



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Colonial Masca in motion: tactics of persistence of a Honduran indigenous community**

Sheptak, R.N.

### **Citation**

Sheptak, R. N. (2013, June 19). *Colonial Masca in motion: tactics of persistence of a Honduran indigenous community*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20999>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20999>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/20999> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Sheptak, Russell Nicholas

**Title:** Colonial Masca in motion : tactics of persistence of a Honduran indigenous community

**Issue Date:** 2013-06-19

## Chapter 1: Writing Histories

This is a study that follows the experience of the people of one indigenous town, originally called Masca, and later renamed Nuestra Señora de Candelaria, from the late sixteenth century through to the nineteenth century. Masca, located adjacent to the Ulúa river valley on the Caribbean coast, came under Spanish colonization efforts in the 1520s and 1530s. After a decade long effective military resistance to colonization centered in the "provincia del rio Ulúa", the leader of that local resistance surrendered and agreed to convert to Christianity. This started a long decline in the local indigenous population, in parallel with the political stagnation of the newly founded Spanish city of San Pedro. Yet as this study will show, by the end of the colonial period in the early nineteenth century, Candelaria's population was growing, it had secured its rights to land legally, residents of the town had been recognized for their roles in the defense of the colony, and it was effectively persisting as a recognized *pueblo de indios*-- an autonomous town of indigenous identity.

In a manner not unlike that of microhistory, but rooted more explicitly in the work of Michel de Certeau (1984, 1988), this study examines the way in which this colonized town tactically used a space not its own: the colonial *pueblo de indios*, a kind of settlement governed by Spanish administrative theories and subject to Spanish administrative demands. By drawing on methodologies rooted in the dialogics of Mikhail Bakhtin, and the theory of practice of Pierre Bourdieu, this study demonstrates that Spanish colonial documents, often viewed as only representing the official perspective, or the dominant Spanish perspective, can be "read against the grain" to surface indigenous arguments, understandings, and tactical moves.

For the people of Masca, which was one of a small number of indigenous towns in the jurisdiction of San Pedro that survived the devastating conditions of the sixteenth century, and an even smaller number of towns to maintain itself to the date of formation of the Central American Republic in the nineteenth century, persistence as a community with its own values and history was a product of the successful tactics they adopted in coping with Spanish colonial structures.

Masca was particularly effective in its use of the Spanish legal system. This produced the petitions what are the core of this study. It involved the people of Masca sometimes seeking justice directly from the *Audiencia* of Guatemala, bypassing the local Honduran authorities in San Pedro and the provincial government in Comayagua. Through these petitions we see not only the tactical use of Spanish administrative means for dispute resolution,

but the way that the jurisdiction of San Pedro constituted, until about 1750, a backwater from the perspective of the central colonial authorities, perhaps providing unique potential for the people of Masca to act tactically to maintain the community.

The tactics that the people of Masca used, including movement of the town from its original location; effective use of the Spanish language; identification of the community with the church; emphasis on service in a Spanish-organized coastal watch; and marriage with people from outside the community, including African descendant spouses, are those that another analyst might have viewed as evidence of loss of community identity. By instead viewing these activities and practices as tactics, this study stresses the way the people of Masca actively maintained those things they valued and worked to shape the colony to allow them to persist.

Nor was Masca unique in these strategies. By bringing in evidence from other towns with which Masca shared service in the coastal watch, continued cultivation of cacao for their own uses well into the eighteenth century, identified church and community, and integrated outside community members as spouses, this study shows that far from being, as traditionally represented, an area where indigenous population disappeared in the early colonial period, the Rio Ulúa district that became the jurisdiction of San Pedro was a place where indigenous people actively used what the colonial situation afforded them in order to remain in place, with their own histories, and to maintain those social practices that mattered to them.

In order to demonstrate all of this, this study starts with a series of petitions that originated with the people of Masca, all of which were ultimately successful. Spanning the period from 1675 to 1714, these petitions provide the material to demonstrate how dialogics can be used to “read against the grain”, to understand indigenous arguments and perspectives from documents created in the Spanish courts.

Before addressing these petitions, this study will explore how the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu allows a different analysis of the social context that ultimately gave rise to the petitions made by the people of Masca. This involves critical re-reading of the sixteenth century history of colonization and an in-depth examination of the way that Masca was integrated into the economic structure of the colony through the *encomienda* system.

Because studies of indigenous society in Honduras have often left the impression that indigenous people disappeared long before the nineteenth century, this study extends the historical scope of analysis after the last of the successful community petitions analyzed. Using a variety of records

from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it begins to demonstrate how Masca – by then called Candelaria—was strengthened by its relation to the newly founded Fortaleza de San Fernando de Omoa, with a population that was growing before independence from Spain in the nineteenth century ushered in a period of profound upheaval across the jurisdiction of San Pedro. While the documentary record of Candelaria as an independent pueblo de indios ceases at this time, Candelaria became part of the newly founded city of Choloma, where modern traditions recognize it as a barrio of the city, even as they convey a misleading history that says Candelaria was abandoned in the eighteenth century.

The next two chapters deal with the sixteenth century. They outline the likely cultural affiliation of the people of Masca, advance an argument about the languages they spoke, and review the history of the colonization campaign, first giving the standard view that foregrounds Spanish actors, and then re-reading this from the perspective of indigenous actors.

In Chapter Four, this study presents the first of the petitions that are the core of the analysis: a petition made by a specifically named indigenous resident of Masca against the labor demands by the city of San Pedro. Marshaling arguments against the added labor demands, this petition refers to Masca's participation in the coastal watch, and also to its assignment in encomienda to a distant encomendero. Responses to this petition, contained with it in the archives, show that the latter argument was received and understood in the capital city, while the former was ignored.

Chapter Five turns to the institution of encomienda, as experienced by the people of Masca in the late seventeenth century. Using the encomienda grant petition from the encomendero who was the subject of criticism in the previous chapter, this chapter shows that the encomienda can be re-analyzed as a series of overlapping social fields, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu. Taking up positions in these fields was accomplished in part by engaging in dialogues, like those represented in the petition previously examined, and like others re-cited in the encomienda document itself.

In Chapter Six, the study analyzes a second set of petitions from the first decades of the eighteenth century, in which specific named indigenous actors in Masca again seek the support of the Spanish colonial authorities. By this time, Masca had relocated inland, with official approval, and also adopted a new name, Candelaria, but was experiencing difficulties with what now were close neighbors in the city of San Pedro. As with the earlier petition, the new petition includes arguments recognized by the authorities, and other statements that suggest differences in the way people of Candelaria viewed their position in the San Pedro district. In a major change

from the earlier petition, service in the coastal watch was now recognized by the Spanish authorities. The new petitions provide a clear indication of the way community was viewed by the people of Candelaria, including the importance of their church and the continued importance of their cacao groves. Comparing the petitions from Masca to similar contemporary petitions made by other pueblos de indios of the Ulúa valley, it is clear that these persistent indigenous communities had shaped their own social world in the colonial order.

Chapter Seven and Eight trace the continuing history of Candelaria in the eighteenth century, when the perception of a threat from the British, allied with the independent Miskito of eastern Honduras, led to the building of a new fortress on the coast. Candelaria was one of just two pueblos de indios to come under the jurisdiction of Fort Omoa. Ticamaya, the other town related to Omoa, has been the subject of archaeological investigation. The results from archaeological research and documentary research are combined in these chapters.

Men from these communities worked at Omoa in rotation. There they met, and in some cases married and brought back to their pueblos, spouses who were classified as from other groups in the emerging casta system. These chapters propose that even as outsiders were entering the town as spouses, a “community of practice” was reproduced that engaged the people in these pueblos, regardless of whether the practices involved had persisted for centuries or were relatively new developments of the process of ethnogenesis. These chapters show that a concept of “community of practice” provides a different way to think about identity and persistence of indigenous communities, one that allows for historical change and does not demand a history of isolation and stasis.

Chapter Nine presents a final set of conclusions about the specific history of Masca/Candelaria, its implications for understanding Honduras, and more broadly, for how study of the colonial histories of other pueblos de indios could be attempted by re-reading Spanish documents with an understanding of dialogics and tactics.

Before turning to the specific histories of Masca/Candelaria and its neighbors, however, we need to step back and look at the various contexts for this study, in historical research generally, in the historiography of Central America, and in the study of Honduran colonial history specifically. These topics occupy the remainder of this chapter.

## The Larger Context: Microhistory

What today is called microhistory was exemplified by a few seminal works in the mid-1970s. Emmanuel le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou* was first published in 1975 but it is Carlo Ginsburg's *Il formaggio e i vermi*, published the very next year, that is considered to have exemplified a microhistory approach to social and cultural histories. Ginsburg's book arises from the review of the Inquisition documents of Domenico Scandella, better known as Menocchio, the miller, in a small Italian town (Ginsburg 1980). Menocchio, who lived in the sixteenth century, had been exposed to books, and interpreted them in ways that defied conventional religious orthodoxy. Rather than identify Menocchio's interpretations as misunderstandings, Ginsburg embraces them as a reading of these books, giving an insight into Menocchio's world view. Ginsburg traces the transformation of ideas from written text through to Menocchio's spoken/written re-elaboration, recreating Menocchio's world in the process.

Ginsburg's earlier book from 1966, *I Benandanti*, (published in English in 1983 as *The Night Battles*), about witchcraft and agrarian cults in sixteenth century Italy, is an earlier attempt to work out some of the ideas that are now recognized as microhistory, particularly the changing of scale to the local. It lacks only the addition of a strong set of more general conclusions arising from the study of the smaller scale. It is set in the same Italian community as his later book, and centers on using the Inquisition documents to provide insight into the mindset of peasants who thought they did god's work battling witches, but whom the inquisition determined were doing the devil's work, and were witches. Ginsburg shows us how, through their conversations with their inquisitors, they came to change their views, and (from the perspective of the inquisitors) see the error of their ways. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie was a member of the *Annales* school who had written many traditional *Annales* style histories, focused on large questions which could be addressed statistically as well as descriptively (e.g. Le Roy Ladurie 1974). Thus it was somewhat a surprise in 1975 when *Montaillou* came out. This work is now also considered an early microhistory. Le Roy Ladurie, like Ginsburg, used Inquisition documents to get at the mental life, social structure, and even the economy of a small French medieval village and how it connected to the larger world around it. Its originality is not, however, in the description of a village, but rather in the attempt to paint a portrait of the community at a particular juncture through the words of its inhabitants. Le Roy Ladurie, influenced by Levy Bruhl's ideas on the *mentalités* of early modern people, saw the thoughts and attitudes of the peasants as part of the structure of a pre-industrial economy

(1980:335-41). For him, these peasant attitudes were a cultural stumbling block, which retarded economic development.

While these are the commonly recognized precedents, they leave us with the question, what is microhistory? Microhistory, Italian practitioner Giovanni Levi (2001:97) tells us, is a historiographic practice with no body of orthodox practice and varied theoretical roots. He sees it as arising in the 1970s as a reaction to the kinds of histories produced under the French *Annales* school. "Called into question is the idea of a regular progression through a uniform and predictable series of states in which social agents were considered to align themselves in conformity with solidarities and conflicts in some sense given, natural, inevitable" (Levi 2001: 98). The kind of positivism criticized permeated late nineteenth century historical narrative and was preserved within *Annales* historical narratives.

Both Levi (2001) and Iggers (1997) note that many of the practitioners of microhistory moved to it from Marxism, having become dissatisfied with the hegemony of economic systems Marxism espoused. Microhistorians, Levi argues, were looking for better models of human behavior, ones that gave human actors agency within the norms and constraints of prescriptive systems. "Thus all social action is seen to be the result of an individual's negotiation, manipulation, choices, and decisions in the face of a normative reality which, though pervasive, nevertheless offers many possibilities for personal interpretations and freedoms" (Levi 2001: 98-99).

Some microhistorians trace their intellectual origins to anthropologist Clifford Geertz's ethnographic model of "thick description" (Iggers 1996; Levi 2001). Levi notes that anthropology and history differ: "One of main differences between microhistory and anthropology is that the latter seeks a homogenous meaning in public signs and symbols whereas microhistory seeks to define and measure them with reference to a multiplicity of social representations they produce" (2001: 107). Brewer, in contrast, traces the origins of microhistory to what he calls a "critical cultural theory of everyday life" in the Marxist tradition (2010:92). Here he cites (among others) Walter Benjamin, Mikhail Bakhtin, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, many of whom are theoretical resources for this study. Brewer singles out de Certeau's coincidence on issues of scale, and especially the use of tactics as the way in which the strategies of power are transformed by the weak to their own ends in the practice of every day life.

Changing the scale, from macro to micro, allows one to describe vast social structures without losing sight of the scale of each individual's social

space (Levi 2001; Brewer 2010). Following Barth (1978), Levi argues that scale is an important factor in all social systems:

What the dimension of the social worlds of different categories of people and different structured fields of relationships demonstrate is the precise nature of the scale operating in reality...the segmentation of complex societies emphasizes the explanatory value of discrepancies between the constraints emanating from various normative systems and of the fact that, in addition, any individual as a different set of relationships which determine his or her reactions to and choices with regard to the normative structures (Levi 2001: 100-101).

Universal to microhistories is the idea that changing scale will reveal factors previously unobserved. Microhistories link interactions among events on a small scale to structures and general tendencies on a large scale (Froeyman 2010:125).

Levi says microhistories focus on social differentiation. Individuals create their own identities; groups define themselves "according to conflicts and solidarities which, however, cannot be assumed a priori but result from dynamics which are the object of analysis" (2001: 108). Levi sees microhistorians as concentrating on the contradictions of normative systems because it is those contradictions that provide the spaces that make society open and fluid, as Jacques Revel put it, paying attention to the "exceptional norms" (1995), or de Certeau's "exceptional details" (1988).

Another characteristic shared among microhistories is the way narrative is constructed. In microhistories, narrative shows the relationship between normative systems and freedom of action which individuals create within those spaces, freedoms brought about by the internal inconsistencies of the norms and normative systems (Levi 2001:109). Microhistory also incorporates into the main body of the narrative "the procedures of research, the documentary limitations, techniques of persuasion and interpretive constructives" (Levi 2001:110). It breaks from the authoritarian narratives of traditional historical discourse and involves the reader in the process of constructing an historical argument. Froeyman adds that unlike *Annales* school works, microhistories directly incorporate causation (2010) into their narratives.

So where do I fit within microhistory? In what follows you will see that as an archaeologist and historical anthropologist, I share a commitment to making methodology explicit as part of the

presentation of any written argument. Like the microhistorians, I am concerned with everyday practices, the traces of which show up both in the archaeological record, and in historical documents. This necessarily shifts the focus from macro to micro. In looking at those everyday practices, I derive inspiration and models from the ideas of De Certeau and Bourdieu, and from Bakhtin I find models for looking at language use in documents.

My goals are related to those of some scholars who have talked about voice and language use by indigenous actors. Histories written about Latin America often reserve agency for Spanish actors, reducing indigenous ones to passive objects of action (Wood 2003). This gives priority to Spanish accounts of the conquest and colonization, and ignores indigenous authored documents covering the same events. In reaction to this state of affairs, some authors have turned to indigenous authored documents as a way to get at native perspectives. These can be both alphabetic and pictorial.

Miguel León Portilla (1962) presented indigenous Aztec accounts of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, disrupting the then-dominant image of indigenous people as "shocked out of their senses", amazed, bewildered, overwhelmed and paralyzed (Wood 2003:193). Nathan Wachtel (1977) contributed similar work for Spanish conquest of the Inca, making it clear that indigenous actors used a variety of tactics in response to Spanish aggression. Wachtel documented both the acts of conquest by the Spanish, and of indigenous resistance. Martinez-San Miguel (2003:30) suggests that the main contribution of scholars following this route was the building up an archive of indigenous texts from which to construct a new vision of the conquered.

Wood notes that many of the colonial documents used by these scholars date from times far enough removed from the conquest itself that their authors may already reflect hybrid ways of thinking. She argues that identities in the colonial period were permeable and changeable, so that any strict assignment to Spanish, Indian, or mestizo is flawed (Wood 2003:9). This leaves a challenge: how do we get at indigenous voices and agency?

A second generation of scholars addressing the issue provide some possible answers. James Lockhart (1993) provided a multilingual version of key texts describing the Aztec conquest, along with analysis of the context of their composition, forms of expression, and ways of indigenous thinking which he derived from the documents. Lockhart demonstrates that these indigenous documents are complex, representing a variety of genres, and that they display multiple viewpoints. Where indigenous authored

documents don't exist, Lockhart looks at Spanish responses to indigenous petitions to find the indigenous voice.

Wood (2003) argues for moving beyond documents about the conquest, and using sources by both indigenous authors and Spanish authors to get beyond narratives of conquest and resistance. As one example, Gruzinski (1989), perhaps influenced by microhistory, turned attention to exceptional life stories in the colonial period. Linguistic methods provided a richer view of the Nahuatl language in his work.

Wood (2003:11) points to pictorial manuscripts as a particular challenge for interpretation. Jansen and Pérez Jiménez are particularly constructive in finding both voice and agency through the analysis of pictorial manuscripts (2011). The pictorial manuscripts they analyze are advocacy documents, one advocating for a particular lineage to become cacique, and one used in ritual. They show that the pictorial documents also have genres, and that they can be hybrid, containing both Spanish and indigenous elements. Like Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, I examine documents engaged in advocacy. Like them, I believe that genres and the selection of arguments involved reveal what indigenous actors believed would be effective forms of argument. To the extent that these actors succeeded, it shows that authorities reacted positively to the elements and arguments advanced. The documents I examine are, like the pictorials studied by Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, hybrid documents. They are not written in indigenous languages, and cannot be described as being indigenous authored because Spanish scribes shaped the final form of the text; but they are indigenous "authored" in the sense that the arguments they present represent perspectives rooted in the *pueblo de indios*, arguments that would never have been made by someone from outside the community.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present an overview of the thematic emphases in historical writing that has dealt with colonial Honduras. In order to do that, I will need to place the Honduran work in the broader context of the themes of historical writing about Central America as a region, and its colonies, particularly Guatemala, of which Honduras was a province, in particular.

### **The Regional Context: Guatemala and Central America**

Honduras was one of six provinces in the Captaincy General of Guatemala, the top level of colonial government below Spain. These provinces were Guatemala, Chiapas, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. As part of the Captaincy General, Honduras's top colonial

official, a Governor, reported to the Audiencia of Guatemala and to its President. The themes in writing about colonial Guatemala form a broader context for the writing about colonial Honduras. The histories of Central America are histories of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, writ broadly, and so these too will be included.

Writing histories about colonial Central America began shortly after the Spanish arrival in the region, but it wasn't until Central American Independence in 1821 that historical writing about Central America as a region caught on. Colonial writing about Central America begins with the work of Antonio de Remesal, Francisco Antonio Fuentes y Guzman, Francisco Ximenez, Domingo Juarros, and others in the 17th and 18th centuries. Gustavo Palma Murga (1994) called authors of this time period the historical chroniclers.

The priests, such as Remesal (1932), and Ximenez (1932), wrote about the missionary work of their respective orders. These works were set in the context of contention between the orders for dominion over space and souls in Guatemala. They served to correct earlier statements of "history" and to preserve the territorial jurisdiction of the religious order, and broadly can be seen as in dialogue with the works by members of other religious orders. For the religious orders and their historians, the indigenous people represented souls lacking in agency. It was only in 1524 that the church determined that the indigenous people of the Americas had souls, and therefore were human. It was up to the priests of these orders to shape and guide the destiny of the souls in their care.

Antonio de Remesal was an educated Dominican priest who came to Honduras in 1613 with the newly appointed Bishop of Comayagua, Alfonso Galdo. While in Honduras he read through the scarce documents in the Archivo Ecclesiastico in Comayagua. Six months later, he was assigned to the Dominican convent in Santiago de Guatemala, then the seat of Audiencia of Guatemala. His history of the Central America to 1619 dwells on Spanish treatment of the indigenous populations, documenting both the abuses, and the good works of those like Bartolomé de las Casas. His focus is on the institutional regulations, such as the new laws of 1542, and their effect on the life of indigenous people. He never portrays the Indians as having agency, outside of the occasional rebellion against Spanish authority. They are subjects of Spanish institutions and their rules.

Ximenez, a Dominican, wrote a detailed history of his order. In it were accounts of the life and death or martyrdom of Dominican priests in Guatemala. As part of the order's history, his account necessarily recorded their interactions with unbaptized Indians. He described the unchristian

beliefs of the Cakchiquel and Quiche of highland Guatemala, including a version of the Popol Vuh, and some of the beliefs of the Manché Chol of Verapaz. However, Indians for Ximenez were savage, unchristian souls who need to be baptized and taught Christian beliefs. At one point he takes great delight in telling readers about priests burning a Manché temple in which human sacrifice took place.

The secular historians, such as Fuentes y Guzman, Herrera y Tordesillas, and the secular priest Domingo Juarros, while still part of the historical chroniclers for Palma Murga (1994), wrote what Cal Montoya (2010:199) described as more general and impartial works of colonial history, not embroiled in the institutional conflicts between the missionary orders. Instead, their work takes on a more descriptive nature, focusing on geographies, demographics, economics, politics, and the cultural life of the colony, described through the lens of their social and intellectual upbringing. In these secular histories there are few named indigenous people; these are histories of the actions of Spaniards. Where indigenous people are mentioned, it is as laborers, as slaves, as sources of uprisings and rebellions, as a population that inconveniently shrank leaving the Spanish with no in-place work force.

Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas was one such secular historian, named an official chronicler of the Indies in 1596. This gave him access to the various archives in Spain, including the royal archives, as source material. He published his history of the Province of Guatemala and Chiapas between 1601 and 1615. Mariano Cuesta Domingo, in his critical edition of Herrera y Tordesillas (1991) studies the identifiable sources of Herrera, chapter by chapter. He found that the section on Honduras was not based on other histories, but rather on primary documents, though many of them were unidentifiable. Herrera, like the religious historians, provides a Spanish history of the actions of Spanish actors. His Indians are at the same time valiant, and barbarians. He describes the rituals and beliefs of some of the indigenous people of Honduras (Decade IV.VIII.III - VI) including duplicating material from Torquemada on Comizagual, a Lenca tradition. He names two specific leaders of the Lenca around Cerquin: Tapica (in Decade IV.VIII.III) and Lempira (Decade VI.III.XIX), and another leader of Piraera called Diego (Decade IV.VIII.V). All of his narratives of named indigenous leaders are generic tales of the defeat of the Indian by clever Spaniards.

There was a degree of advocacy in all of Herrera's sources from Spanish archives. These included different kinds of Spanish documents, though he seems to have relied primarily on Royal decrees, petitions for

pensions and encomiendas known generically as *Meritos y Servicios*, and the reviews of administrative officials, called *Residencias*. Each of these kinds of documents advocates for something and that advocacy shapes their narratives. Royal decrees are orders to the colonial authorities; *Meritos y Servicios* are self serving accounts of the service of a Spaniard (or Afrodescendent person, or Indian) in the conquest and colonization of the various provinces of the Indies. *Residencias* document the good or bad behavior of colonial officials in their assigned position.

Herrera's account of the defeat of Lempira appears to draw heavily on information in *Meritos y Servicios* cases for Spaniards who accompanied Montejo in his campaign against the Lenca uprising of 1537 (for Alonso de Caceres and Cristobal de la Cueva, among others). In the 1980s Honduran historian Mario Felipe Martinez Castillo found a completely different description of the events in a different *Meritos y Servicios* case, from Rodrigo Ruiz, a conquistador who served in Honduras and Mexico, retiring in Mexico (1569 AGI Patronato 69 R.5; Martinez Castillo 1987). In it, Ruiz tells a very different story about the death of Lempira, one that involves personal bravery against Lempira, portrayed as a savage, dressed in the clothing of slain Spaniards. The contradictions between these different accounts, all based on colonial archival records, are just one illustration of the inherent perspective introduced in documents that were making an argument, in these cases, in part by using indigenous people as generic examples of fierce enemies overcome by conquistadors.

Following the historical chroniclers of the colonial period, Palma Murga (1994) identified the next period (1825-1949) as that of the official historians; "official" because they were often writing histories commissioned by and serving the nationalist interests of governments or tracing the roots of the political movements in Central America at this time. These authors were by and large entirely secular. Palma Murga (1994) divided these authors into Conservative and Liberal, depending on whether they advocated change based on local representation derived from the colonial oligarchy, or wanted to reposition what they saw as a stagnated society which they sought to transform with knowledge and liberty. In general, these authors, according to Palma Murga, viewed history through a lens of their contemporary Central American society. While this reminder of political perspective is useful, William J. Griffith (1997:767) warns against this dichotomization, and sees a greater diversity of threads of opinions during Independence. Although these historians deal in most depth with events after the colonial history that concerns us here, they had a critical role in erasing the history of the pueblos de indios. Some deliberately began their accounts of the history

of the new republics in the colonial period. Like the historians before them, they treated Indians as not having agency and thus began a tradition of declaring indigenous cultures as something that had disappeared, or were disappearing, identifiable only when the Indians were not conversant with Spanish language, culture, and society.

José Cecilio del Valle (1982), a Honduran, thought it necessary to write a history of Central America from the start of the colonial period through independence. In 1825 formulated the first methodological principles for how to write history in Central America, in his "Prospecto de la Historia de Guatemala". In this, he follows Fuentes y Guzman in devoting time to indigenous Guatemala. He arrived at a periodization of Central American: Indian Guatemala, Guatemala as a Province of Spain, Guatemala as a Province of Mexico, and the Free Republic of Guatemala. Indians before the Spanish arrived were described as living in small kingdoms governed by elected and hereditary kings. He rejected the barbarian-civilization dichotomy for this period, noting that indigenous civilizations were sometimes equal to or better than the Spanish. He was critical of the colonial Spanish for tearing down the Indian civilizations. However, he was not so kind to Indians in the colonial period who were indigenous or mestizo, with a mixture of Spanish and indigenous beliefs (in *Jesus de la Sol y la Luna*, for example), and hybrid languages (*lengua de Chinautla*). Del Valle thought that mestizaje and ladinoization led to homogenization of the races and a kind of social equality, the sharing of the Spanish language removing the barriers between Spaniard and ladino.

In 1831 Mariano Galvez was elected President of Guatemala, then part of the Federal Republic of Central America. In that same year, he commissioned two historical works, one on colonial Guatemala, by Francisco de Paula Garcia Peláez (1968), and one on the Republic, by Alejandro Marure (1877-1878) to consolidate the liberal victory in Central America. Marure's book was originally published in 1837, but Garcia Peláez's book was delayed until 1851. Garcia Peláez's work consisted of short historical sketches on themes that resulted from his encounters with various historical documents in civil and religious archives. Topics like "Hostility of the Zambos-Miskitos" were immediately followed by "Governors of the Provinces" without any regard for continuity of a theme or chronology. What is interesting about Garcia Pelaez is that he refers to specific documents and publications as the sources of his information. Cal Montoya (2010:203) notes that these sketches themselves served as reference material for later authors.

In Chapter 70 on the "Hostility of the Zambos Miskitos", Garcia Pelaez called the Zambos Miskitos barbarous and without religion, speaking a wild mixture of languages and English. They were "a rebel population and rival of Guatemala [un pueblo rebelde y rival de Guatemala]" (1968-73: 164). In referring to the Zambos Miskitos as barbarians, Garcia Pelaez is typical of nineteenth century histories in viewing indigeneity as primitive and problematic.

Cal Montoya (1994:204) does not include Garcia Peláez's work among the official histories, and rather starts that period with Marure's (1877-78) *Bosquejo Historico*, published in 1837. This is because it is the first Liberal history. In it Marure constructs a historical vision that liberalism arose out of the Central American independence movement with intellectual roots in French, British, and North American thought. This vision is, in turn, challenged by conservative administrations and their historians.

It has been argued that for Liberal intellectuals in nineteenth century Central America, indigeneity was a problem to be solved, an obstacle in the way of political progress. For example, Virginia Tilley (2005:193-194) writes

Everywhere, intellectuals understood that economic growth was dragged down by the Indians perceived backwardness, superstition, poverty, insularity, and inefficiency. Hence debates were pursued all over Latin America under the rubric of "the Indian problem"... In a 19th century polemic about the Central American *patria*, Salvadoran writer Miguel Román Peña offered a more poetic vision of the Indian problem, coupling a vision of Indian suffering to a lament about their obstructing progress.

Gundmundson (1995) noted that Liberals and Conservatives shared a common social origin and a common disdain for the masses. Both Liberals and Conservatives were the patriarchs of colonial society. Gundmundson characterized Central American Liberals as elitist and racist, calling them insensitive to the masses, especially Indians.

For both Palma Murga and Cal Montoya, the "official histories" are by definition not about colonial Central America because colonial Central America was not Liberal (or Conservative). I would argue that they saw the colonial period as a period where nothing really happened; that the colonial order was established by simple conquest and made more solid after that. Both colonial Spanish and indigenous peoples were assigned unchanging roles, the Spanish as the active agents of civilization, the indigenous people

as the passive objects of subjectification. From the perspective of Liberalism, the colonial period was stagnation, lacking the realization of liberal values, and living in an indigenous community would (at best) have held back the people from realizing their potential. From the Conservative perspective, the colonial period fostered values (including those of religion) that needed to be freed of the heavy hand of European domination, but that were the basis of a solid independent Republic-- including a social hierarchy in which Indians were a racialized lower class.

Griffith (1960) views historical writing of this period about Central America as broadly relevant to western European historical writing, but also largely governed by passion, a passion that grew out of origins in the civil strife after independence from Spain. Griffith (1960:549) writes: "Most modern works on political and military subjects are dominated by the spirit of passion perhaps more thoroughly than were the events which they record". He notes that Conservatives sought to enshrine their view of history with the work of Manuel Montúfar y Coronado (1832). Montufar y Coronado's history is mostly devoid of Indians except as labor, and as tribute payers. After the colonial period they cease to exist completely.

During this same time, in the United States, Hubert Howe Bancroft (1882-1887) employed researchers to gather together the documents and thematic essays he combined into his *History of Central America*. In the preface to the first volume Bancroft (1882:xi) wrote of the historian's task:

There is only one way to write anything, which is to tell the truth, plainly and concisely. As for the writer [of history] I will only say that while he should lay aside for the time his own religion and patriotism, he should always be ready to recognize the influence and weight of the value of the religion and patriotism of others....The exact historian will lend himself neither to idolatry nor detraction and will positively decline to act as the champion or assailant of any party or power.

Griffith (1960) notes that in the third volume, Bancroft aligns himself with the Liberal historians in his interpretation of Central American history. Bancroft saw native peoples as impediments to the Spanish project of colonization and the objects of colonization once it was effected. He described the Indians of Honduras as savages. He felt that once the colonial period was over, the Christianized Indians were no longer authentic Indians.

His three volume work on the History of Central America provides the first extensive historical sketch of the conquest of Honduras, in which the Ulúa Valley was central, and establishes many of the arguments continued by later writers in English. For example, he presents the conflict

between Pedro Alvarado and Francisco Montejo as a central event in the conquest, later taken up by Chamberlain (1953). Bancroft pioneered the focus on viewing a few named Spaniards as the active agents in constructing history in Honduras. His writing sought to contextualize the Central American history more broadly in Spanish history, and provided less attention to individual provincial histories.

Although he relied on primary documents, Bancroft's narrative often is inaccurate. For example, he relates an incident, which happened when Andres de Cereceda was moving people from Trujillo to Naco, passing through the Ulúa valley (discussed in detail in Chapter 3 below), but gets many of the details wrong. He writes:

On reaching a spot where the river flows through a narrow defile, they found their passage obstructed by a barricade erected by the Cacique Cizimba, who thought thus to prevent the invasion of his territory. The natives were routed at the first onset, and those who were taken captive suffered mutilation, their hands being cut off and were suspended with cords from their necks. (Bancroft 1883, volume 2: 157)

In Chapter 3, I use letters written by Cereceda in 1533, and Diego Garcia de Celis in 1535 to discuss the same incident. Cereceda's description places this battle on the Rio Balaliama (Rio Choloma) which flowed across the floodplain and back swamps of the Ulúa and Chamelecon rivers at this time. The only time this river flowed through a narrow defile was near its origin, in the mountains behind modern Choloma, which is nowhere near the path Cereceda described. What Bancroft describes as a "barricade" was an Indian town surrounded by a palisade. Instead of an account of an indigenous act of aggression against the Spanish, the actual letters from the Spanish participants relate an attack made in passing on an indigenous town, specifically motivated by a desire to avenge a previous exchange of hostilities at one of the coastal Spanish towns. By arguing that historians need to tell the truth, Bancroft set a goal he himself could not reach. His writing echoes the advocacy contained in the documents he referenced, and, as this example shows, can even go beyond it. It leads him to not question that Çocamba should have accepted Spanish presence and allowed them unobstructed access across his territory. For Bancroft, the natural superiority of the Spanish is an unexamined taken for granted.

Slightly later, Antonio Batres Jáuregui, one of the founders of the Academia de Geografía e Historia in Guatemala, and a liberal historian, began a three volume work on Central American history, issuing the first volume on prehispanic history in 1915, the second volume, a history of the

colonial period, in 1920, and a final volume on the Republic written in 1921 and published posthumously in 1949. Cal Montoya (2010:210) calls this the second most outstanding example of liberal history of Central America. It describes a homogeneous Guatemalan state with a ladino identity and intellectual roots influenced by England, France, and the United States.

With the 1950s and 1960s marking a transition period, Cal Montoya (2010) places the work of Severo Martínez Peláez in the 1970s as the beginning of professional history in Guatemala. Martínez Peláez, a student of Wecelao Roces (known for his translations of Marx) and Silvio Zavala (known for directing attention to the formation of institutions in the colonial period) provided a Marxist historical analysis of the social structure of Guatemala. As Cal Montoya (2010:215) characterized it, this would be

a history which would suggest comprehensive structures of the determinative historical processes in the making of an exclusionary economic system to which were clinging a diversity of social, political, and ethnic conflicts unresolved since the colonial period.

[un historia que planteara estructuras comprensivas de los procesos históricos determinantes en la constitución del régimen económico excluyente al que estaban asidos diversidad de conflictos sociales, políticos, y étnicos irresueltos desde la Colonial. ]

To accomplish this, Martínez Peláez reused the work of earlier chroniclers while providing a “deep interpretation” of their motivations in writing the chronicles.

For example, Martínez Peláez's *La Patria Criollo* is a Marxist reading of Fuentes y Guzmán's *Recordación Florida*, to show Fuentes y Guzmán's intellectual development into a class conscious writer, and the origins in colonial society of the class structures that allowed the criollos and Spaniards to exploit the lower classes of society (Indians, Afrodescendants). "Taking a broader view allows us to see the work and its author [Fuentes y Guzmán] as historical phenomena in and of themselves" (Martínez Peláez 2009: 146). Martínez Peláez notes that Indians are everywhere present in the *Recordación Florida* of Fuentes y Guzmán, but in a sketchy fashion, often discounted as less than human, with many shortcomings. He attributes this to an intention to obscure the exploitation of Indians as the source of a Criollo's wealth in colonial Guatemala. In those few instances where Fuentes y Guzmán speaks out against exploitation, it is exploitation of the Guatemalan born Criollo by the Iberian born, and serves to preserve his own class status.

In contrast to Fuentes y Guzman's Indians, for Martinez Pelaez, Indians are active agents trying to persist in the face of domination and exploitation. In discussing religious syncretism, Martinez Pelaez wrote: "They kept their own traditions alive not simply out of inertia, but because they refused to be passive and bow to a set of beliefs imposed on them by the people who had defeated them and were their class enemy" (2009: 122). He attributes what others might call religious tolerance by the Catholic priests "to the resolute opposition natives showed". Ximenez (1930, volume 1, page 5), a chronicler and priest discussed previously, wrote of what Martinez Pelaez called syncretism: "It is the Doctrine they imbibe with their mother's milk". Martinez Pelaez would agree, but reach a very different judgment of the significance of this persistence of religious belief under Catholic proselytization.

The historians of this period were influenced by a reaction to anthropological work of the 1950s and 1960s looking at the nature of indigenous cultures in Guatemala and attempting to identify indigenous and ladino aspects, using a concept of syncretism rather than hybridity. These works dealt with the idea of the formation of a Guatemalan citizen through the ladinoization of indigenous peoples. In reacting to this, Guatemalan historians and anthropologists turned to Marxist tools and more inclusive histories that attempted to give indigenous peoples a voice, albeit a somewhat reactive voice of resistance.

Martinez Peláez argued that the contemporary Indian was an intellectual product produced by the colony to justify its economic regime of forced labor for the economic elites. He wrote, "explaining Indians involves explaining how conquest and colonialism transformed pre-Hispanic natives into Indians" (209:281). That is, Indians of today are not the same thing as pre-Hispanic indigenous people, but rather something that has been transformed to fill the needs of colonial society. They are the product of the pressures indigenous people had to endure, the functions they performed, and their responses (including resistance) to colonial domination. Cal Montoya (2010) identifies this as the point at which Guatemalan history passed from being descriptive, to having a methodology and being about interpretation. This is also the point at which the theme of Indian resistance, a view of Indians as somewhat active social agents, emerged in Guatemalan historical writing. Unfortunately, resistance seemed to be the only way in which Indians could be active social agents, not by making their own choices, but by resisting the choices of others.

The "professional histories" that follow are social histories. They are less about institutions and more about people and society. Jorge Lujan

Muñoz (1993-1999) sought to enlarge the historical field of enquiry to include cultural phenomena through concepts he called "history of culture" and "history of ideas". Cal Montoya (2005), in an article on the historiography of the history of culture in Guatemala, a post-1990s phenomenon, writes of the influence of the French historian Roger Chartier on Lujan Muñoz and those who came after, leading to recent histories on various fields of cultural production in music, art, politics, national identity, and religion, for example. We can add to this the many histories of resistance to colonial and modern governments by the indigenous people, which has become the legacy of syncretism studies.

In this vein, Pinto Soria (1995) argues that colonialism and its emphasis on the nuclear family brought about a tendency in Indian communities in colonial Guatemala to form extended multigenerational households, and that the religious institutions of *cofradía* in particular served to create Indian-only ways of practicing religion in their communities. Sonia Alda Mejía (1994) analyzes the indigenous community as the unit of resistance and persistence in Guatemala's colonial period, particularly focusing on what it had to absorb to persist. She notes that all of the evidence of resistance should upset the notion of Indian passivity, but that because of the exigencies of local communities, it necessarily only brings them to a pre-industrial level of community consciousness. These studies contrast sharply with recent work on colonial Mexico (Rodríguez-Alegria, Neff, et al. 2003) that recognizes much more clearly that indigenous people had agency in daily life.

This is not to say that institutional, economic, demographic, and descriptive histories have disappeared. As Woodward (1987:43) noted, since 1960 there has been a certain professionalization of historical writing over what preceded it, but like any period of change, the new is intercalated with the old style of writing to laud particular ancestors, or defend particular political or economic positions. Examples from Honduras include the collected works of Marco Antonio Cáceres Medina. He wrote about historical topics as diverse as Maya odontological practice (2003) and General and President Terencio de Sierra (2011). Cáceres Medina, himself a physician, not a historian, documented the craziness of an unpopular nineteenth century dictator of Honduras, mixing documentable facts and rumors about his behavior into a narrative of Sierra's life.

What has still not developed is history that takes as its object indigeneity, particularly the view of indigenous people of their own place in colonial society. Missing are histories that focus on indigenous actors specifically, or that focus on a single *pueblo de indios* in the Guatemalan

colony. There are still no histories that ask or attempt to answer the question "how long and through what tactics did the pueblos de indios persist?" My goal in this dissertation is to do precisely this: trace the history of a single pueblo de indios from its earliest appearance in Spanish documents; to read those documents as evidence of indigenous perspectives and tactics; and trace how a pueblo de indios managed to persist and even began to thrive, before the upheavals of the independence and Republican periods.

### **The Local Context: Honduras**

Honduran historiography has had a somewhat different trajectory than the larger context of Guatemala and Central America. Woodward (1997:46) largely dismisses Honduran history published before 1983. He singles out the 1983 doctoral dissertation by Jose Guevarra Escudero, at New York University, on nineteenth century economic history in Honduras as a turning point leading to professionalization of history in the country. In contrast, two prominent Honduran historians, Argueta (1981, 1983) and Euraque (2010), both consider the founding of the Department of History at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras (UNAH) in 1977 as the beginning of professionalization of Honduran history. Each also identifies national historians trained outside of Honduras as early as the 1950s as having shaped events that led to the arrival at that foundational moment.

While Argueta (1981, 1983) eschews a periodization of writing of Honduran history, Euraque (2010) provides a view of the post 1950 Honduran writing on history, dividing it into two periods, 1955-1977, and 1978-present. Argueta (1981:11) states that there has been scant attention paid to the colonial period by Honduran historians. Euraque (2010) basically agrees. A review of the major emphases in Honduran history shows that even when the colonial period has been the focus, little or no attention has been paid to indigenous communities as actors or agents.

The 1955-1977 period of Honduran historical writing is marked by the return to Honduras of historian Medardo Mejia from political exile in 1954 (Euraque 2008). Mejia is the first to use Marxist models in interpreting the history of Honduras. His six volume work (Mejia 1969) was mostly published posthumously as only the first two volumes were published during his lifetime. However, the first volume dealt with the prehispanic period and the colonial period, making his contribution particularly important to this study. Instead of focusing on the means of production as a route to periodization, he focuses on changes in the formation of the state (Sierra Fonseca 2008). Mejia writes that he follows Louis Henry Morgan in viewing

the Maya of Copan, and the Maya Toltecs that he says came after them, as barbarians (1983:27). Indians in the colonial period are only mentioned in the context of Spanish activities, as passive recipients of the effects of Spanish activity and law.

Euraque (2008; 2010:96) viewed Mejía's contribution as not so much his use of Marxism or social sciences in general, but rather his changing the view of positivism that had marked Honduran history since the previous century. Pragmatically, Euraque also notes that Mejía promoted the development and use of the national archives, helping disrupt the historiographic vision that had dominated Honduras by providing new kinds of sources for analysis. For example, included in the National Archives are land titles, including some for pueblos de indios (Archivo Nacional de Honduras 1901). Sources like this could provide a basis for renewed study of indigenous communities in the colonial and early Republican period.

Also writing in this period were Mario Argueta, José Reina Valenzuela, and Victor Caceres Lara. Combined, their work introduced the concept of Honduras as an enclave into the historical writing in Honduras. The "enclave", a concept borrowed from political economy, is an economically autonomous region within a country that runs on foreign capital and exports resources or products from a region to other countries. Modern examples in Honduras itself include special economic development zones and Paul Romer's model cities, but in the historical literature, we are concerned with the banana enclave (Lainez and Meza 1974). The banana enclave disrupted the landscape when land grants dispossessed existing communities of their lands while preserving their names in the names of banana plantations (Quelequele and Tibombo for example). The enclave experienced labor shortages that resulted in bringing Afrodescendent workers into north coast Honduras, primarily from Jamaica, reintroducing "blackness" into Honduras as a racial category separate from everyone already living in the country (regardless of existing strains of African descent), and further associating blackness with foreignness.

Studies of the banana enclave are political economic accounts, not social histories. As Euraque writes, they looked at "elite masculine protagonists and the institutions they founded" (2010:101). They are rooted in traditional Honduran narratives which Euraque says are about patronization and are overly romanticized, recalling Griffith's (1960) comment about passionate histories dominating the nineteenth century. Euraque notes that these authors treat Indians and Afrodescendent people as the object of, rather than the subject of, investigation.

Such studies are basically the inheritors of the liberal histories of the previous century, such as that of Vallejo (1882). Authors in this group, like Victor Caceres Lara (1978) and Jose Reina Valenzuela (1969) did not use formal historical frameworks. This period also saw the impetus for Honduran novelists like Ramon Amaya Amador to write semi-historical novels like *Los Brujos de Ilamatepeque* (1979) and *Prision Verde* (1974). These were inspired by historical events. *Prision Verde* dealt with events within recent memory, working conditions on the banana plantations before the banana workers' strike of 1954. *Los Brujos de Ilamatepeque*, based on an 1843 document in the national archive, fictionalized the experience of former *morazanista* soldiers returning to their village.

In the 1970s, four important figures in Honduran historiography returned from political exile in Spain and Brazil: Ramon Oquelli, Leticia Oyuela, Marcos Carias Zapata, and Mario Felipe Martinez Castillo (Euraque 2010:107-8). Euraque notes that all four wrote on the colonial period in Honduras. This was a major contrast with other Honduran historians. Martinez Castillo is the only one of these scholars to have studied history and the only one whose work focused exclusively on the colonial period. Carias Zapata was a novelist, and all of these four used literary references similar to much postcolonial historical writing. Oquelli (1982, 2004) took Jose Cecilio del Valle as a topic numerous times. Oyuela wrote primarily about religion and art (Oyuela 2007), but also wrote the first Honduran history about women in the colonial and republican period (Oyuela 1993). Martinez Castillo wrote about a wide range of colonial topics, from the formation of the Alcadia Mayor of Tegucigalpa (Martinez Castillo 1982) to the Cathedral in Comayagua (Martinez Castillo 1988). His 1980 dissertation on colonial art in Honduras was published in 1992.

For Euraque (2010), the period from 1978 to 2000 is dominated by the formation of a history profession at the UNAH and the influence of its graduates in shaping the discourse and dialogue of national identity. Honduran history at this time is notable for the domination of dependency theory. Derived from historical sociology, dependency theory characterized writing about Honduran contemporary history of the 19th and 20th century. Dependency theory places indigenous people in a passive position. Euraque (2010:109) credits Molina Chocano (1975) with introducing the concept in Honduras.

Euraque (2010:112) notes that outside of modern studies of the banana enclave that developed in the 19th and 20th centuries there is no recent historical work about the north coast of Honduras, much less work on the colonial period in this area. Euraque sees his own work, much of which

does concern the north coast (e.g. Euraque 1993, 1996b), as fostering a transition from discussing Honduras as a banana enclave, to focusing on identity, race, and nationality (Euraque 1996a). This important work re-introduces questions concerning the indigenous experience in the Republican and colonial periods, questions this study seeks to explore.

### **Recent Historical Writing on Colonial Honduras**

It was in the 1970s that US scholars took an interest in Honduran history and historiography, mainly centered on the colonial period (MacLeod 1973; Newson 1981, 1986; Sherman 1979). After this, there is practically no continued tradition of Honduran history in English. A notable exception is the study of Mercedarian missionization in the Department of Santa Barbara, carried out in conjunction with work by historical archaeologists (Black 1995, 1997).

Much of the writing about colonial Honduras in the 1970s and 1980s focused on the theme of the demographic collapse in Honduras following the Spanish Conquest. Argueta (1981, 1983) identified Molina Chocano (1975) as providing a first approximation to a quantitative study of the population decline. Both MacLeod (1973) and Newson (1982) examined the effects of the colonial mining industry on indigenous population, seeing it as one of the principal causes of decline or even disappearance of indigenous people in Honduras.

MacLeod (1973) pioneered a kind of economic history of Central America in which the colonial period had an increased visibility, primarily due to the importance of mining. In this tradition, West (1959) explored the economic impacts of mining in Honduras in general, while Thompson (1973) provided an economic overview of the historical geography of mining. MacLeod (1973) discussed how in the sixteenth century, the Spanish saw a potential for gold mining from placer stream deposits near Trujillo, San Pedro Sula, and Puerto Caballos, making those areas the focus of the earliest Spanish settlement. In the seventeenth century, a reorientation to silver mining shifted the Spanish focus inland. While there was some silver inland from Trujillo in Olancho, the largest deposits were located farther south, in the south central part of the province, near what would become the capital city in the nineteenth century, Tegucigalpa.

During the early years of the colony, MacLeod (1973) sees indigenous people mainly as a labor force. He notes that the indigenous population was the main engine of wealth in Central America. In Honduras, that wealth was quickly squandered by Europeans selling indigenous people as slave labor

for Caribbean plantations, and employing them for working the metal deposits. This resulted in a drastic indigenous population decline in the sixteenth century that MacLeod believes became so great that there were no longer economically exploitable concentrations of indigenous people. Once mining became important again in Honduras, in the eighteenth century, Indians again are seen as important as part of the labor force that supported this endeavor, along with the numerous mixed-race peoples who formed the bulk of the day laborers in Honduras at this point.

Newson (1981, 1986) documented the collapse of indigenous population in sixteenth century Honduras using archival data. For the region of this study, the Ulúa Valley, she notes that data are lacking. Nonetheless, she suggests there were few, if any, indigenous people left in the region by the end of the colonial period. According to her research the number of indigenous communities in the jurisdiction of San Pedro (a proxy for the Ulúa Valley) decreased between 1582 and 1811 from twenty to four. Her data also show that if a community survived until the end of the sixteenth century, then throughout the rest of the colonial period, it experienced population growth.

Sherman (1979) examined the abuse of indigenous people in Central America in the first half of the sixteenth century. He includes the enslavement of the indigenous population of Honduras, which Newson (1987) credited with depopulating the north coast. He also looks at practices forcing indigenous people to provide labor for a Spanish encomendero, something not a jural part of the encomienda system. With the establishment of the New Laws in 1542, and the Audiencia of Los Confines in 1544, new indigenous slavery was abolished, and Spanish owners of existing indigenous slaves had to prove they had legal title to them, or free them. Sherman says this was perceived in Central America as undermining the encomienda system, and as such, was not initially implemented until Alonso de Cerrato was appointed President of the Audiencia de los Confines in 1547. Sherman credits Lopez de Cerrato (who was President of the Audiencia from 1548 to 1555) with implementing the new laws in Central America and remedying the abuses corrected by it. These reforms created a labor shortage (Sherman 1978:191), and indigenous forced labor continued even after the reforms. The Spanish New Laws were meant to create a free indigenous day labor pool that had to be paid, with the assumption that indigenous people would want to work for the Spanish (Yaeger 1995), but that turned out not to be the case. In practice, personal service continued in Central America throughout the sixteenth century under the fiction that it was done in exchange for a reduced or eliminated tribute responsibility.

Indian labor allowed for public works was reinterpreted as an assignment for individual Spaniards.

There are a few hints of indigenous agency in these demographic and economic histories. Sherman (1979) has little to say that is specific to Honduras. He does indicate that free blacks, mulatos, and Indians exercised a collective agency in refusing to work for Honduran cattle owners at the prices the cattle owners were willing to pay (Sherman 1979:259). Newson (1987:220) identifies both the Ulúa and Aguan valleys, centers of pre-Columbian cacao cultivation, as areas where cacao continued to be produced in the colonial period. While some towns in the Ulúa valley paid tribute in cacao into the seventeenth century, most colonial cacao production in northern Honduras was for indigenous consumption and reflects indigenous intentions, even if Newson did not emphasize this.

While economic development fueled the formation of colonial society, equally important was the establishment of Spanish settlement patterns. Mario Felipe Martinez Castillo wrote on the urbanization of Comayagua (1980), the original colonial capital, and on Tegucigalpa (1982), which succeeded it. Chamberlain (1946) and Lunardi (1946) also contributed to this theme. Indigenous people play ambiguous roles in these histories of Spanish settlement. The Indians in Chamberlain's history are either savage barbarians who came to Honduras as allies of Pedro de Alvarado, or rebellious natives that needed to be put down. Lunardi adopts the practice of quoting from colonial documents about Comayagua, and so portrays Indians only as the recipients of Spanish actions.

Colonial Comayagua was the focus of Reina Valenzuela (1968) and Daniela Navarrete Calix (2008). Navarrete Calix writes about the institutions within the city set up for Indians, but otherwise refers to them as the objects of *encomienda*. Spanish urbanization was also the topic of Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle's master's thesis (1975). His subsequent book on the history of San Pedro Sula (1989) is a unique resource, focusing on the north coast region that is the topic of this study. Pastor Fasquelle shows that San Pedro, after an initial promising start, stagnated into the seventeenth century as it was no longer a mining center. It remained somewhat important because of its connection to the port of Puerto Caballos. Threats to shipping security in the eighteenth century along this coast resulted in the construction of a fort at Omoa, and this region experienced a slight boom as a result of increased economic activity with the founding of the fort. However, it was not until the nineteenth century, with the development of the banana enclaves and railroad, that San Pedro grew to its present dominance as Honduras's second largest city and industrial capital.

Studies of illicit commerce in colonial Honduran history do include the region of northern Honduras. Sariego (1977, 1978) noted that such commerce favored the French and English. Popular goods included staples (flour and salt pork) but more often wine, cane alcohol, vinegar, olive oil, used clothing and table china. Illicit commerce was also the topic of studies by Szaszdy Nagy (1957), and Martinez Castillo and Chaverri (1975). None of these authors focus on Indian participation in illicit commerce. In later chapters, I will show the deep involvement of residents of pueblos de indios on both sides of the illicit commerce on the north coast.

While many of the studies of colonial history of Honduras mention indigenous people in passing, there is very little writing prior to 2000 that takes the indigenous populations of Honduras either as a focus, or as actors with agency. William Davidson, a cultural geographer, looked at the historical geography of the Bay Islands, off the north coast of Honduras (1974), and attempted to trace the geographic location of the Tol in the eighteenth century (1985). Davidson and Cruz Sandoval (1995) describe the movements of the Sumo and Tahuaca from 1690 to the 1990s. Lara Pinto (1980) examined colonial Spanish documents about the conquest and attempted to locate named indigenous places across the country. Lara Pinto (1996) also tried to identify indigenous forms of social organization just prior to the arrival of the Spanish.

The main intellectual work that these authors contributed was a definition of the historical boundaries of different indigenous groups defined by a shared language. In each case, the effort was made more complicated by historical sources that show more fluidity in boundaries than might have been expected, and the displacement of entire groups to other regions in Honduras. It is noteworthy that most of these studies concentrate on indigenous groups that were largely outside the control of the Spanish colonial administration. Many of the sources are from military campaigns and missionization efforts. Only Lara Pinto (1980) takes a country wide approach, but her unit of investigation is the named place, not the linguistic or ethnic group. Her primary sources are early colonial period documents, including those that I discuss in the next chapter.

In unique studies focused on the history of indigenous groups, Offen (2002, 2009), Ibarra (2007, 2009) and Garcia (2007) examine the history of the Miskito and Afrodescendent Zambos in eastern Honduras during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Miskito and Zambos maintained their independence from Spanish colonial control by allying themselves with the English. They used tactics like raiding the Spanish colonial parts of Honduras for indigenous slaves, an economic alliance with the British for

commodities, and an openness to escaped Africans who became the defensive bulwark of the core Miskito settlement area. I will show in later chapters how these slave raids, which extended from the Gulf of Honduras down to Costa Rica, impacted pueblos de indios in the Ulúa Valley.

The spiritual conversion of indigenous peoples and their religious life has been a topic of particular interest for Honduran historians. Argueta (1979) looked at the "spiritual conquest" of Taguzgalpa, an indigenous province, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Black (1995) provided a similar focus on the work of the Mercederian order in western Honduras, among Lenca speaking people. Reina Valenzuela (1983) published a two volume work collecting in one place a series of seminal documents about the ecclesiastical history of Honduras in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Tojeira (1990) presents religious history of Honduras from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries and even attempts to characterize what indigenous religions were like before the Spanish conquest.

These histories draw on both civil and ecclesiastical documents. While Indians are present in such histories, they tend to be combined into the general population, reducing the visibility of indigenous actors. In all of these histories, indigenous people are seen as the passive recipients of evangelization, if they are present at all. In subsequent chapters I will show how indigenous people took an active role in their own Christian practice, and how elements of religion were tactically deployed as part of the work of persistence.

Several anthropological studies of contemporary indigenous groups also include information relevant to historical studies of pueblos de indios. Chapman (1978) traced the history of Spanish contact with various Lenca groups in the interior of Honduras in the sixteenth century, promoting a concept of Lenca tribes corresponding to different languages that my own work, described in the next chapter, challenges. Her ethnographic studies examining modern Lenca field and agricultural ritual provide important evidence of persistence in traditional practices on the level of the individual farmer (Chapman 1985). Castegnaro de Foletti (1989) examines the practices of modern Lenca potters who she demonstrates reproduced traditional technologies throughout the colonial and Republican periods.

In 1983, Argueta (1983) identified several themes not present in Honduran work to that date about the colonial period, particularly writing about encomiendas, land and land policy, and agrarian policy. Argueta (1983) also cites Central American commerce and how it articulated with Spain through the Honduran flotilla as an unexplored topic. Another theme undertaken in Guatemala, but not in Honduras, Argueta (1983:10) states, is

the transition from an Indian majority population to a mestizo majority population in the eighteenth century. While Valenzuela (1978), Mayes (1956), and Diaz Chávez (1973) wrote about the transition from a colonial province to independent state, they did not make the question of change in population composition a central one.

Euraque (1996a) took up Argueta's challenge and looked at the erasure of indianness in the 18th through 20th centuries through an emphasis on *mestizaje* (the development of a population of mixed ethnic or racial extraction), and the concept of a lack of authenticity brought about through loss of indigenous languages. He examines *mestizaje*'s role in the obscuring of indigenous and Afrodescendent people from the official national identity in the 19th and 20th centuries. With the introduction of an explicit discussion of *mestizaje*, Honduran historians turned to exploring the presence and absence from historical accounts of the many different groups that made up the population in the late colonial and early republican periods.

Barahona (2002) examined the evolution of *mestizaje* and attitudes towards Afrodescendent peoples from the colonial period forward to the present day. Pastor Fasquelle (1994) discusses the portrayal of black slaves, freed slaves, and escaped English slaves in the writing of Thomas Gage and Fuentes y Guzman, setting their comments in a historical context. Thompson (2012) discusses the life of run-away English slaves around Trujillo in Honduras. Rebecca Earle (2007) follows Eurague (1996) in contextualizing the redefinition of Honduras as a mestizo population in a larger Latin America-wide process of the development of different national identities.

In a unique study based on historical archaeology, Charles Cheek (1997) describes how different Afrodescendent groups interacted in Honduras during the transition toward independence. His data came from three sites dating from 1799 to the 1880s near Trujillo. One site was occupied by refugees from Haiti. Another was a settlement of Garifuna forcibly resettled from Saint Vincent Island in the 1790s. Cheek argues that the Garifuna living near Trujillo preferentially used products of English manufacture, simultaneously distinguishing themselves from the Haitians, and from the unconquered indigenous Miskito of eastern Honduras.

The colonial Atlantic coast of Honduras, previously only represented by work on the fort of San Fernando (Hasemann 1979; Zapatero 1997), became a topic of interest for more historians after 2000. Payne (2009) documents the proposal in 1556 to move the trans-isthmus gold shipment from Panama to Honduras, ultimately departing from Puerto Caballos on the Atlantic coast. She also examined the history of the port of Trujillo, in eastern Honduras (Payne 2006, 2007). Fernandez Morente (2001) described

Honduras's economic relations with the Caribbean region. Despite the development of these examples, in 2010 Euraque (2010) noted an almost complete lack of colonial histories for the Atlantic coast of Honduras, and a complete lack of colonial histories for the region that treat indigenous people as agents instead of objects.

## **Discussion**

What this review should make clear is that there is a gap in the existing literature on colonial Honduras, a lack of works that take as their focus indigenous people as agents crafting their own persistence, rather than as passive objects affected by forces over which they had no control. In such crafting lie the roots of modern Honduran civilization; the social transition through the colonial history to where Euraque takes up the question of race and identity in modern Honduras. That historical research in Honduras has focused on the data-rich regions of the interior of the country comes as no surprise. This makes it all the more important to focus on the history of the Atlantic coast of Honduras, since without understanding how it articulates with the colonial centers, and with Spain and Guatemala, one cannot understand the Honduran colony.

My own work derives from similar sources to those used by recent historians of the Honduran colonial period. Rather than accept that there was no effective way to study the indigenous experience along the north coast of Honduras, I sought out resources for the region in a variety of archives. These sources, as I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, allow me to develop a historical account in which indigenous people were active agents in their own community persistence. They were central actors in the shaping of the Honduran colony.

While conventional histories argue that indigenous people disappeared early from the area, my research has located a large body of documents about indigenous communities here. While some kinds of documents traditionally privileged (such as economic records) are missing, the kinds of documents available (in particular, petitions and legal cases) are especially illuminating sources when analyzed in new ways that I will introduce in the chapters that follow. Those documents allow me to tell a more complicated history.

In that history, indigenous people employed Spanish institutions to reinforce their continuity as communities. They reproduced traditional practices of particular value in relating community and land, such as cultivation of cacao, but also drew on practices introduced through

colonization to reinforce community identity, for example, through community churches. Indigenous communities in the late colonial period recruited residents from outside the pueblo.

In order to show how pueblos de indios persisted, I take one community-- originally called Masca, later Candelaria-- and follow it as it relocated twice to safer positions inland; successfully petitioned colonial authorities at points over multiple generations to resist increased labor demands and insist on relief from threats of excommunication and debt; became embroiled in economic activities, both legal and clandestine, around a new military fort; and gradually rebuilt its population size from a low point at the end of the sixteenth century. I will stress the way that indigenous people in the region probably became conscious of the differences in fundamental assumptions that guided practice during the sixteenth century (drawing on Pierre Bourdieu) and the tactical use by the community of new practices begun under the colonial authority (following the concept of Michel de Certeau); will re-read Spanish documents to move toward an understanding of the indigenous perspectives they echo (employing the dialogics of Mikhail Bakhtin); and show how, far from simply being part of a socio-political hierarchy determined elsewhere, indigenous people in colonial northern Honduras took up positions in social fields through their practices of speech and everyday action.

We begin with an orientation to the region of Honduras called the río de Ulúa in the sixteenth century, a province where a decade-long military resistance to Spanish colonization ended in 1536. Over the course of the next two chapters I will establish where indigenous settlement was in 1536, and how it changed over the course of the sixteenth century. I will explore how indigenous and Spanish actors together created the conditions of the early colony, emphasizing what each might have understood about the other. Masca, in these chapters, is in the background, as the centers of military leadership against the Spanish received more attention from the early Spanish writers. Masca remains just one of a number of pueblos de indios that experienced new regimes of administration as a result of the imposition of a colonial order. Drawing on what documents and archaeology say about other pueblos de indios in the sixteenth century, the next two chapters set the scene for when Masca emerges in the seventeenth century, as the home community of leaders actively negotiating for their community based on what by then were multiple generations of participation in new hybrid practices that allowed the district of San Pedro to survive as a part of the Honduran province of the colony of Guatemala.



Plate I: Ulua River near its head of navigation at Cerro Palenque, looking east



Plate II: View of the floodplains of the Ulua River, looking west toward Cerro Palenque



Plate III: View northeast across the floodplains of the Ulua River, from Cerro Palenque