

# **A Return to the Past and the Elaboration of an Indo-Hispanic Identity in Modern Honduras**

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JOSÉ LARA  
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Historical icons and heroes were essential to the creation of many, if not all, Latin American nations. Honduras is no exception. During the latter decades of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Honduran leaders and intellectuals began to create a national imaginary by elaborating an “official history” based on a common Indo-Hispanic past. This essay illustrates the different ideologies and processes that were enacted to form at a discursive level a racially and culturally uniform nation. I focus, in particular, on the cultural, political and socio-scientific reasoning for the celebration of what I describe as inclusionary and exclusionary discourses of *ladinaje* and *mestizaje*. I detail the Hispanicization and environmental strategies elaborated by the State to correct the racial and cultural composition of Indian and Black populations who were considered a threat to the integrity of a homogenous national image. I also explain the transformation of two icons from Honduras’s past into symbolic capital<sup>1</sup>—the pre-Columbian Mayan city of Copán and the sixteenth century indigenous cacique Lempira, who opposed the Spanish conquest—and their relation to the debate on Honduran identity. Overall, this work attests to the complexities of the Honduran nation building era and the continuous search for a national identity.

## **The Liberal Reform Period and the Surge of the Banana Industry**

The creation of the nation did not become an official project until the Liberal Reform Period (1876-1883). Led by the economic and political strategies of President Marco Aurelio Soto and Minister of Public Instruction, Ramón Rosa, Honduran leaders sought to establish a strong central government that would eliminate localism, incorporate the country into the international market, legitimate the Nation-State and create a homogenous national image of Honduras. In order to accomplish these objectives, political officials and intellectuals elaborated a symbolic language that facilitated the feeling of a common origin and the formation of bonds among members of the population. Leaders also initiated an aggressive recovery and reconstruction of the past, which included the creation of national heroes and icons and the establishment of centralized archival

depositories such as the National Library and National Archives (Varela-Osorio 148-49). One of the first State-sponsored projects of this reform period was the transfer of all historical documents preserved in various depositories in the city of Comayagua, the center of colonial power, to the newly created and organized National Archives in Tegucigalpa. On August 27, 1880, Ramón Rosa delivered a speech commemorating the opening of the National Archives and Library in which he emphasized the importance of history, archives and traditions in defining and solidifying a nation (Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo XX* 39). This oration served as a call to intellectuals and leaders to elaborate an “official national history” based on a careful selection and compilation of pre-Columbian, colonial and republican narratives and events that helped to define Honduran identity. It is precisely at this moment—as part of the recuperation of history—that figures from Honduras’s historical past such as Copán and Lempira became more widely known and recognized for the first time as national symbols.

As part of the efforts to build a modern and developed State, the liberal government of Marco Aurelio Soto actively promoted foreign investment and immigration from Europe and the United States. Although these measures were endorsed since independence from Spain by prior governments, beginning in the mid 1860s, the State began to establish a series of favorable immigration laws for those coming into the country. The expectation was that immigrants would help in developing the export economy (Glenn Chambers 19). For example, in 1866, the State approved a new regulation that granted property ownership free of tax to all foreigners who worked the land for five years and allowed them to introduce tools, machinery or instruments necessary to establish their own businesses without having to pay any custom fees (Amaya 32-33). Two years later, this measure was supplemented by the October 26, 1868 memorandum from the Department of Colonization, which provided a formal document to issue letters of inhabitance to immigrants who wished to settle in Honduras (Valle 517-18). During Soto’s administration, the President ratified a new law in 1877—*Ley sobre agricultura* [Agriculture Law]—where he officially placed all matters regarding agriculture under the jurisdiction of the State and presented a more elaborate version of the privileges granted in 1866 (Valle 518-20). The 1880 constitution served to support these measures by specifying that the State would do everything possible to stimulate foreign investment, colonize previously abandoned areas and integrate Honduras into the world economy (Chambers 24). Consequently, the country further opened its doors during the next few decades with the approval of the 1895 and 1905 immigration laws and the economic boom of the banana trade. It is important to note that while the Honduran government and numerous intellectuals contemplated

the possible economic benefits of foreign immigration and investment, they did not fully consider the cultural baggage of these groups and the effect they would have on both the country's overall population composition and identity.

The liberal agriculture policies served as an impetus for the development of the Honduran Caribbean region and the international fruit industry. At the beginning of the mid nineteenth century the cultivation of bananas in Honduras was in large part limited to the Bay Islands, but with the promulgation of new immigration laws, the country saw an increase in banana production in the North Coast of Honduras. Independent growers, mainly from the region of Olancho, began to sell their product to North American merchants who imported bananas into the United States. Local control of this industry lasted for about four decades as US investors began to establish themselves in the area and form what became the three most dominant multinational fruit companies: the Cuyamel Fruit Company, the Vaccaro Brothers (later known as the Standard Fruit and Steamship Company) and United Fruit Company. The large economic revenues from these businesses did not benefit the country or its citizens, because most of it did not remain in Honduras, but rather made its way back to the US, where investors had set up their headquarters. Nevertheless, these three companies were able to attract and acquire as part of their labor force numerous Hondurans from various parts of the country—including the Garifuna people—and immigrants from different parts of the world who hoped to take advantage of the competitive wages (Chambers 26-29).

Until the late 1920s, all regulations pertaining to immigration matters were free of any language that seemed to privilege or limit any racial group from entering the country. Historian Jorge Alberto Amaya makes a valid point in indicating that during this period, State officials were under the erroneous assumption that these favorable laws would exclusively attract Europeans and US immigrants, and thus did not make a conscious effort to include restrictions in any of their laws until the 1929 migratory law (36). One of the main reasons for the creation of a new law that established a clear hierarchy among different racial groups was the State's lack of success in attracting those classified as white. Census records indicate that only a small percentage of the total number of immigrants was of US or European nationality. In addition, after the 1895 immigration law was issued, the country began to see Asian, Middle Eastern and West Indian populations settling in or close to the coastal region of Honduras, all of whom were considered by the Honduran elites "less desirable" races and a threat to the ideals of progress and civilization (Amaya 31-38). Another motive for the new legislature was the resentment that the ruling class developed as the banana companies began to expand their interests into other economic sectors, including communication,

banking and the production of numerous products. For example, Chambers indicates that the Standard Fruit Company established the *Banco Atlántida*, monopolized the production of sugar with its Honduras Sugar and Distilling Company, and made beer and other types of refreshments through the *Compañía Industrial Ceibeña* (31).

It is well known that the economic decline of the Ottoman Empire and the numerous ongoing wars in the Middle East were two of the most salient reasons for the immigration of Palestinians to Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> But, what was the reasoning for their immigration to Honduras during this period? At the moment of greatest expansion by the banana companies, this group began to enter the country and eventually settle primarily in the city of La Ceiba and San Pedro Sula. Most Palestinians were educated Christian merchants from the Bethlehem-Jerusalem area in search of economic opportunities who initially did not have any intention of forming permanent settlements in Honduras. They produced religious items and other forms of souvenirs that were sold to pilgrims and Catholics throughout Central America. According to Manzar Foroohar, in Honduras, Palestinians began as peddlers selling religious icons, agricultural tools and household goods until they became the dominant suppliers in the region (7-11). The economic boom and surge of regional markets resulting from the banana production allowed them to gain control of the commercial system in the North coast and to branch out into new lines of trade and small scale industries, especially textile and clothing manufacturing (Foroohar 11; Amaya 56-57). Palestinians were one of the most economically powerful immigrant groups, but as I will later explain in more detail, this success is what led Honduran elites to reject them and enact a series of discriminatory policies against them.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Hondurans vs. Foreign Immigrants<sup>3</sup>

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

Sources: Antonio Vallejo, *Primer anuario estadístico correspondiente al año 1889* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1998) 146, 153. William Davidson, *Honduras: Territorial Structure and Statistic Census of 1895* (Tegucigalpa: Academia Hondureña de Geografía e Historia, 2002) 1a. Héctor Pineda, *Censo general de población en 1926* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1927) 117.

José Pineda, *Resumen del censo general de población de 1930* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1932) 32.

Table 2: Nationalities of Foreign Immigrant Groups

	1887	1926	1930
American	185 (3%)	2,160 (6.2%)	1,313 (3.1%)
Belizean	NR	NR	684 (1.6%)
Chinese	1 (.02%)	195 (.56%)	269 (.64%)
English	1,033 (16.8%)	4,196 (12.1%)	2,921 (6.9%)
Guatemalan	2,060 (33.4%)	8,358 (24.1%)	7,885 (18.6%)
Jamaican	NR	NR	930 (2.2%)
Nicaraguan	610 (9.9%)	3,162 (9.1%)	5,907 (14%)
Other European	219 (3.6%)	1,348 (3.9%)	1,478 (3.5%)
Palestinian	NR	131 (.38%)	198 (.47%)
Salvadorian	2,000 (32.4%)	13,452 (38.8%)	18,522 (43.8%)
Turkish	NR	945 (2.7%)	569 (1.3%)
Total	6,167	34,714	42,280

Sources: Antonio Vallejo, *Primer anuario estadístico correspondiente al año 1889* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1998) 153. Héctor Pineda, *Censo general de población en 1926* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1927) 117. José Pineda, *Resumen del censo general de población de 1930* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1932) 32.

We can see in table 1 that from 1887 to 1930, there is a clear increase in the number of immigrants that settled in Honduras. But the increase, in terms of the overall population percentage, is quite minimal. Furthermore, as Amaya has indicated, most immigrants did not come from the United States or European countries, but rather from the contiguous Central American countries, especially El Salvador and Guatemala. In fact, since 1887, these two countries have made up over 60 percent of the entire foreign population in Honduras. Palestinians and Turks (who were in actuality Palestinians, but were categorized as such because many carried Ottoman passports) made up over 3 percent of the population in 1926, but less than 2 percent in 1930 (Foroohar 7). In terms of the number of West Indians who settled in the country, it is more difficult to gauge due to the limited documentation. Before 1930, demographical information did not include a separate category for any of the West Indian countries or a “West Indian” classification and often times not all West Indians were included because many only entered as temporary workers (Chambers 20). What we do have is the category of English, which may or may not encompass both “white” and “black” populations. In his analysis of British West Indian immigration documentation, including national censuses, Chambers estimates that there were about 1,033 documented West Indian immigrants on the North Coast in 1887, 3,673 in 1926 and 4,215 in 1930 (21, 61). If we take into account the estimates Chambers presents and the information that I have provided in tables 1 and 2, it appears that he has

included the number of English immigrants as part of the overall number of West Indians who settled in the North Coast of Honduras. Although Chambers does not fully explain how he arrives at these numbers or question the sources he utilizes, the underlying assumption that the English category may encompass West Indians may well be correct given that many Black West Indians made a point to emphasize their status as English nationals in an effort to differentiate themselves from the Black Garifuna population whom they considered to be inferior.

### **The Honduran Elite Response to Foreign Immigration**

The economic development of the Caribbean coastal region further fomented the ideological debate pertaining to race and national identity that first surfaced in the 1860s with the incorporation of the Northeast region to the overall territory of the country.<sup>4</sup> State officials and members of the liberal intelligentsia had always favored Western notions regarding European superiority, but the arrival of “less desirable” races coupled with the development of new scientific ideas resulted in a widespread anti Afro-descendant sentiment. By the late 19th century, Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* and Francis Galton’s *Heredity Genius*, the founding text of eugenics, had made their way to Latin America and the ideologies known as Darwinism, Social Darwinism and Eugenics had been adopted in some form or another by much of the intellectual class. These scientific principles not only questioned Lamarck’s notion of the inheritance of acquired characters by indicating that physical and mental variations were the results of hereditary material, but also planted the seeds for racist formulations based on the idea that the “race plasma” of certain groups—meaning that of the European race—was fitter and therefore superior to that of other degenerative populations. These weaker groups included those of hybrid racial composition (Stepan 22-27). Thus, it is no surprise that Honduran nation-builders enacted a series of strategies that reflected a rejection of many of the newly immigrated populations. But none were targeted more so than the Black West Indians who many Hondurans feared might biologically and culturally mix with the rest of the Honduran population. In addition, and I believe this was a greater concern, the Black West Indian presence resulted in a re-evaluation of the country’s own heterogeneous racial composition, its own African heritage.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the State sought to create a racially and culturally homogenous population. But it was not successful in accomplishing such an objective for most of the century. This changed during the Liberal Reform Period when the State employed the

problematic and complex term “*ladino*” to classify the majority of its population. This was obviously not the first time that this term was utilized for it had also been used during the colonial era.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the previous period in which the meaning of *ladino* was varied and ambiguous, in the 1880s, the authorities delimited its definition. In 1887, officials carrying out the census of that year were instructed by State officials to make no distinction among individuals who were racially mixed and to categorize them as *ladino* (Euraque, “*La construcción del mestizaje*” 78). The term *ladino* was racially neutralized so as to erase the heterogeneity of the Honduran populations inherited from the colonial period, and to ideologically remove the black element of the racial composition of Honduras. In fact, the 1887 census suggests that the Honduran population did not include any blacks because out of 331,917 inhabitants, 263,045 were classified as *ladino* and 68,872 as indigenous (Valle 151). Nevertheless, it is important to note that these figures did not include many of the “savage” populations of the Yoro and Mosquito region whose racial composition, like that of the West Indians, included African blood.

### **The Return of the Maya**

Another important component of the nation-forming project was the elaboration of a foundational language that provided all Hondurans with a shared origin, and unified them under the conceptual abstraction of nation. As part of this undertaking, State officials and intellectuals began a series of discussions to determine the time period to which they wanted to trace their history. They looked to their pre-Columbian past, colonial years and recent republican independence era for heroes and icons that embodied honor, prestige, glory and authority – elements that constitute what Pierre Bourdieu defined as “symbolic capital” in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and further explained in his subsequent work *Distinction*. Hondurans found in the city of San José de Copán (vestiges of one of the greatest civilizations that had existed in its territory before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors) existing sources of symbolic capital, and drew from them to legitimate the nation.

Largely unknown and well hidden in the extreme western part of the Republic of Honduras for many centuries after its disintegration, the ruins of the Mayan empire were first discovered by Diego de García Palacios in 1576. As the official magistrate of the Audiencia of Guatemala, García Palacios wrote in his *Carta dirigida al Rey de España* [sic], a detailed report to King Phillip II of Spain describing what he had seen. But as a result of the lack of interest in this part of Honduras and the difficult terrain that impeded explorers from reaching the city, the value of Copán was not stressed

until the time of nation building. As socio-cultural anthropologist Mortensen cogently argues in “Structural Complexity and Social Conflict in Managing the Past at Copán, Honduras,” Copán is situated on the margins of the territorial state, but was and continues to be at the center of the cultural patrimony and recent tourism initiatives in Honduras (258).

Similarly to what occurred in other Latin American nations, Honduran intellectuals and leaders of the late nineteenth century sought to trace their roots to a glorious pre-Columbian past and to describe the nation they were creating as a continuation of the Maya civilization that flourished before the conquest of the territory.<sup>6</sup> Barahona argues that this historical jump from the Liberal Reform Period to the pre-Hispanic past was a symbolic elimination of Spanish predominance in Central America for over three hundred years. In addition, a Mesoamerican past was quite appealing to Hondurans because the Maya had settled in the Copán region and had established an empire that was believed to have embodied the Republican ideals of “progress” and “civilization” that Hondurans desired for the Nation-State (*Pueblos indígenas* 162). The greatness of Copán was a feat of the Maya civilization, a testimony of the material work that had flourished on Honduran soil before the arrival of the Spanish. Such a vision justified the State’s efforts to conserve and restore the ruins of Copán, initiate the excavation of other archeological sites and appropriate this civilization as part of Honduras’s rich history. It is important to note that the Maya civilization to which Hondurans traced their origins was an idealized one, a constructed Mesoamerican society. Escoto makes a convincing argument when he indicates that two versions of the Maya exist in the collective imaginary of Honduras. The first kind is “the real” or historical Copán that Hondurans were not able to experience—and thus have no knowledge of—and the second is the constructed Copán of the late nineteenth century that gave birth to the land: a form of pre-Hispanic Camelot that was gifted with justice, production and wise and intellectual leaders (9). In other words, the Copán that Hondurans revere today is the space that has been embedded with symbolic capital and value.

Linking the present to the past is not a phenomenon particular to the official formulation of a national identity. It is a continuous process and a common practice of numerous cultures in different time periods.<sup>7</sup> The Maya of the Copán region were no exception. As rulers during Copán’s classic period (c. 628-822) they commissioned elaborate structures that not only commemorated their reign, but also communicated and legitimated their authority by forming ties with those that came before them. For instance, archaeologist Claude-Francois Baudez argues that the 13th Mayan ruler (18 Rabbit) authorized the construction of Stela C to celebrate his ascension (28). Through a

symbolic reading of this stela, Baudez demonstrates how the two figures depicted on this stela—Eighteen Rabbit, the thirteenth Mayan ruler, on the east side and Smoke Jaguar, the twelfth Mayan ruler, on the west side (see figure 1 and 2)—emulate the movement of the sun from east to west. Similar to the rising sun in the east, the new ruler is given authority by the previous king that has passed away or set like the sun in the west (32-35).<sup>8</sup> The quintessential model of how Mayan leaders created ties to their predecessors is the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Temple 26 (see figure 3). Commissioned by Eighteen Rabbit and completed by the fifteenth ruler, Smoke Shell, this large structure measures about twenty-one meters long and has a total of 2200 glyphs that according to Maya specialists depict the former kings who made up the royal line and narrate some of the most important events of the Maya empire in Copán (Fash 143-45). More specifically, the glyphs highlight the distinguished life of the twelfth monarch, Smoke Jaguar, whose accomplishments included the creations of many of the statues and structures still found today.

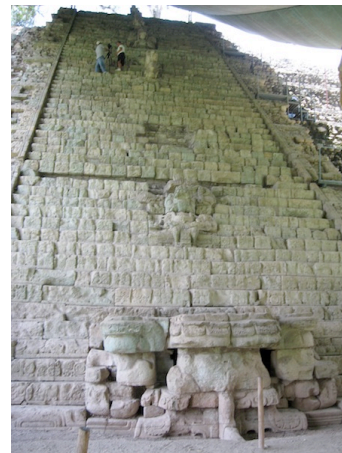


Figure 1: Smoke Jaguar (West)<sup>9</sup> Figure 2: 18 Rabbit (East) Figure 3: Hieroglyphic Stairway

The importance of history for this dynasty is quite evident, but why is the figure of Smoke Jaguar emphasized? Fash indicates that Smoke Shell revived the memory of Smoke Jaguar in an effort to restore the Mayan ruling order during a time in which it had lost control of many of its subjects after the humiliating death of the thirteenth king. Eighteen Rabbit was beheaded by a leader of a fiefdom that was originally subservient to Copán, and since then, the empire was in a precarious situation (145-46). These are only a few examples of how the same pre-Columbian society that Honduran leaders appropriated in order to validate the new nation also utilized the past to legitimize their rule.

Legislation had placed the ruins of Copán under the protection of the State in 1845, but it was not until the end of the century that this archeological site began to acquire special

governmental attention. In fact, in the early 1840s there was even an attempt, albeit unsuccessful, to sell the ruins of Copán to the English architect and artist Frederick Catherwood and American explorer and diplomat John Lloyd Stephens, both of whom were pivotal in the rediscovery of the Maya civilization and had published extensively on their travels to Maya cities in Central America and Mexico (Earle 142). Historian Rebecca Earle emphasizes this account and others that also demonstrate an explicit interest from the international community in Copán, to argue that the State's ensuing response to officially protect and claim Copán as part of the national patrimony was in part due to the international attention demonstrated during this period (142-43). In other words, the region's acquired international stature and scientific importance is what led Hondurans to consciously appropriate Copán because by doing so, the State also "accumulate[ed] the capital of honor and prestige" (Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* 118).

Honduran leaders began to demonstrate interest in rebuilding Copán as early as 1874. During this year, President Ponciano Leiva ordered a formal report of the current condition of the ruins and the probabilities of restoration. Nevertheless, the State did not take any formal action until 1889 when it signed its first contract with the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology of the United States to begin the restoration of this site with the hope of developing a national museum where many of the cultural remains of the Maya empire were to be exhibited. In 1891, a new contract allowed the Peabody Museum to carry out excavations for a total of ten years beginning in 1892. This same contract guaranteed the Peabody Museum the right to half of the total artifacts found during the excavations. (It is important to note that the case of Copán is only one of many instances in which Latin America's cultural patrimony has been sacked or at least been exposed to such risk. America in the colonial period was the territory from which natural resources were extracted and pillaged and now is the land from which cultural monuments and artifacts are stolen.) Nevertheless, this part of the contract was obviously unfavorable to Honduras and seen as a threat to the protection and conservation of the ruins. Thus, the contract was suspended in 1895 (Ávalos 4-5; Barahona, *Pueblos indígenas* 162-63).

The notion of archaeological cultural patrimony at the State level was now in existence, but the lack of resources to restore Copán allowed the Peabody Museum to propose a new contract in 1900 to excavate in the region. This led to a legislative debate regarding the ruins of Copán that took place on the floor of the National Congress on March 20, 1900. The issues of discussion were the possible benefits and detriments of a contract with the Peabody Museum that would oversee the study and restoration of the various monuments, structures and sculptures that were found in

Copán. Some representatives expressed their support for a contract because they felt that Honduras lacked the knowledge and resources of the United States, but most felt that Hondurans should be at the forefront of this project because the ruins were an important part of the country's cultural patrimony and of its source of capital. I emphasize this debate because it turned into a discussion of the importance of history and the elements that constitute it, of the need to recover historical artifacts because they are what link the population of today with those of the past. As part of this dialogue, the role that Copán would have in defining national identity was also discussed (Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo XX* 38-42). Representative Miguel Ouelí Bustillo expresses this nationalistic sentiment in the following words:

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

At the end, Honduran leaders entered in agreement with the Peabody Museum, but also ratified new legislation that prohibited the export of any archeological remains (Barahona, *Honduras en el siglo* 42). Nevertheless, this newly renewed interest and understanding of the importance of Copán did not result, at that particular time, in the elaboration of an official discourse that advocated a Maya national identity (Barahona, *Pueblos indígenas* 165) or initiated the official “Mayanization”<sup>10</sup> of Honduras. That is not to say that the ancient civilization that thrived in Copán was not seen as a central element of Honduran history or that it did become one of the most significant, if not the most important, national icon. In addition, it is important to emphasize that the symbolic value attributed to Copán was part of a strategic plan to celebrate the Indian of the distant past and negate the contemporary existence of indigenous groups.

According to Nancy Appelbaum, the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s were eras in which numerous Latin American States reevaluated some of the economic, ideological and political measures carried out during the late nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> This was the time period of the Mexican Revolution, Cuban Independence and other significant historical events that resulted in the appearance of various populist projects and a more inclusive conception of citizenship and national identity. This change in the way Nation-States defined their people was in part due to the production and promotion of the ideology of *mestizaje* as a national myth and the rejection of European and North American assertions of the racial inferiority of Latin American hybrids. At the same time, some intellectuals endorsed *indigenismo*, a philosophy that exalted the “pure” Indian and promoted the

indigenous figure as the basis for a national identity and imaginary. Nevertheless, promoters of both ideologies were concerned with turning Indians into citizens through education and modernization (Appelbaum 7-8). In conjunction with the development of the “cult of *mestizaje*” was the articulation of eugenic and medical practices that sought the improvement of the race by linking a salubrious environment to racial health (Stepan 84-95).

In the case of Honduras, the State endorsed the mestizo as representative of the nation while promoting two strategies for the improvement of its populations: the introduction of schooling missions and foreign immigration (Chambers 33-36). Also, the promotion of *mestizaje* coincided with the omission of a Black presence from Honduras’s history and territory, and the veneration and appropriation of the 16th century cacique Lempira as part of the national symbolic capital. Lempira had become more widely known and recognized for the first time with the publication of José María Cacho’s “Resumen estadístico, corográfico e histórico del departamento de Gracias” in 1855,<sup>12</sup> Guatemalan historian, Jose Milla y Vidaurre’s *Historia de Centroamérica* in 1879 and José Cisneros’s epic poem, “Lempira” In 1899.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Mythification of Lempira and its Relation to the Discourse of Mestizaje**



Statue of Lempira at the Congressional Plaza, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Before the late nineteenth century’s construction of an official history, Lempira and the Lenca rebellion he led in the sixteenth century were largely unknown. Using archival documentation, the historian Martínez-Castillo indicates that all of the conquistadors of Honduras who lived in the 1530s and 1540s—whether it be in official reports, letters directed to the King or to the Council of the Indies in Seville, or other forms of documentation in which they narrated how they served the

Crown during the conquest and colonization of this territory—make reference to an indigenous uprising in the Province of Gracias a Dios and its respective pacification, but do not provide a detailed description of this account. All conquistadors narrate the rebellion in the same manner: they mention it, but they omit any reference to the numbers of indigenous rebels who participated in this uprising and to their leader, Lempira (9). A century after the death of Lempira and the end of the rebellions throughout Gracias, Lempira’s story appeared in Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas’s 1626 *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Océano*.<sup>14</sup> In this, his most important work, Herrera provides us with more in depth information about the conquest of Honduras that was not present in the official reports of the conquistadors. He discusses the details of the battles that occurred in Gracias: the number of men in Lempira’s army, the number of days the rebellions lasted, the age and some physical aspects of Lempira, and indicates that Lempira died by treachery because he could not be defeated otherwise. This is the version of Lempira that until this day is disseminated and that lives in the memories of all Hondurans.

Although Herrera creates a detailed account of the betrayal and death of Lempira, voids or gaps exist in his narrative. For example, the chronicler completely omits the names of Lempira’s betrayers: the parliamentarian who was supposed to have faced Lempira head-on and the soldier who shot and killed him while he hid himself and therefore was undetected by the cacique.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, these details missing from the official history coupled with the near-invincibility of Lempira are what facilitated the mythification of this figure during the 19th and 20th centuries and the utilization of Lempira as not only an exemplary hero, but also an answer to the challenging question of national identity (Lunardi 6).

It is of no surprise that when the country composed its national anthem in 1915—an important symbol of Honduran identity—Lempira’s “heroic death” was included. The third verse says:

Era inútil que el indio tu amado  
 Se aprestara a la lucha con ira,  
 Porque envuelto en su sangre Lempira,  
 En la noche profunda se hundió;  
 Y de la épica hazaña, en memoria,  
 La leyenda tan sólo ha guardado  
 De un sepulcro el lugar ignorado  
 Y el severo perfil de un peñón.<sup>16</sup>

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

Lempira was most utilized during Honduras's period of intense nationalism. As indicated above, the incorporation of the country into the international market and the acquiring of foreign investments were necessary to its economic development, but with these came a strong alien presence and the immigration (although initially State-supported) of individuals from distinct nationalities and racial groups—British, Americans, Black West Indians and Palestinians. Foreign presence, and more precisely the financial success of some of those groups, resulted in a strong nationalistic rhetoric and the appearance of multiple representations of the autochthonous that promoted national pride and served to differentiate the "true" Hondurans from the "Others." Two groups that Hondurans defined themselves in opposition to were the Palestinians and Black West Indians. The success that Palestinians and Black West Indians demonstrated in the textile and the banana industry, respectively, was perceived as a threat to the interests of both the elite and working class of Honduras.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, this fear led to the creation of strict migratory laws limited their entry into the country and resulted in a series of unjustified monetary fines of up to 5,000 *lempiras* on their businesses (Amaya 35-40). Overall, these manifestations of distrust by Hondurans considering themselves *mestizo* – mixture of Indian and Spanish – are further proof that identity is constituted, partially, by repressing what threatens it and in relation to what it is not (Laclau 1990 and Derrida 1981, qtd. in Hall, *Question of Cultural Identity* 5).

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

The 1930 census is a clear manifestation of the State's second official efforts to homogenize its population. As previously indicated, the first occurred in 1887 with the census of that year in

which the majority of the population was grouped under the then racially and culturally neutralized classificatory term *ladino*. Unlike its first attempt, its second was clearly through the use of a “racialized” label and a particular form of mestizaje promoted by the elite class. Nonetheless, before the 1920s there is no real evidence of a veneration of the *mestizo* as representative of the nation’s identity (Centeno-García 98; Euraque, *Conversaciones* 80). Official population registers between 1887 and 1930 that include information pertaining to race indicate that before 1930, *mestizo* was utilized only twice: 1895 and 1910. The census of 1895 is a unique record in that it is the only document to include 31 different descriptors for race (Davidson, *Honduras: Territorial Structure* 1a-2a). In addition, we can extrapolate from this census that by this period, the definition of racial identity encompassed a series of characteristics including skin color, national origin, tribal group and geographical location. Like the 1895 census, the 1910 population count clearly reflects the use of a heterogeneous racial nomenclature, but unlike the previous one, delimited its definition of race to classificatory terms that were common during the late Colonial Period or to skin color referents. This was the norm for every subsequent census that included race as part of its record (See Table 3).

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

Table 3: Racial Classification by Population <sup>18</sup>

1887	1895	1910	1916	1930
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indígena</li> <li>• Ladino</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amarillo</li> <li>• Blanco</li> <li>• Caribe</li> <li>• Caucasiano</li> <li>• Centroamericano</li> <li>• Hicaque</li> <li>• Ladino</li> <li>• Mestizo</li> <li>• Mulato</li> <li>• Negro</li> <li>• Sambo</li> <li>• Yndio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amarillo</li> <li>• Blanco</li> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Ladino</li> <li>• Mestizo</li> <li>• Mulato</li> <li>• Negro</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Ladino</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amarillo</li> <li>• Blanco</li> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Mestizo</li> <li>• Negro</li> </ul>

Sources: Antonio Vallejo, *Primer anuario estadístico correspondiente al año 1889* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria, 1998) 151. William Davidson, *Honduras: Territorial Structure and Statistic Census of 1895* (Tegucigalpa: Academia Hondureña de Geografía e Historia, 2002) 2. Santos Centeno-García, *Genes y músculos negros en los renglones histórico-antropológicos de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Nacional, 2008) 96, 98. José Pineda, *Resumen del censo general de población de 1930* (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1932) 31.

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

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

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

1926 was the year in which Honduras adopted Lempira as its newly named currency, and 1931 marked the first year in which its coinage began to circulate with a visual representation of this indigenous figure (Rápalo-Flores 140). But this was not the only time that the State appropriated this figure as statues were erected in his honor, neighborhoods, streets and public avenues of different

cities were named after him and national celebrations commemorating Lempira's achievements were initiated. These presentist representations and practices served to provide material evidence of Lempira's greatness, power and prestige (in other words, symbolic capital), and functioned as visual referents for Honduras of what constituted their heritage and, thus, their national identity.

### **Monumentalization and Corporeality of Lempira**

In 1935, July 20 was established the national day of Lempira (otherwise known as national identity day); as part of this day, a series of celebrations and multiple re-enactments of battles that occurred between Spaniards and Lenca at the time of the conquest were performed throughout the country. One of these festivities of which we have a written account included a march, an essay contest and the dramatization of Lempira's death at an elementary school.<sup>19</sup> These forms of "organize[d] exhibitions of symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice* 180) are extremely important for they put a community in contact with its past. Moreover, by reenacting Lempira's "original" death almost four hundred years after it took place, which in this case may or may not have occurred as described by Antonio de Herrera, this dramatization takes on an immemorial and immortal aspect that converts it into reality (Foster 53, qtd. in Rápalo-Flores 138).<sup>20</sup>

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

been completely decimated, or had biologically mixed with the conquistadors during the conquest and colonization of Honduras (*Pueblos indígenas* 193-95).

Since the notion of soft inheritance was accepted in Honduras, it was believed that if a population could not conform at a genetic level to the *mestizo* national image, they could do so at a cultural level through education projects such as the *misiones escolares* (Chambers 33). The dominance of neo-Lamarckian ideals is not surprising because if the Honduran government had supported a strict innatist ideology it would have condemned the nation to a perpetual inferiority.<sup>21</sup> In addition, since the late nineteenth century, some of the presidents: Francisco Bertrad, Francisco Bográn, Alberto Membreno and Vicente Mejía Colindres had studied medicine and more than likely had been exposed to the scientific discourses pertaining to race and the advantages of the implementation of corrective measures based on the idea of soft inheritance. Nevertheless, these same political leaders envisioned and promoted the miscegenation of Europeans and Indians while continuously supporting an environmentalist approach (Chambers 32-35).

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

Five years prior to the construction of the bust in Erandique, a memorial in honor of Lempira was built in one of the plazas of the coastal city of San Pedro Sula (see figure 5). Although this monument is not situated in a territory where Lempira is believed to have lived, nor has it received the same amount of attention as the one constructed in 1941, it is equally significant and its origin is unlike any other statue. It is the space where every July 20 (national day of Lempira) celebrations are carried out and where individuals of all ages come together as a community to honor this national symbol. Such unification is a manifestation of the strong identitary ties the people of San Pedro have developed with Lempira since the erection of this monument by Palestinian-Arabs, one of the ethnic groups who were subject to racial intolerance since the early twentieth century. The State or the nationalist intellectuals did not create this 1936 figure, but rather Arab-Palestinians who were providing the city with a gift as a way to reduce the anti-Palestinian sentiment. The inscription in the plaque reads: “La comunidad palestina rinde homenaje al valiente e inmortal guerrero, el gran cacique Lempira al cumplirse el IV centenario de su muerte” (see figure 6). The appropriation of Lempira by this group is an evident expression of their efforts to integrate themselves within the nation by directly participating in the fashioning of Lempira as a figure representative of Honduran identity. Moreover, we can argue that through the edification of this symbolic space of negotiation (the monument and the value attributed to it) there is an evident resignification of this icon, for it now was made to embrace one of the populations it was initially utilized to exclude.<sup>22</sup>



(Figure 5)



(Figure 6)

## Conclusions

Nations are constructions that are unified on the basis of what they believe to be a common history, shared cultural characteristics and heroes from their past. Honduras was no exception, as nationalistic officials, intellectuals and members of different populations actively worked to recuperate and reinterpret many elements of their history and to formulate a national identity. Beginning with the Liberal Reform Period, these leaders resorted to a symbolic language and complex political and social practices in order to unify the people under a culturally and racially homogeneous image. In the late nineteenth century, the State attempted to categorize the majority of its population under the term *ladino*, which at that moment had been stripped of any racial connotation. In the twentieth century, there was shift from the promotion of a primarily *ladino* to *mestizo* nation. As I have indicated in this article, the celebration of an Indo-Hispanic *mestizaje* was partly due to the need for a more inclusive definition of identity and in part was a manifestation of the economic and racial threat that immigrants presented for many Hondurans. Directly tied to the elaboration of a national identity and history was also the appropriation and veneration of the Maya civilization and the cacique Lempira as well as the rejection of an African presence in the history and racial makeup of Honduras.

Even though the ideology of *mestizaje* may serve to promote “inclusiveness,” the particular case of Honduras is a clear example of how this ideology can also be utilized to exclude those who do not fit the proposed *mestizo* image. I have demonstrated how *mestizaje* was used to not only mask the cultural and racial diversity of its population, but also to exclude Black and Indian groups from avenues of representation and the debate over national identity. Yet, the State continued to believe that while its indigenous populations could not conform at a genetic level to the national image it was promoting, they could do so at a cultural level through education. The government established schooling projects as an indication of the environmentalist or neo-Lamarckian approach it had adopted. The same did not hold true for those of African descent as the State took a more innatist position when debating the possibility of their racial improvement. According to late 19th and early 20th scientific theories and discoveries on the etiology of race and human improvement (eugenics), the European, white “race plasma” should not mix with that of these two groups because Blacks and Indians only diluted its “superior” composition. Honduran intellectuals endorsed those scientific theories and used them to legitimate their rejection of Black populations, and in large part, their ideological representation of the Northeast region as being outside the territorial, cultural and racial bounds of the nation. This exclusionary practice is most reflected in the census count of 1930:

out of 21,092 Hondurans identified as *negros*, only 43 were in the department of Tegucigalpa, 572 in el Paraíso, 6 in Choluteca, 10 in Valle, 0 in Olancho, 1 in Comayagua, 416 in Yoro, 11 in Santa Barbara 2,619 in Cortes, 5,042 in Atlántida, 8,733 in Colón, 3,631 in the Bay Islands (J. Pineda 54-202). These details were used to argue that, given most Blacks were outside the constructed limits of the nation, the African and African-descent presence was almost non-existent in Honduras.

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

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Bourdieu's conceptualization of symbolic capital in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed historical explanation of the conditions in the Ottoman Empire during this time, see Foroohar's "Palestinians in Central America."

<sup>3</sup> The 1901, 1910 and 1916 census were not included as part of this analysis because they do not provide any statistical information regarding the nationality and race of the different populations or do not make a differentiation among nationals and foreigners.

<sup>4</sup> See Herranz's *Estado, sociedad y lenguaje: la política lingüística en Honduras*. 170-180.

<sup>5</sup> The term "ladino" has been accorded various meanings at different time periods and in different contexts. In the case of Central America, it was initially used to describe an Indian who spoke Castilian and who had adopted Spanish customs. Beginning in the late 18th century it was used interchangeably with the term *mestizo*, and used to classify any individual who was not Spanish or Indian; it made no distinction among individuals of different *castas* because a *ladino* could be a mulatto, *pardo*, *mestizo* or even African. In other words, the term *ladino* would encompass many different races (Fernández-Hernández 84-90).

<sup>6</sup> See Earle's introduction to *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America*.

<sup>7</sup> See chapters 1 and 2 of Lowenthal's *The Past Is A Foreign Country* and Norman Yoffee's introduction to *Negotiating the Past in the Past*.

<sup>8</sup> Other two-figured stelae that also serve to commemorate and legitimate the ascension of the new ruler are Stela M and N. See Baudez's *Maya Sculpture of Copan*.

<sup>9</sup> I took all photos unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>10</sup> Euraque argues that the ideological project of Mayanization began with the dictatorship of General Tiburcio Carías Andino. In addition, this process was linked to, among other factors, certain elements of North American archaeology and the banana industry, together with Ladino elites. Mayanization emphasizes the official rescue of an ancestral legacy for the purpose of constructing a national identity, while ignoring the lived realities of ancient and contemporary indigenous peoples of Honduras. See Euraque's *Conversaciones históricas con el mestizaje y su identidad nacional en Honduras*. 37-65.

<sup>11</sup> See "Racial Nations" in *Race and Nation in Latin America*. 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Cacho was an intellectual and the General Minister of the Honduran government during the late 1820s and again in the early 1850s. Although he wrote this work in 1834, part of his text was not published until March of 1855 in *La Gaceta de Honduras*, number 7. See Rómulo Durón's *Honduras literaria: escritores en prosa*. 155-66.

<sup>13</sup> José Cisneros was a prolific writer and Minister of Foreign Affairs. In his poem "A Lempira," (1866) Cisneros details Lempira's heroic death in an effort to incorporate this figure as part of the national corpus - national literature - Honduras was in need of. See Rómulo Durón's *Honduras literaria: escritores en prosa*. 117-26.

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Herrera de Tordesillas was the Spanish Crown's first official chronicler of the Indies. As chronicler, his duty was to collect colonial documentation and create a text that narrated the most important events of the conquest of America.

<sup>15</sup> "Meritos y servicios: Rodrigo Ruiz," a judicial document of the colonial period (1558) that Martínez-Castillo recently found in the archives of Seville, disproves this version of Lempira's death. The testimonies given by individuals who witnessed Lempira's death, saw Captain Rodrigo Ruiz arrive with Lempira's head, or heard of how Ramirez had killed Lempira and the testimony of Rodrigo Ruiz himself indicates that Lempira died while facing Ruiz in battle. There was no betrayal or heroic death to speak of, according to the documentation. This document also provides us with additional information regarding Lempira and the conquest of Honduras that we did not have prior to its discovery.

<sup>16</sup> See Reyes-Mazzoni's *Un pueblo en busca de sus símbolos nacionales: La historia del himno nacional de Honduras*. 90-91.

<sup>17</sup> Among those who expressed a strong nationalistic and anti-black sentiment were literary intellectuals Froilán Turcios and Paulino Valladares. Both published numerous articles in newspapers such as *El Tiempo* and *Foro Hondureño* on the problems that the less-desirable races were causing in the North coast and country in general. See Euraque's "The Banana Enclave, Nationalism and Mestizaje in Honduras" in *Identity and Struggle At the Margins of the Nation-State* for a detailed explanation of some of the writings of these two important intellectuals.

<sup>18</sup> This table includes only the national censuses that include racial classifications. I have omitted the years 1881, 1901, 1905 and 1927 because they do not include statistics related to race.

<sup>19</sup> See Martínez's *Homenaje al Cacique Lempira en el día de su consagración nacional*. 7.

<sup>20</sup> These rituals continue to this very day and have become part of the public holidays that brings Hondurans together and gives them a sense of identity every July 20.

<sup>21</sup> My argument is based in part on Wade's own assessment of Latin American nations with a predominantly mixed racial nature. See *Race, Nature and Culture*.66.

<sup>22</sup> Despite their intent to integrate themselves into the nation and its identitary projects, Palestinians continued to be viewed by nationals as others and as unpatriotic. In *Patrios Lares*, Ortega indicates that during the unveiling of this statue the consensus among the masses was that the Lempira monument was void of any true patriotism because Palestinians did not have Lempira in their hearts.