Nicaragua was no different from the rest of the countries when discussing education and the right to it, and established professional (craftsmanship) education that gives the idea of social inclusion especially after a detailed look at Tables 10 (page 155) and 11 (page 157). Savings institutions, minimum wages, and conciliation are also included.<sup>510</sup>

Costa Rica was the last country to incorporate issues related to gender and labor. The constitutional reform of 1946 included a chapter of “Social Guarantees,” which contains many of the fore mentioned articles and María Ernestina Mejía’s consideration, “to same type of job and similar conditions same salary. No gender difference.” A difference with the other Central American constitutions is the creation of the Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social (CCSS, Costa Rican Social Security

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<sup>508</sup> Título V. Derechos y Garantías. Capítulo II. Familia y Trabajo. Art. 60-64. Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador, *Constitución Política Reformada de 1939 de El Salvador* (2004 [cited]); available from <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/constitucion/1939.htm>.

<sup>509</sup> Art. 85. “La ley dispondrá la organización y reglamentación del patrimonio familiar, sobre la base de que será inalienable, inembargable y exento de toda carga pública.” Título IV. De las garantías constitucionales. Capítulo II. De las Garantías Sociales. “Constitución Política de la República de Nicaragua de 1939.” Álvarez Lejarza, *Las Constituciones de Nicaragua*, 785.

<sup>510</sup> Título IV. De las garantías constitucionales. Capítulo II. De las Garantías Sociales. Art. 63-105. “Constitución Política de la República de Nicaragua de 1939.” Ibid., 779-83.

Fund) which started to provided effective health care, and maternity leave payment, and retirement fund, all of which became universal years later.<sup>511</sup>

The inclusion of all the above-mentioned articles, which should protect workers, peasants, day laborers, women, children, elderly, and indigent or poor people into each countries constitution does not necessarily mean that they were effective or enforced. The degree of real implementation depends on the country and the most successful social reform was the Costa Rican. For our purposes it is important to look at the legislation because it enables us to understand to what extent discussions in the public sphere were incorporated and institutionalized and became political practices.

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<sup>511</sup> Título II. Sección Tercera. De las Garantías Sociales. Art. 51-65. “Constitución Política emitida por la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente el 7 de diciembre de 1871, con todas sus reformas y adiciones al 7 de diciembre de 1946.” Peralta, *Las Constituciones de Costa Rica*, 569-72.

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## Appendix

## Appendix 1. Hymn to Central America

### Himno a Centroamérica

I

Den al viento las blandas espigas  
Sacudiendo sus lanzas de oro  
Del al viento las mieses en coro  
La canción del trabajo y la paz.

Y que juntas las manos amigas  
Y una ¡oh Patria! Tus cinco naciones  
Sus insignias en sus nuevas legiones  
El olivo fecundo no más.

CORO

Suene el dulce vocablo de hermano,  
bata el aire una enseña de unión,  
Cinco dedos formando una mano  
Alto agiten un cetro de honor.

II

Un altar a la vida y al arte,  
Un altar a Minerva y a Ceres;  
Y que sepan tejer sus mujeres;  
Y que sepan tus hombres sembrar,

Y que tome el arado el dios Marte,  
Más que vele labrando la tierra  
Y esté en paz, pero pronto a la guerra,  
A la guerra que impone la paz.

CORO

Suene el dulce vocablo de hermano,  
bata el aire una enseña de unión,  
Cinco dedos formando una mano  
Alto agiten un cetro de honor.

III

Eres libre entre libres, cadenas  
Nadie puede soñar imponerte,  
Porque es libre entre libres el fuerte  
Porque es libre el que sabe morir.

Coronando tus arduas almenas,  
Baste el aire invencible estandarte,  
Y la unidad es tu firme baluarte  
Y la lid del derecho tu lid

Source: *La Tribuna* (Managua) September 14, 1921, 2. "Himno a Centro-América,"  
*Centro-América. Órgano de publicidad de la Oficina Internacional*  
*Centroamericana*. XII, no. 2 (1920): 359.

CORO

Los grilletes infame de esclavo  
De tus manos rodaran al fin,  
Porque es libre entre libres el bravo,  
Porque es libre el que sabe morir.

IV

Nación eres por Dios elegida;  
Nunca te alce un anhelo infecundo.  
Colocado en el centro de su mundo  
Es tu suelo como un corazón,

Que recibe y difunde la vida,  
Rebosante en los patrios verjeles,  
Por la red arterial de sus rieles  
Y a las alas del raudo vapor

CORO

Corazón de la tierra fecunda,  
Eres númen de unión y de paz  
Dios te puso en el centro de su mundo  
Y mañana su emporio serás.

V

Gloria al día en que pueblos hermanos  
Al solar olvidado volvieron  
Y de nuevo el hogar encendieron  
Que en un día fatal se extinguió.

La sonrisa en los labios, las manos  
enlazadas con nudos estrechos  
al calor del hogar en los pechos  
con más fuerza latió el corazón.

CORO

Son el dulce vocablo de hermano,  
Batió el aire una enseña de unión;  
Cinco dedos formando una mano  
Agitaron un cetro de honor.

Rafael Arévalo Martínez



## Appendix 2. Costa Rica. The National Emblem

### El Escudo

Frente a mí, en una plancha de bronce que cuelga de un blanquecino alambre, está grabado el escudo de Costa Rica.

Es magnífico.

Sobre cuatro volcanes que arrogantes se levantan a la orilla del mar lucen cinco estrellitas. Una barquilla boga en las ondas, baila el cielo malva y rosa. Y todo esto adornado de bandas plegadas con esa perfecta armonía con que los bucles de Cela caen igualmente recogidos a ambos lados de su rostro alabastrino.

Al contemplar el escudo, siento fuerte opresión en el pecho. El recuerdo de mis antepasados, de mis amigos de ayer de hoy; el cariño entrañable que conservo para mi terruño en donde germinan y se esparcen margaritas o azucenas de amor para sus hijos; los juegos de luz vistos en las prismas de ensueño de una edad de inocencia o inquietud; los pensamientos de otro tiempo dorados cual trigos de Spira, todo lo que expresa esa palabra talismánica que se llama Patria, viene a mí, en un instante.

Ahora paréceme [sic] que, lo mismo que el caracol repite el rumor del Océano, el escudo de nuestro país guarda el estremecimiento del paso de la nube viviente de sus aves, el murmullo de sus ríos, los aires melancólicos que entonas sus bosques.

De pronto, al soplar el viento, el escudo vibra como la misteriosa campana de Velmich.

¡Adorable imagen de la Patria mía!

Carlos Jinesta

Source: *La Prensa*, Costa Rica (Sept. 15, 1920), 3.

### Appendix 3. Costa Rica. Hymn to the National Flag

## Himno a la Bandera de Costa Rica

*Letra: Porfirio Brenes Castro*

*Música: J. J. Vargas Calvo.*

Salud, noble bandera  
de blanco, azul y rojo;  
jamás ningún sonrojo  
fue mancha a tu esplendor.

La banda bucanera  
cayó a tu sombra herida  
y heroica y bendecida  
salvaste el patrio honor.

Tan blancas como armiño  
tus franjas representan,  
la paz que siempre ostentan  
los hijos del país.

Vivimos con cariño  
bajo este azul del cielo,  
labrando con anhelo  
dichoso porvenir.

Carmín en las mejillas  
del pueblo laborioso,  
revela el don precioso  
de entera libertad.

Ganaste en los combates  
de Santa Rosa y Rivas,  
las glorias siempre vivas  
de honor y lealtad.

Como ala protectora  
en toda Costa Rica,  
tu emblema dignifica  
el santo patrio amor.

La tumba de los Moras  
y Cañas tú proteges  
y en nuestro pecho tejes  
escudo al corazón.

Himno a la Exposición de Industria y Artes  
Honduras, 1921

Premiado por unanimidad por el Jurado Calificador

Coro

*Flora hoy luce opulentas guirnaldas  
Con las rosas más frescas y puras  
Saludando la gloria de Honduras  
Que hace un siglo a la vida nació.*

I

Celebrando tan fausta centuria,  
A la patria, entre hosannas y flores,  
Le ofrendamos de nuestras labores  
Las más bellas al pie de su altar.  
Las Industrias, las Artes nos  
muestran  
Que su afán bienestar nos procura,  
Porque el bien que nos brinda Natura  
Es debido al trabajo no más.

Coro

*Flora hoy luce opulentas guirnaldas  
Con las rosas más frescas y puras  
Saludando la gloria de Honduras  
Que hace un siglo a la vida nació.*

Nuestra patria será grande y fuerte,  
Cuando en vez de fusil fraticida,  
El arado nos dé [sic] paz y vida  
De la tierra al fecundo calor.  
El trabajo que salva a los pueblos  
Sea siempre el ideal que nos guíe,  
Ya que ahora triunfal nos sonríe  
Con los brazos abiertos, la Unión.

Coro

*Flora hoy luce opulentas guirnaldas  
Con las rosas más frescas y puras  
Saludando la gloria de Honduras  
Que hace un siglo a la vida nació.*

Alonso A. Brito

Source: *Excelsior* (Honduras), August 15,  
1921, 3.

Ante la estatua de Morazán  
(Honduras)

Al Dr. Don Alberto Uclés, Apóstol del Unionismo

No pasará de largo por la gentil  
Honduras;  
Bailo en ella un oasis y moraré unos  
días  
Volcando mis alforjas repletas de  
amarguras  
Hasta lograr dejarlas totalmente vacías.  
Salud! Poned en ellas ensueños y  
venturas  
Que sonrosen la tarde de mis  
melancolías.

No pasará de largo por Honduras  
(la tierra crestada de montañas como un  
gallo bravío  
Que hinca los espolones al flanco de la  
sierra  
Con navajas que tienen el argento del  
río.)

Pueblo de hombres heroicos y de  
fazañas [sic] grandes;  
Pues tenéis fuertes alas y salvarás todo  
abismo,  
Imitad a los cóndores que anidan el los  
Andes  
Y como a cinco cumbres volad al  
Unionismo!

Morazán, la gigante figura de la  
Historia,  
Que Juan Ramón Molina cantara en lira  
homérica,  
Sueña desde el sepulcro conquistar la  
victoria:

Anhela que se bañen en fulgores de gloria  
Las cinco patrias núbiles que forman Centro  
América.

Aislada cada estrella tienen valor escaso:  
Es irisada perlas sobre cerúleo raso  
O en la faz de la Noche lástima diamantina;  
Más cinco estrellas juntas no habrán de  
habar acaso  
Y formarán eterna constelación divina.

Yo intento abrir un surco luminoso en los  
pechos  
Exento de ruindades. Vengo a hablaros en  
nombre  
Del amor a la Raza. Preciso es que con  
hechos  
Sembremos la simiente que dispersó el gran  
Hombre.

Capitán: en el noble corazón hondureño  
Tenéis un tabernáculo: se le ama y venera.  
Hermano de Bolívar, tu más radiante sueño  
Florece en los espíritus como una  
primavera.

La Unión será! Más si alguien ansía que se  
fuerza tu ideal,  
encendido de cólera sagrada,  
Si no alcanzaste el triunfo por amor, por la  
fuerza  
Unirás a las cinco Naciones con tu espada!

Juan B. Delgado  
Tegucigalpa, 09 de abril de 1921

Source: *Excelsior* (Honduras), April 16, 1921, 4.

Himno a Morazán  
Del Himnario Cívico Escolar Hondureño

Letra de Froylán Turcios  
Música de Francisco R. Díaz Zelaya

Mágica rima de bronce que cante  
La maravilla de tu épica historia  
Sobre las cumbres mi musa levante  
El fabuloso esplendor de tu gloria.  
Que tu figura se encienda en la llama  
Que irradien las albas de nácar y oro  
Himno solemne pregone tu fama  
Vibre en los aires tu nombre sonoro.

Solo I

Eco de amor de los altos confines  
Queda vagando en los verdes pinares  
Lloran tu muerte los claros clarines  
Y en su profundo responso los mares.  
Ínclita musa de arcanos acentos  
De tu renombre destierra el olvido  
Flota el ideal de la Unión en los vientos  
Cual Pabellón al futuro tendido.

Solo II

Quién tu figura no ciñe de flores  
Pase tu númen venciendo vestigios  
Cual sol sin ocaso de vivos fulgores  
Sobre el eterno rodar de los siglos.  
Patria saluda al heroico guerrero  
Himnos eleva de luz y victoria  
Ama el sublime fulgor de su acero  
Pon en su frente el laurel de la gloria.

Source: Francisco Arístides Medina. *Cancionero Escolar Hondureño. Paquito. ¡Catrachísimo!*  
(Tegucigalpa: Ediciones Culturales FAMA, 2003), 17.

## Himno al Salvador del Mundo

Letra de don Belisario Calderón

Música de don Pedro J. Guillén

Hemos recibido el Himno al Salvador del Mundo que escribió nuestro amigo don Belisario Calderón, quien lo dedica al Ilmo. Señor Arzobispo Monseñor Antonio Adolfo Pérez y Aguilar, y a su señoría el Obispo Auxiliar de la Arquidiócesis, Monseñor Belloso y Sánchez.

Este expresivo himno que a continuación insertamos, fue estrenado en la Misa Pontifical oficiada en el festival del 6 de agosto de este año en la Iglesia Metropolitana; la música es del conocido compositor nacional don Pedro J. Guillén.

## Himno al Salvador del Mundo

¡Salve! Salvador del Mundo,  
Patrono de El Salvador,  
De quien eres protector,  
Dándole tu amor profundo.

En la conmemoración  
De; Tabor de excelsa historia,  
Tu pueblo exalta la gloria  
De tu Transfiguración.

Hincados ante tu trono,  
Viendo tu faz soberana,  
Tus hijos cantan ¡Hosanna!  
A su Divino Patrono.

¡Salve! Salvador del Mundo,  
Patrono de El Salvador,  
De quien eres protector,  
Dándole tu amor profundo.

Source: *Diario del Salvador* (El Salvador) Sept. 3, 1921, 1.

Appendix 8. Nicaragua. Hymn for the Centennial

1821-1921  
15 de Septiembre  
Nicaragua

Hoy un siglo. A las almas patriotas y nobles  
Que habitaban el Istmo Central  
Agitó el entusiasmo; el rumor de fogosos redobles  
Derribose el poder colonial.

Hoy un siglo! Y del tiempo en la escena fatal  
Han brillado furiosos mandobles  
Y ha babeado mil pechos viriles el hocico del Lobo del Mal.  
En los bosques se rompen los robles.

Descuartizánse hermanos á hermanos;  
Errabundos fantasmas tiranos  
Son factores de negras faenas,

Y aherrojan tus flácidas manos  
Santa Patria con fieras cadenas:  
¡Nicaragua! Nicaragua que hoy plañen tus penas...

J. Antonio López Díaz.

Source: *La Tribuna* (Managua) September 14, 1921, 2.

Plegaria De S. Exclcia. Rvma. Arzobispo Monseñor José Antonio

Lezcano y Ortega en la Sesión Solemne del Congreso Nacional

Excelentísimo Gobierno de la República; Excelentísimo Cuerpo Diplomático;  
Honorable Cuerpo Consular; Señores:

Como ministro del Dios Altísimo, aunque indigno; como superior gerárgico [sic] en esta Provincia Eccla. Católica; con vosotros, Soberana Asamblea Legislativa, Excmo. Señor Presidente de la República y Augusta Corte Suprema de Justicia, que dignamente representáis a esta nación cristiana; en este solemne día en que jubilosos conmemoramos y festejamos el centenario de la independencia de nuestra patria, elevo mi plegaria al cielo, parafraseando el himno de acción de gracias, que acostumbra la S. Iglesia: TE DEUM LAUDAMUS,

Porque diste a nuestra patria muy amada, el don inefable de la libertad a Ti, oh Dios, alabamos.

Como te confesaron nuestros padres, a Ti, Señor, Te confesamos.

A Ti, eterno Padre, venera toda la tierra; a Ti venera Nicaragua, esta tierra nuestra que tus manos colmó de favores.

A Ti con los ángeles todos, con los Cielos y con las Potestades, con los querubines y con los serafines Te proclamamos:

Santo, Santo, Señor Dios de los ejércitos, llenos están los cielos y la tierra de la majestad de Tu gloria.

A Tí el glorioso coro e los Apóstoles.

A Tí de los profetas la multitud venerable.

A Tí de los mártires el espléndido ejército Te alaba.

A Ti por todo el orbe de la tierra Te confiesa la Santa Iglesia, Padre de inmensa Majestad, Creador y Ordenador del Universo, Autor de las sociedades, Legislador Supremo, Fuente primera de toda autoridad.

Y venerando a Tú verdadero y único Hijo,

Y también, al Paráclito Espíritu Santo.

Tus eres Rey de la gloria, oh Cristo, Rey de las almas, Rey de las naciones, Rey de nuestra patria, que a Ti se consagró.

Tú del Padre eres el Hijo eterno.

Tú, deseando salvar al hombre, Te dignaste bajar al seno de una Virgen.

Tuyas son nuestras vidas porque Tú destruiste el dardo de la muerte y abriste a los creyentes los reinos de los cielos.



Tú estás sentado a la diestra de Dios en la gloria del Padre.

Creemos que vendrás como juez de los individuos y de los pueblos.

Y por eso Te rogamos que socorras a este pueblo siervo. Tuyo que redimiste con Tu preciosa sangre. Has que sus hijos sean contados entre Tus santos, en la gloria eterna.

Este pueblo es Tu pueblo, cree en Ti, espera en Ti, Te ama; sálvalo, Señor, bendice a Tu herencia. Si alguna vez delinquire, perdónalo, rígelos y condúcelos hasta la eternidad.

Todos los días Te bendecimos,

Y alabamos Tu nombre por los siglos de los siglos.

En este día en que celebramos cien años de vida independiente este pueblo y aquellos a quienes puso Tu Providencia adorable para que lo guiaran, entonando un cántico de gracia a Tu Bondad y elevan una plegaria implorando Tu protección. Escucha Señor esa plegaria. Bendice a nuestra madre España que nos dio su sangre y su fe; conserva a nuestra a [sic] patria libre y feliz, da luces y virtudes a sus gobernantes. A todos, Señor, guárdanos para siempre sin pecado.

Venga Tu misericordia, Señor, sobre esta nación conforme a la esperanza que tenemos en Ti. En Tí, Señor, ha esperado; que no sea confundida jamás.

Bendigamos al Padre y al Hijo y al Espíritu Santo. Alabémosle y exaltémosle por los siglos.

Bendíganos a María, Madre de Dios, que es nuestra Madre.

Así sea.

Managua, 23 XII-1921.

Source: *La Gaceta*, Managua (Dec. 26, 1921), 2203-2204.

## GLORIA

Compuesto para al Jura de la Bandera de 1917, Chinandega, Nicaragua

Celebremos con júbilo santo,  
Compañeros, la fecha dichosa  
En que alzaron homérico canto  
Una pléyade de hombres, gloriosa.

Celebremos la espada de un día,  
Como un sol alumbró nuestra historia,  
Cuando hirió al la infamante jauría  
Que dejó tan ingrata memoria.

Gloria eterna a los grandes patriotas,  
Gloria eterna a Chamorro y a Estrada,  
Que infirieron tremendas derrotas  
A la turba de Walter osada.

Por César Tijerino R.  
Alumno de la Escuela No. 1 de Varones de la ciudad de Chinandega.

Source: *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1917), 47.

Appendix 11. Nicaragua. Oath to the Flag, 1917

José Cecilio del Valle  
Jura de la Bandera de 1917, Jinotega, Nicaragua

Descubríos ante él, porque es el sabio  
Ungido con el óleo de la ciencia,  
Que anticipando un siglo su existencia  
La coronó la gloria en desagravio.

Descubríos ante él, porque en labio  
Derramó esplendorosa la elocuencia,  
Y cual foco de luz su inteligencia  
Lanzó al error y a la ignorancia agravió.

El es el pensador grave y austero;  
El amigo de Betham erudito;  
De nuestra cara Patria, honor y lustre;

El que su nombre eternizó el primero,  
Y el que, escuchando de su pueblo el grito,  
Da libertad el Acta escribió ilustre!

José Antonio Domínguez

Source: *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1917), 73.

## Appendix 12. Nicaragua. Civic Poetry, 1917

### A Nicaragua

(Recitación por el alumno Aquileo Rizo, San Rafael del Norte, Jinotega, Nicaragua. Sept. 14, 1917)

Nicaragua en tus altares  
Hoy rinden en loores,  
Su aroma las patrias flores  
Su voz los patrios pinares  
Su música los dos mares,  
Su gratitud la igualdad,  
Sus ofrendas la lealtad,  
Y los pueblos redimidos  
Sus corazones henchidos  
De amor, dicha y Libertad!

J.J. Palma

Source: *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1917), 76.

Appendix 13. Nicaragua. Poem to the National Flag, 1917

Al Pabellón Nacional

Recitación por la alumna Concepción S. Rivera en la Jura de la Bandera  
San Rafael del Norte, Jinotega, Nicaragua 1917

De en medio de un incendio de truenos y de balas  
Te alzaste, pendón santo, con brillo y majestad;  
El cóndor de los Andes, te trajo entre sus alas,  
Nosotros te abrazamos gritando: ¡Libertad!

Aquí nuestros hermanos envueltos en tus pliegues,  
Murieron por su patria, su honor, su religión:  
Como ellos moriremos, y cuando a verlo llegues,  
¡Contad con vuestros hijos, hermoso pabellón!

Con empeño afanoso al lado de esa tumba  
Nosotros levantamos de ruinas un montón;  
Allí estarás flameando mientras que el Norte zumba,  
Allí vendrá a estrellarse del yankee la ambición.

Carmen Díaz

Source: *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1917), 78.

### Adiós

Recitación por María L. Juguay en la Jura de la Bandera  
San Rafael del Norte, Jinotega, Nicaragua 1917

¡Bendita sea tu diestra!  
¡Bendita Señor tu diestra!  
Que hizo la tierra y el cielo  
Cuanto se ostenta en el suelo,  
Tu amor y piedad nosotros muestra.

Con la lluvia y el rocío,  
Crece el arroyo y la fuente,  
Corre en los campos el río.

Bulle el insecto en el grama,  
Triste en el monte el cordero,  
Y el dorado jilguero  
Que vuela, de rama en rama.

El hombre, el ave, el insecto y el bruto,  
Campos, arroyos y flores:  
Todos cantan tus loores  
Y te dan ¡Señor! Tributo.

X.X

Source: Memoria de Instrucción Pública (Managua, 1917), 76.

## Canto a la América Latina

A los heraldos de la Unión

Latino Americana

MANUEL UGARTE y J. IGNACIO GÁLVEZ

I

Nadie sabe todavía  
Cuándo, desde la profunda mar bravía  
Que azotaba el huracán,  
Tus gigantes cordilleras  
Asomaron sus cabezas altaneras,  
Coronadas con penachos de volcán.

Ni de dónde a tus orillas arribaron  
Las extrañas,  
Fuentes razas que poblaron tus  
montañas,  
Y tus valles y tu mar.  
Sólo al que no se extendieron como  
enjambres vigorosos  
Y cubrieron con sus tribus, sus imperios  
poderosos  
Sus inmensos guerreros,  
Del lejano septentrión a los postreros  
Arrecifes en que llora el mar austral.

Junto a un lago  
Que brindábale el halago  
De su linfa rumorosa  
En la tierra del cenizote y del quetzal  
Se expandía, formidable y belicosa  
La temida monarquía  
Que fundó Quetzalcoatl.

Con sus sólidas falanges de guerreros,  
Sus caciques altaneros  
Con su corte de pintores y poetas  
Imperaba en las mesetas  
Y en el valle de Anahuac;  
Y llegaba,  
Sin reparo, el albedrío  
De su inmenso poderío  
De Tezcoco al Orizaba

Desde el golfo al otro mar.

Con su joyas, sus vestales,  
Sus palacios y sus templos colosales,  
Su gobierno patriarcal,  
El imperio de los Incas se extendía  
Por la América y cubría  
A los pueblos con su púrpura real.

En las faldas de los Andes orientales,  
Donde hay lagos suspendidos,  
Como espejos, en los cuales  
Se contemplan los erguidos  
Soberanos de las cumbres, habitaba el  
aimará.  
Una raza de gigantes  
Que ha dejado huellas hondas de sus pasos  
En los ásperos ribazos,  
En las islas de sus lagos, ondulantes,  
En la cima del volcán.

Sí, entregados a las guerras,  
Los feroces y salvajes guaraníes  
Dominaban el las tierras  
Del Brasil y el Paraguay,  
Los valientes e industriosos cachalquies  
Dedicados a pacíficos trabajos,  
Habitaban las montañas y los bajos  
De la sierra cordobesa al Tucumán.

Y los indios de las pampas vigorosas y  
arrogantes  
De ágil cuerpo, compartían con el índico  
jaguar  
El dominio de sus sabanas gigantes,  
Por el sol y por el viento acariciadas,  
Que aun palpitan en oleadas  
De verdura como un mar.

Y detrás de las ingentes  
Cordilleras, orgulloso, soberano,  
Defendido por las lanzas de sus ulmenes  
valientes  
Levantábase el gran pueblo araucano,  
Siempre listo a combatir  
Por las sierras escarpadas  
Y las lóbregas quebradas  
De su indómito país.

## II

Al través de los incógnitos océanos,  
Unos seres sobrehumanos  
Con una ansía inextinguible de tesoros y  
aventuras  
Arribaron de las tierras desde donde  
viene el sol;  
Y, escribiendo con su sangre cien  
homéricas hazañas,  
Escalaron las montañas,  
Y asolaron las llanuras  
Como oleadas de una enorme  
inundación.

Y cayeron, uno a uno, los imperios  
seculares,  
Y se hundieron en los lagos, y en los  
mares  
Y en las selvas, donde nadie penetró,  
Los despojos de las tribus primitivas  
Que, diezmados, pero indómitas y  
altivas  
Resistieron al empuje del turbión.

Y entre rancos aullidos,  
Estampidas,  
De mosquetes,  
Raudas cargas de jinetes  
Y disparos de cañón,  
Escueboes [¿?] la agonía  
De nos raza que moría  
De otra raza ante el asalto abrumador.

Y se irguieron bravamente los primeros  
Los aztecas, los guerreros  
Que escribieron la epopeya mejicana,  
Que es hermana

Del poema de Lautaro y Tucapel.  
Pelearon frente a frente con sus lanzas y sus  
mazos  
Sin temor a las corazas  
A los rayos de las armas ni al empuje del  
corcel.

Fueron ellos los soberbios mejicanos  
Que, encerrados a la postre por los hierros  
castellanos,  
Por la peste, por el hambre, la miseria y la  
crueldad,  
No queriendo convertirse de señores en  
esclavos,  
Prefirieron enterrarse como bravos  
En las ruinas de su gran Tenuchtitlan [sic].

Y cruzando por las olas  
Nunca hundidas del remoto mar del sur,  
Las osadas compañías españolas,  
Realizando la quimera de su empresa,  
Como leones que aprovechan el descuido de  
su presa,  
Sorprendieron a los incas del Perú.

Y arrollaron los Pizarros a los quechuas  
indolentes,  
A los súbditos pacientes  
De este imperio conventual,  
Con la voz de sus cánones  
Y los cascos de sus rápidos bridones,  
Como a un tímido rebaño montaraz.

De las márgenes del Plata  
A las pampas infinitas como el mar,  
Pronto el reino de Castilla se dilata  
Sin atajo, cual el raudo viento austral.  
Y la tribu que corría libremente por sus  
llanos  
Ve, a pesar de sus esfuerzos sobrehumanos,  
Invadido y pisoteado su postal.

Pero un día se estrellaron los ejércitos  
hispanos  
Con los rudos  
Capitanes araucanos,  
De los pechos indefensos y desnudos  
Que, rodeados por sus bárbaras indiadas,



Sus montañas nunca halladas  
Se aprestaban a librar.  
Y rodaron los jinetes castellanos  
Al empuje de sus lanzas y sus hachas,  
Como caen resonantes,  
Derribados por las rachas  
En el alto Nahuelbuta, los gigantes  
Del pinar.

Y ya nadie puso diques  
A los índicos arranques. Los caciques  
Y guerreros más audaces protegieron  
sus figuras  
Con la férreas y brillantes armaduras  
Que quitaron en los campos de batalla al  
español,  
Se habituaron al tronar de los cañones  
Y montaron los fantásticos bridones  
Sin recelo ni temor.

Cuantas veces contemplaron los iberos  
Cómo iban los indianos caballeros  
Con las riendas en los dientes, en  
furioso galopar,  
Lanza en ristre y embrazando los  
broqueles,  
Inclinados sobre el cuello de sus rápidos  
corceles,  
Los escudos de sus viejos enemigos a  
golpear!

Fue cesando lentamente  
En las selvas y en los llanos la pelea,  
Y el hispánico poder el continente,  
Cual la bíblica marea,  
Desde Méjico al estrecho sepultó;  
Más quedaron en los límites australes  
Del Arauca legendario los caciques  
inmortales,  
Invencibles bajo el sol,  
Como quedan en los mares,  
A pesar de las crecientes,  
Los peñascos seculares  
Que levantan hacia el cielo su erizado  
pedernal,  
Vencedor de las rugientes  
Marejadas que subleva el temporal.

(Continúa)  
III  
Y los siglos pasaron,  
Y del cruce fecundo  
De las dos bravas razas que pelearon  
El dominio de un mundo,  
Brotó una raza nueva,  
Robusta y aguerrida,  
Fuerte como los pumas y jaguares  
Que pueblan la temida  
Frontera de tus montañas seculares.

Una raza altanera que tenía  
La noble bizarria  
De un quijotesco hidalgo castellano,  
Del gaucho a serena poesía,  
La bravura del indio mejicano,  
Y el sublime heroísmo  
De un cacique araucano.

En brazos de tus hijos  
¡Oh! América, dormías perezosa,  
Reclinada en las faldas  
De tus montes bravíos  
O en el verde alfombrado de tus llanos,  
Oyendo la corriente sonora  
De tus gigantes ríos  
O el rudo canto de tus dos océanos.

Mas un día, a la luz de una alborada,  
Escuchaste vibrar la clarinada  
Que lanzaron las águilas francesas  
Cuando, poblando el aire de rumores  
De libertad y guerra,  
Volaron anunciando por la tierra  
El fin de los tiranos y opresores.

Te erguiste lentamente  
Con el suave vaivén de la marea,  
Que en el principio toca  
Apenas con su espuma dulcemente  
El dorso de la roca,  
Y que, luego, más firme y animada,  
Hacia el asalto viene  
Con el apoyo de otra nueva oleada  
Que la anima, la impulsa y la sostiene.

Y cuando terminó la incertidumbre

Y se oyó por doquier la la [sic] voz  
vibrante  
Que mostró de la hispana servidumbre  
Roto por siempre el manto,  
E hizo resonar por vez primera,  
Desde el llano a la cumbre,  
En nombre de la patria sacrosanto,  
Se lanzaron tus hijos a la lucha,  
El viento la melena alborotada,  
Cual sale de la hirviente marejada  
Revuelta por los raudos aquilones  
La aulladora jauría,  
A tomarse los altos murallones  
De la costa bravía.

Y los héroes brotaron  
De toda la amplitud de horizonte  
Con la misma bravura  
Con que antes levantaron  
Sus testas orgullosas, en el monte,  
El valle y la llanura,  
Los caciques del suelo americano,  
El sentir resonar en sus montañas  
El rudo casco del corcel hispano.

No oís como bramidos de huracanes,  
Como una ave gigante que aletea?  
Bostezos de volcanes,  
Rumores de pelea,  
Veces de imprecación, salves y  
hosannas,  
Y junto al son de bélicos clarines,  
El himno de las místicas campanas?  
Es que envuelto en los cálidos vapores  
De la sangre y la gloria,  
Sube, desde la puebla de Dolores,  
Despertando los valles y las sierras,  
La gran figura del patriarca Hidalgo  
A redimir las mejicanas tierras.

Al frente de sus bravos inmortales,  
El gran Bolívar llena  
La amplitud de las zonas tropicales  
Con la heroica leyenda que derrama  
Los ecos de su gloria y de su fama;  
Y, vencedor en la sangrienta oriflama,  
De Quito al mar Caribe  
Y desde el Orinoco al Magdalena,

La libertad de América proclama.

A los pies de la andina cordillera,  
Alzase el grande O'Higgins. Su bravura  
Sobre los campos de batalla deja  
Atrás a los más invictos campeones  
Y de la Rancagua en la sangrienta plaza  
Cierra el poema de la Patria Vieja  
Con la carga inmortal de sus bribones.

Entretanto que el fuclito [sic] Belgrano,  
Vencedor o vencido,  
Aún lucha con el fiero castellano,  
Midiendo desde el llano  
La insalvable barrera  
Que le opone el riscal de la montaña,  
San Martín silencioso  
Su grande jora espera,  
Como el tigre nervioso  
Aguarda por la tarde en los herbajes  
De la pampa callada  
El rítmico trotar de la manada  
De los potros salvajes.

El noble O'Higgins llega  
Y junta sus deshechos batallones  
A las nuevas legiones  
Que San Martín sacara  
De sus llanos desiertos y sus breñas,  
Como Moisés, en otros tiempos, hizo  
Borbotar a los golpes de su vara  
Cristalinas corrientes de las peñas.

Y ávidos de cumplir la grande hazaña  
De libertar un mundo, el alto monte  
Traspassaron chilenos y argentinos,  
Y fueron sobre el escuadrón de España  
Como bandadas de cóndores andinos  
Que caen sobre un león en la montaña.

Salvaron los abismos  
y las cimas con sus alas de vuelos soberanos  
Y, bajando a los valles de Aconcagua,  
Como alud gigantesco, en Chacabuco  
Vengaron reunidos los hermanos  
La sangre clamadota de Rancagua.

Y la bandera de la blanca estrella,  
Símbolo del poder de un pueblo nuevo  
Cruzó los mares y, a la sombra de ella  
Los guerreros de Aranco y de la pampa  
Derribaron del tronco a los virreyes.

Y desde las riberas  
Donde cantan los mares antillanos,  
Remontando salvajes cordilleras,  
Mortíferos pantanos,  
Abatiendo a su paso las banderas  
Y los escudos y las armas reales,  
Una legión de bravos colombianos  
De raza ciclópea  
Vino, con sus guerreros formidables,  
Sus cargas de corceles y sus sables,  
A decidir la homérica pelea.

Y al pie del Chimborazo  
Que con su blanca frente  
Domina la mitad del continente,  
Sellaron juntos en fraterno abrazo  
La redención del suelo americano  
Los dos héroes más grandes:  
Bolívar, el titán venezolano,  
Y San Martín, centauro de los Andes.

#### IV

Salve, América, están libres los senderos  
Que te abrieron tus guerreros  
Con los filos de sus sables  
A los toques sonoros del clarín!  
Quién contiene tus avances formidables  
Hoy que pasas  
Con tu séquito de pueblos y de razas  
A cumplir tu noble fin!

Salve, América, se acerca ya la aurora  
Cuya lumbre bienhechora  
Va anunciando por montañas y por  
llanos,  
De las sierras hasta el mar,  
El sol nuevo de justicia, sol de  
hermanos,  
Que, al calor de sus miradas, sin  
envidias ni recelos  
Bajo el dombo gigantesco de los cielos,

De la América latina [sic] las naciones  
unirán.

(Continuará)

Y tus hijos arrogantes y briosos  
Con el alma estremecida por anhelos  
generosos,  
Hermanados por la épica memoria  
De los héroes que esculpieron la leyenda de  
tu gloria,  
Juntaránse bajo un mismo pabellón;  
Y del Golfo Mejicano a los canales  
Donde se alzan los enjambres de  
archipiélagos australes  
Formarán con sus cien pueblos una sola y  
gran nación.

Y así juntos alzaremos una valla  
Semejante a una granítica muralla,  
Donde vengan, impotentes,  
A estrellarse las corrientes desbordadas  
De las razas antagónicas y extrañas que, en  
oleadas  
Espumantes, de los viejos continentes  
llegarán,  
Un gigante acantilado, cuyas cimas  
vencedoras  
Pongan diques a las bandas invasoras  
De las águilas del norte, que, de lo alto de  
sus montes,  
Escudriñan codiciosas los ignotos horizontes  
donde brilla la serena cruz austral.

Envainadas  
Sus espadas  
Al compás de los martillos y al sonar de las  
azadas,  
Mientras se oiga de los trenes el jadeante  
galopar.  
Nuestros hijos alzarán en el futuro  
Los acentos de su cántico más puro  
A vosotros, los perínclitos latinos,  
Que llevasteis estos pueblos hacia altísimos  
destinos  
Y supisteis de esta raza la gran alma  
modelar,

A, ti, oh! Galia, redentora

De las razas oprimidas,  
Que marcaste en nuestras vidas  
La grande hora  
Que anunciaba la soñada libertad,  
Y que lanzaste allá en las cumbres tus  
ideas  
Fulgurantes, como teas  
Que guiaron en las sombras a esta nueva  
humanidad.

A ti oh! Patria de los Médicis y el  
Dante,  
De Leonardo y Rafael,  
Que al palenque de las artes nuestra  
mente vacilante

Has llevado con tu mágica paleta y tu cincel.

Y a ti, España, madre amante,  
Que, en tu raza valerosa y arrogante,  
Nos legaste tu hidalguía, tus hazañas y tu  
ideal,  
Y, engastado, como perla, sobre el oro  
valioso  
De tu idioma sonoro,  
El Quijote, que es símbolo de tu alma noble  
y leal.

SAMUEL A. LILLO  
(concluye)

Source: *El Demócrata* (Rivas, Nicaragua) (Octubre 19, 1921), p. 4, (Octubre 21, 1921), p. 4, (Octubre 23, 1921), p. 4.

## Lo que es la Patria

Cuando corría mi lejana infancia, sentíame yo poseído por el culto a la santa mujer que me diera la vida; y por el culto a España, de quien cien pruebas tengo ya ofrecidas en mi tormentosa existencia.

Y muchas veces, cuando balanceaba en compendio las páginas más ilustres de nuestra historia y veía la mirada material, atenta como en éxtasis, al libro y al hijo, yo solía preguntarme allá en las interticias interrogaciones propias de los niños; ¡Dios mío! ¡Qué mérito habría yo contraído antes de nacer para que me haya dado una madre tan buena y una Patria tan grande!

No se puede saber cuánto ama uno a su madre sino sobreviviéndola como por ley general se la sobrevive; no puede saber cuánto ama uno a su Patria, sino separándose de ella, por prescripción y por fuerza.

Todo el planeta es tierra, decía yo en mis destierros, pero no es la tierra cuya substancia llevamos en nuestras venas; la atmósfera es aire, pero no es el aire que recogió nuestros primeros suspiros; todo el sol es luz, pero no es la luz de la cual llevaremos hasta el morir un beso en la frente; todos los hogares ofrecen calor y abrigo, pero no es aquel abrigo que nos dio el hogar santificado por las lágrimas que costaron nuestras vidas; todas las iglesias son una, pero sus campanas no suenan como aquellas que han doblado por la muerte de nuestros progenitores o que nos han traído el “Avemaría” a los labios en la tarde, cuando pliegan las aves sus alas sobre el ramaje y despliegan los astros su luz en el espacio; todas las lenguas son humanas, pero no son aquella lengua de la cual nos valemos para decir: ¡madre mía! ¡Amor mío! Con la cual en los labios queremos presentarnos al juicio de Dios: que todos los recuerdos más santos y todas las esperanzas más consoladoras se encuentran en el culto de la Patria, y toda el alma de la Patria es su lengua, legado glorioso recibido de nuestros escritores inmortales, y que debemos, como un vínculo sacro, transmitir de generación en generación hasta la más remota posteridad, cual me recen su gloria y su grandeza.

Emilio Cateláe (Esp.)

Source: *El Demócrata* (Rivas, Nicaragua) Dic. 02, 1921, p. 3.

### La proclama unionista de 1863

Separatistas escuchad –valientes  
Los hijos del ilustre Morazán,  
Por doquiera que alcemos nuestras  
frentes  
Coronadas de gloria brillarás.

No importa que en la rabia los tiranos  
Nos calumnien con pérfido rencor:  
El mundo los conoce, americanos,  
I hará justicia á nuestro noble ardor.

E son de guerra los tambores bates:  
¡A las armas, amigos, a triunfar!  
Traidores son los que la unión combaten  
I nuestras fuerzas nunca enfrentarán.

Unión, Unión, nuestra bandera sea:  
Solo una vez: “La Patria, la Nación!”  
Que esta querida tierra al fin nos vea  
Triunfar o sucumbir, más con honor!

Queremos Patrio o sucumbir luchando  
Asistir de la Patria al funeral!  
O con ella levantarnos proclamada  
Un solo nombre: AMÉRICA  
CENTRAL.

¿Oís el rumor de inmensa gritería?  
Es de mil bravos el furor temblás!

Sinó queréis fatal carnicería  
Seamos amigos: pronto unión jurad.

Trazada está nuestra gloriosa Era  
De Coatepeque en la sangrienta lid  
Del rudo embate del feroz Carrera  
Triunfante Barrios la firmó feliz.

El son de guerra los tambores batea:  
A las armas, amigos, a triunfar!  
Los pechos nobles de entusiasmo ¡atean!  
A Nicaragua por la Unión marchad!

Adelante, adelante, es la una mano  
Señal de paz, fraternidad y unión  
I un corazón todo él americano  
Con solo un pensamiento la Nación.  
En la diestra, rebzidez [sic], una espada!  
Retrógrados, infames, elegid...!  
Es la hora ya fatal, desesperada:  
Un abrazo de hermanos a la lid.

Queremos Patria o sucumbir luchando  
Asistir de la Patria al funeral.  
O con ella elevarnos proclamando.  
Un solo nombre: AMÉRICA CENTRAL.

Carmen Díaz

Source: *La Tribuna* (Managua) September 14, 1921, 2.

Appendix 18. Nicaragua. To General José Dolores Estrada, Hero of the National War (1856-87), 1921

### AL GENERAL ESTRADA

En su trono de gloria, al lado suyo  
Te coloca la Patria entusiasmada  
Que un hijo digno, generoso Estrada,  
Llena de orgullo reconoce en ti.  
Que el sol esplendoroso de Bolívar.  
Siempre inmortal en la memoria  
muestra,  
En San Jacinto se ostentó, y tu  
diestra  
La brecha de sus glorias abre allí.

Desde ese día, meramente libre  
Del enemigo á nuestra Patria vimos,  
I de tu voz potente percibimos  
El eco, repitiendo ¡Libertad!  
Nicaragua yacía moribunda.  
De cansancio postrada, no rendida  
I tú vendaste su fatal herida  
I le dijiste: "Patria, levantad."

La *frente* alzó debilitada, apenas,

I apoyada en la fuerza de tu brazo.  
Se quiso levantar, dio el primer paso,  
I siguió caminado hasta triunfar,  
I tú luchaste por su noble causa,  
Hasta dejarla de los suyos dueña,  
Siempre llevando del honor la enseña,  
Desafiando el peligro sin cesar.

Oh! Si cual tú, magnánimo guerrero,  
De mi Patria querida honor y gloria,  
Pudiera siempre hallar en mi memoria  
Placer tan puro y grato al corazón;  
I pudiera decir con justo orgullo,  
Como tú dices al mirar tu suelo:  
*"Yo corrí del destino el negro velo,  
Yo abrí la puerta al Sol de la Nación."*

Carmen Díaz  
Managua, Septiembre 14 de 1886.

Source: *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (Managua, 1917), 74. *La Tribuna* (Managua) Setiembre 14, 1921, 4.

## Himno a San Jacinto! Himno del Doctor Leandro García

*Harol* [sic], un colaborador de *La Patria*, de León, publica en los números 20 y 21 de esta revista literaria, correspondientes al 16 de marzo y 1º de abril últimos, los himnos nacionales de Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador y México, dejando al lector que juzgue si los centroamericanos pueden en verdad llamarse nacionales. Resueltamente juzgamos que no, una vez que, habiendo Centro América nacido una sola Patria a la vida independiente, ninguno de esos himnos para el caso –como no debe importar nada- el que estén políticamente separadas las cinco secciones centroamericanas. Aparte de este defecto capital, tienen otros por los que no merecen el concepto de verdaderos himnos, *Harold* no publica el himno del joven Salomón Ibarra, himno premiado sólo académicamente, debido alas intrigas de cierto maestro de sonido, que se ha guardado para sí el premio material de córdobas que designara, el Ministerio de la Guerra, para el autor del himno concurrentes; no lo publica *Harold*, sin duda por no conocerlo; pero sin contradecir en lo mínimo nuestra *Historia de un concurso literario*, que salió en el número 18 de *La Patria*, no titubeamos en juzgar que el himno de Ibarra tiene aquel mismo defecto capital. Además, no se sabe si los jurados examinadores tuvieron el trabajo de Ibarra por mejor, entre varios malos o regulares, o si por ídem entre buenos. Y entendemos que un himno nacional debe ser lo mejor de lo bueno, ya que no lo mejor de lo mejor.

¡Los cinco himnos que presenta *Harold*! Con éste creemos que no hay entre nosotros un himno nacional calificado oficial o académicamente, que merezca el nombre, pues los que se conocen no nos exhiben en sentido centroamericano de unidad, ni en el literario.

Pero si no tenemos un himno realmente nacional, sí contamos con dos, que pudiéramos llamar concretos o locales; uno de 1856, de Juan Iribarren, el único poeta granadino, el cual himno es, en nuestro concepto, la *Marsellesa nicaragüense*, en oposición este juicio al respetable don Francisco Javier Medina, quien otorga tal calificativo al *Alerta a la Raza*, notabilísimo trabajo del doctor Santiago Argüello. Es conocido el himno que nosotros llamamos la *Marsellesa nicaragüense*. El otro es de 1892, compuesto por el doctor Leandro García a la memoria del general don Patricio Centeno, 2º jefe vencedor en el inmortal combate de San Jacinto, librado contra Byron Cole, lugarteniente de Walker, el 14 de Septiembre de 1856. Don Pedro Baltodano, artista meridional, compuso la música de este himno, que fue estrenado por la Banda Infantil formada y dirigida por aquel maestro la noche del 14 de Setiembre e 1892, en una velada que se dio en Jinotega.

El autor de *San Jacinto* debe ser poeta, y el doctor García lo es, más que muchos que pasan por tales. ¡Y el doctor García no es considerado como versificador siquiera! Cuando las revistas literarias del país –no exceptuamos ninguna- *engalanan* sus páginas con renglones cortos, hasta los nuestros!



San Jacinto es un verdadero himno, local hemos dicho; ¿y nacional por qué no? ¿San Jacinto no es acaso la primera acción de armas que puede legítimamente enorgullecerse el patriotismo centroamericano? ¿No es por ventura la génesis de nuestra segunda independencia? Sin San Jacinto tal vez no se hubieran unido fuertemente contra Walker las cinco secciones de Centro América... [sic]

Literariamente hablando, *San Jacinto* es muy superior a cualquiera de los himnos centroamericanos que publica *Harold*. Menos extenso que el mexicano, quizás el mejor de la América Hispana –no América Latina- piensa *Harold*, y que se refiere solo a un hecho, exclusivamente s él; pero la inspiración con que está escrito y el patriotismo nacional que lo impulsa, no son inferiores a la inspiración y el patriotismo que campean en el de la heroica patria de Hidalgo, Morelos, y Juárez.

HIMNO SAN JACINTO  
A LA MEMORIA EL GENERAL DON PATRICIO CENTENO

Coro

*Gloria, gloria mil veces al nombre  
Del egregio, inmortal [sic] paladín!  
Gloria al héroe y al mártir. Loores  
De la patria al invicto adalid.*

I

Negra noches sus sombras tendía,  
La tormenta bramaba terrible,  
Y el adverso destino, inflexible,  
Nos cubría de eterno baldón.  
Cara Patria! Tus santos altares.  
Por audaz y ruin bucanero  
Profanados! La muerte primero  
Que la extraña, la vil opresión!

II

En la tierra en que alientan los  
libres,  
En la tierra do [sic] puso la planta  
El marino inmortal que agiganta  
De los siglos el rauda correr.  
En la tierra en que un día brillara  
El espléndido sol de Castilla,  
No se infama ni abate ni humilla.  
Que se preciso morir o vencer!

III

Y al combate veloz volaron,  
Como nobles leones heridos,  
Patria mía, tus hijos queridos,  
Al combate a vencer o a morir!  
Santo fuego enardece sus pechos,  
Sacro incendio su espíritu inflama;  
Patriotismo, vivifica llama,  
Los conduce y arrastra a la lid.

IV

Por doquiera la sangre y la muerte,  
Por doquiera el horror, la matanza,

Pero siempre la hidalga pujanza,  
Pero siempre el heroico valor.  
En el noble bizarro soldado  
Que defiende el más santo derecho,  
Que se agita y alienta en el pecho:  
Libres ser ante el mundo, ante Dios!

V

Allá va..... majestuoso, atrevido:  
Allá va..... su mirar es de fuego.  
En su sangre va sangre de Riego.  
En su sangre va sangre del Cid.  
Más allá..... la soberbia montaña,  
Con relámpagos, truenos de gloria,  
Sinaí que ilumina la historia,  
De los libres radiante cenit.

VI

San Jacinto..... ¡pedazo de tierra  
Do [sic] los viles el polvo mordieron,  
Do [sic] tus hijos ¡oh patria! Rompieron  
Sus cadenas de oprobio y horror!  
San Jacinto..... ¡alborada de gloria  
Sol que rasga la horrisona sombra!  
San Jacinto, mi labio te nombre  
Con ardiente y profunda emoción!

Leandro García

Jinotega, 14-IX-1920

Source: *La Patria*, Vol 26, No. 9-11,  
1920. pp. 148-150.

Nota: *La Patria* es una revista literaria  
nicaragüense.

## EL BOSQUE LEJENDARIO [sic]

En el primer Centenario de la Independencia de Centro América

A los centroamericanos

En el bosque legendario os cantará la gloria.  
En esta fecha insigne que consagró la historia  
Y celebráis unidas con patria devoción.  
Sea mi lira grandiosa cuyo salvaje acento.  
Aullaba a los indios cual materna canción.

Has mecido en tus cuerdas, ¡oh bosque legendario!  
La cuna de la raza. El viento milenario  
Sopla entes rudos troncos con extraño rumor.  
Eres libro pletórico de heroicas tradiciones.  
Templo de mil columnas; fuente de mil canciones.  
Que brindas a tu pueblo tu savia y tu vigor.

Con un brindis de siglos, alzas tu copa inmensa.  
Descuellas misterioso a través de la densa  
Niebla del tiempo, alzando tu canción secular.  
Testigo de la historia, presenciaste sus dramas,  
Y desplegando al viento tu pabellón de ramas,  
Has visto los ocasos de os siglos pasar.

Tejes perennemente tu túnica florida:

Entre sus verdes pliegues el poema de la vida,  
Agita sus estrofas, prolífico, inmortal.  
Cubres se fresca pompa la obra destructora  
Del tiempo en cuyo abismo se despeña sonora,  
La fuente inagotable de tu savia vital.

Con sus raíces rasgas las vírgenes entrañas  
De la tierra y te yergues magnífico, y te bañas  
Extasiado, en los áureos resplandores del sol.  
Cuando la luna alumbra tu solemne reposo,  
Poblado de fantasmas, duermes y vagoroso [sic]  
Suspiras cuando el cielo te tiñe de arrebol.

Tierno, a veces, al céfiro tus querellas exhalas,  
Y sintiendo la trémula caricia de sus alas,  
Eres todo fragancia, y eres todo temblor.  
A veces, cuando rugen los rudos huracanes.  
Tus árboles se agitan en lucha de titanes,  
Y entonces eres todo confusión y furor.

Pero más me conmueven que tus  
vivientes glorias,  
Los pálidos festejos de tus sacras  
memorias,  
Los dolientes ruinas que hablan de un  
vago ayer;  
Allá, bajo tus frondas, la inefable  
tristeza  
Del recuerdo, los últimos vestigios de  
grandeza,  
Que el sol de otras edades viera  
resplandecer.

En tanto que la vida, en tu seno  
fecundo  
Levanta un himno eterno, en silencio  
profundo  
Duermen grandes imperios su sueño  
inmemorial;  
Viste, como entre sueños, ¡oh bosque  
primitivo!  
Cruzar héroes y pueblos, y tu ramaje  
altivo  
Tremola victorioso cual bandera  
triunfal.

De las bélicas huestes que yacen a tu  
sombra,  
Fueron tus mustias hojas el sudario y  
la alfombra,  
Y cual ellas rodaron en confuso tropel.  
Revelaste a los pueblos sus ciencias y  
sus leyes,  
Armaste a sus guerreros, coronaste a  
sus reyes,  
Y ceñiste las frentes gloriosas de  
laurel.

En tu espesura, a veces, se oyen  
clamores bravos;  
Silvar [sic] de flechas; choque de  
armas; gemir de esclavos;  
Y de festejos bárbaros la exaltación  
feroz...

La noche de los tiempos en tu fondo se  
esfuma...  
Y te pueblas de insignias y penachos  
de pluma...  
Y la muerte atraviesa con su cortante  
hoz.

Sacudieron tu seno violento  
convulsiones;  
El derrumbe de reinos; las fieras  
invasiones  
De pueblos aguerridos, y de tribus  
bravías  
En pos una de otra, muchedumbres  
salvajes  
Labiaban su penoso camino en tus  
boscajes,  
Disputándose el paso en sangrientas  
porfías.

Y luego los monarcas que construyen  
ciudades  
De palacios, y erigen templos a sus  
deidades,  
A tu arboleda imponen su cetro  
abrumador,  
Hasta que extraños hombres, que  
llegan como dioses,  
Y férreos y flamígeros aclaman con  
sus voces  
El pendón de Castilla, y la cruz del  
Redentor.

¿Quién leyera las páginas de tu libro  
grandioso?  
¿Quién pulsara de tu arpa el cordaje  
armonioso,  
Para arrancar un grito de heroica  
inspiración,  
Que hiciese, cual conjuro, marchar en  
procesiones,  
Los fantasmas efímeros de las  
generaciones

De que tu solo guardas la vaga  
tradición!

No sé si en tus dominios poblados de  
misterio,  
Proyectará en su sombra Xibalba, el  
gran imperio  
Que en épocas remotas fundó Valún  
Votán;  
O sí Quicáb guerrero cruzó por tu  
espesura;  
O tu follaje el nombre de Cucumátz  
murmura;  
O si en tu seno duermen los restos de  
Copán.

No sé si fueron mames, pipiles o  
chontales,  
Quichés o cachiqueles, chortis o  
rabinales,  
Las tribus que poblaron tu seno en otra  
edad...  
Los que tiñen sus cuerpos, o hacen piel  
de pumas,  
Los que labran el oro, los que tejen las  
plumas,  
Los que oran en los templos del dios  
Tamagastud...

Talvez de tu arboleda se erguía frente a  
frente,  
Holom, la ciudad rica, o Izmalchi, la  
potente,  
O Rulabá, dormida al pie del Excanul.  
Quizá viste en las noches de  
imploración y ruego,  
De Mictlán las pirámides con cúspides  
de fuego,  
Donde oficiaba el *tecti* de la túnica  
azul.

¿Fueron los árboles tuyos las lanzas  
chorotecas [sic],

Por que fuentes sonaban las vírgenes  
toltecas,  
U oíste las leyendas del ingenio pipil?  
¿O escuchaste el estrépito de los  
pueblos guerreros  
Quichés y cachiqueles... los ayes  
lastimeros  
Del cautivo inmolado en aras de  
Tohil?

Talvez vibre en las cuerdas de tu  
grandiosa lira,  
La fiera voz de Urraca, Nicarao o  
Lempira,  
O el estruendo de cascos del corcel  
andaluz!  
Talvez guarden un eco del fanático  
celo,  
O de Fray de las Casas la voz, que era  
consuelo,  
Que hablaba las divinas palabras de  
Jesús.

No sé qué canción cantas, ¡oh bosque  
legendario!  
No sé si acaso quedas, ¡oh bosque  
milenario!  
En tierra de los lagos, o en tierra del  
quetzal;  
Solo sé que aun se escucha tu viviente  
armonía,  
En una paraje agreste de América  
Central.

No creo que haya el hacha del hombre  
derribado  
Los troncos gladiadores de tu templo  
sagrado,  
Que el hacha de los tiempos no pudo  
derribar  
Los rudos centinelas del templo  
secular.

No creo que haya hacha del hombre  
derribado  
Los troncos gladiadores de tu templo  
sagrado,  
Que el hacha de los tiempos no pudo  
derribar.  
El alma de la raza en tu santuario vive,  
Y ni el tiempo con su hacha es capaz  
que derribe  
Los rudos centinelas del templo  
secular.

Y ya que son las cuerdas del arpa de la  
gloria,  
Y ya que son los mudos testigos de la  
historia,  
Tus árboles que vieron los triunfos de  
otra edad,  
Verán a cinco pueblos surgir de sus  
escombros  
Y alzarse victoriosos con un siglo en  
los hombros  
¡Hoy hace un siglo, ¡oh bosque!  
Gritaron libertad!

Hoy envío a esos pueblos mi canción  
de poeta  
Con sonos de clarines y acentos de  
profeta,  
Por encima de un siglo y en el soplo  
del mar.  
Y les diré a esos pueblos que llevan tus  
amores,  
Que viven tus recuerdos, que tienen tus  
furores.

Lo que escucho en tu fronda  
hondamente vibrar:

“Pueblo de Centroamérica, a quien di  
mis alientos,  
Desafiad cual mis árboles la furia de  
los vientos.  
Desplegad cual mis ramas el patrio  
pabellón;  
Que el sol finge en el Este un arco de  
esperanza.  
Aguardando la marcha triunfal de  
vuestra alianza.  
Y el clarín del progreso proclama  
vuestra unión.

“Formad en la cadena cinco argollas  
de vida;  
tejed, como yo tejo, la túnica florida;  
Bebed savia en mi copa, savia de rica  
miel,  
En tanto que al poeta le doy mi  
augusto acento,  
A Minerva su olivo, lanzas al  
pensamiento,

Y a las testas gloriosas mis ramos de  
laurel.”

Liverpool, Inglaterra, Septiembre de  
1921

Carlos Barahona-Villaseñor