Understanding the Paradoxical Experiences of Indigeneity in Izalco, El Salvador

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADESCO	Asociación de Desarrollo Economico y Social Comunitario (Association for Economic and Community Development)
ADESCOHUIS	Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal Huiscoyolate (Association for Community Development in Huiscoyolate)
ADESCOMIZ	Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal de Mujeres Indígenas de Izalco (Izalco Women's Association for Community Development)
ANEP	Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (National Association of Private Enterprises)
ANIS	Asociación Nacional de Indígenas Salvadoreños (National Association of Indigenous Salvadorans)
ARENA	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republican Alliance)
CCNIS	Consejo Coordinador Nacional Indígena Salvadoreño (National Coordinating Council of Indigenous Salvadorans)
CICA	Consejo Indígena de Centro América (Central American Indigenous Council)
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)
CONCULTURA	Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y el Arte (National Culture and Arts Council)
CORSATUR	Corporación Salvadoreña de Turismo (Salvadoran Tourism Corporation)
ECMIA	Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas (Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas)
EZLN	Ejército Zapatisa de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)
FAMA	Fundación Feliciano Ama (Feliciano Ama Foundation)
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISTU	Instituto Salvadoreño de Turismo (Salvadoran Tourism Institute)
MARN	Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources)
MINED	Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)
MITUR	Ministertio de Turismo (Ministry of Tourism)
MUNA	Museo Nacional de Antropología Dr. David J. Guzmán (The Dr. David J. Guzman National Anthropology Museum)
MUPI	Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (Museum of the Word and Image)
Secultura	Secretaria de la Cultura (Culture Secretariat)

UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations' (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
US	United States

Glossary

Abuelos, abuelas	Elders, also known as *tatas* and *nanas*
Abya Yala	Indigenous word used referring to America
Alcalde del Común	Indigenous leader who oversees *las cofradías* and who once spoke on behalf of the indigenous community
Buen vivir	Living well or collective wellbeing
Brujo, bruja	Witch, sorcerer
Cacique	Traditional indigenous leader
Casa de la Cultura	Cultural centre
Cofradía	Brotherhood, a Catholic organization seen as indigenous
Cosmovisión	A worldview
Cushcatan	Náhuat word referring to what is now known as El Salvador
Izalqueño, Izalqueña	Person from Izalco
Mayordomo	*Cofradía* leader
Mestizo, mestiza	Of mixed origin from Spanish and Indian descent
Mestizaje	The process of racial and cultural mixing
Nanas	Female elders also known as *abuelas*
Nansin	Teachers who run language programs in Izalco
Náhuat	Language of the indigenous people of Cushcatan (western part of El Salvador)
Palacio Municipal	Municipal government headquarters
Refajo	Indigenous dress worn by women
Tatas	Male elders also known as *abuelos*

Maps

Map of El Salvador
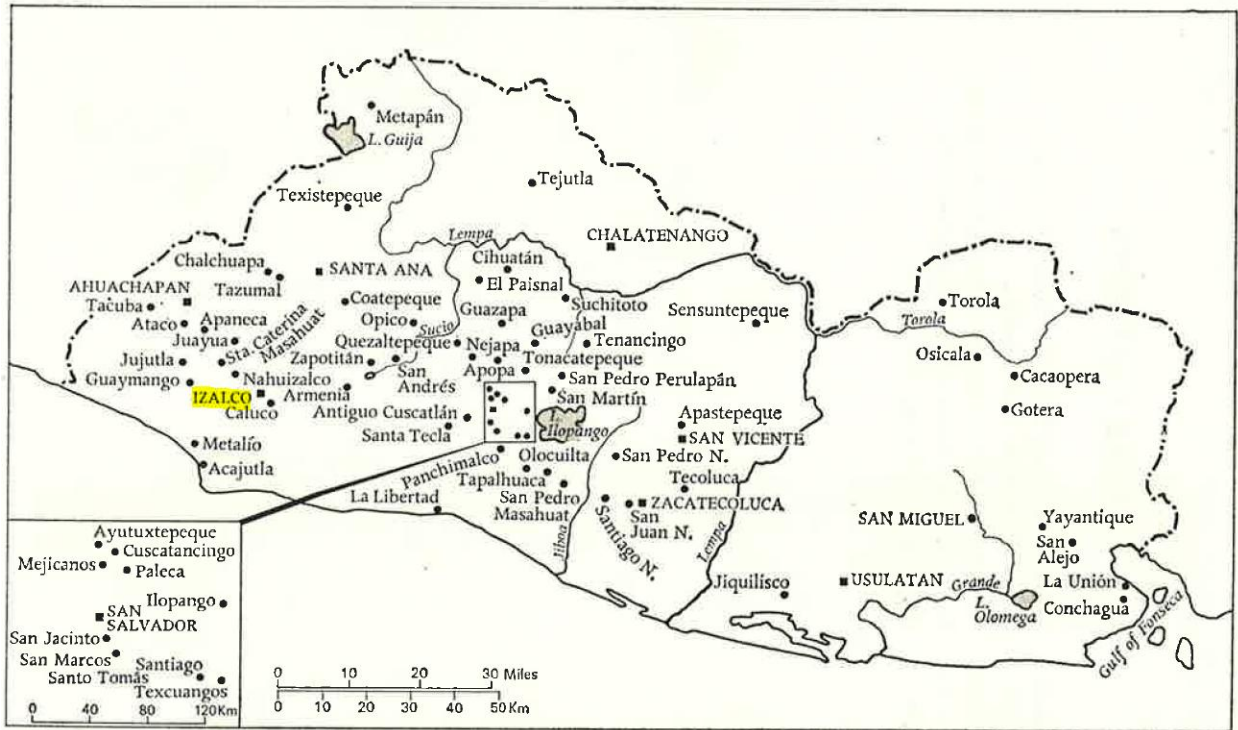
(Browning 1971, xx)

Map of Izalco, Sonsonate Department

Fuente: GIS-SACDEL 2012
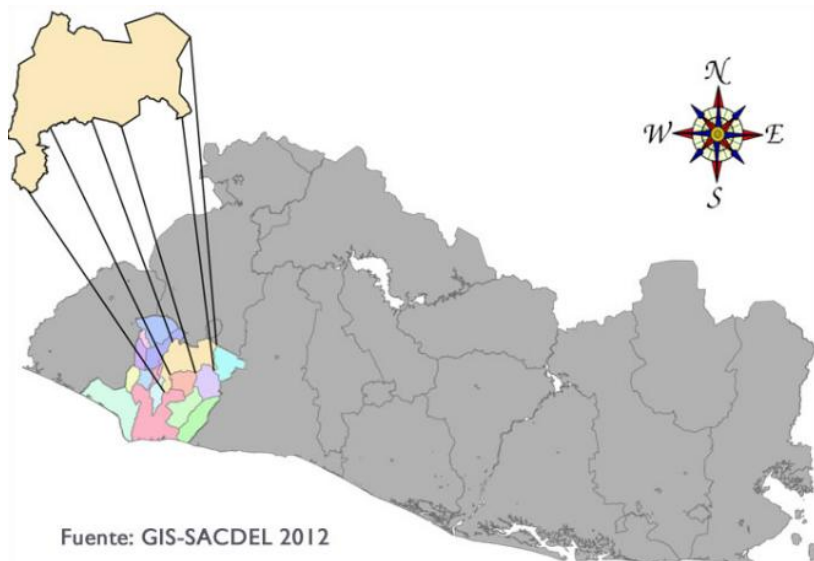
("Ubicación geográfica", Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco)

Abstract

The town of Izalco in El Salvador has recently become the site of indigenous revival. This development is occurring in the midst of numerous narratives at the national and local levels which assert that the indigenous Náhuat-Pipil people have disappeared from El Salvador. The causal assumption is that indigenous people were massacred during a peasant uprising in 1932 and since then, the remaining few assimilated into the dominant mestizo culture through the adoption of ladino language, dress and traditions. The purpose of this dissertation is therefore to analyze this apparent paradox, where indigeneity oscillates between presence and absence.

Using an interpretivist political ethnographic framework, this dissertation deepens our understanding of indigeneity by identifying hidden practices and discourses, across everyday social contexts in Izalco, which give meaning to indigeneity. Rather than beginning with set 'ethnic' criteria aimed at examining how a pre-established group of indigenous people experience indigeneity, I focus my analysis on four areas where indigeneity surfaced: as part of cultural celebrations (during *Día de la Cruz*), in stories and storytelling practices, through visual representations of 'Indians', and within the context of the global tourism industry. My research therefore moves beyond the tendencies of negating an indigenous presence because of the perceived absence of essentialist ethnic identifiers in El Salvador. In approaching the study of indigeneity in such a manner, I demonstrate the pervasiveness of hegemonic colonial representations through which people give meaning to indigeneity. Across the sites of analysis presented in this dissertation, expressions of indigeneity (that is, when people speak, in images, spaces, religious rituals, and social interactions) consistently reproduce colonial power relations, in which the Indian is positioned as inferior in relation to mestizos. Such a characterization also suggests that it is indigeneity, rather than simply indigenous people, which has been subject to coloniality.

Keywords: indigenous politics, El Salvador, coloniality, mestizaje

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I could not have completed this research without the tremendous support of Dr. Cédric Jourde. His commitment to this project was evident in the care that he took to scrutinize every word of this thesis, challenge my assumptions and help me to navigate through the entire process of completing this dissertation. During the lows, Professor Jourde quickly turned situations around by instilling confidence in me and reminding me that the end was in sight. For his support and guidance, I am truly grateful.

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To my father, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews, and extended family, I am deeply indebted to you. You were a constant source of encouragement and tangible support for my family and I through this entire process. To my mother, Lidia, who taught me to enjoy life and to embrace challenges, this thesis is dedicated to you. Even though you are gone, I can still hear your words of encouragement: *Para atrás, ni para coger impulso...* I know that you will be celebrating in

heaven, as I finally walk across that stage to receive that "piece of paper" you wanted so much to display on your wall.

To my children, Levi and Madalina, thank you for all the joy and laughter. Making time to play with you has been most rewarding, even with deadlines looming. I have learned so much about the things in life that truly bring me happiness because of you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, a number of indigenous individuals and groups have surfaced in El Salvador, claiming their collective and individual indigenous rights. Indigenous actors are allying with indigenous groups, collaborating with issue-based civil networks, organizing popular demonstrations, and engaging with the state to make themselves visible in various spaces in which they feel indigenous people are invisible. At the time that this research was conducted indigenous actors, including the National Coordinating Council of Indigenous Salvadorans (*Consejo Coordinador Nacional Indígena Salvadoreño*, CCNIS) and its member organizations (14 at the time of the research), were pressuring the Salvadoran state to ratify the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention 169 and the United Nations' (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Once ratified, indigenous representatives expected these instruments to serve as pillars to reform the Salvadoran Constitution and formally recognize indigenous people and their collective rights (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013).[1] This is highly significant given the ways in which the Salvadoran state and society have largely denied the existence of indigenous peoples within the Salvadoran territory and erased them from the national consciousness (Lara-Martinez in Schultze-Jena 2010, 1; Tilley 2005, 188).

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze indigenous experiences in the town of Izalco, El Salvador, while gaining a deeper understanding of everyday struggles between indigenous expressions and homogenizing tendencies. Unlike certain Latin American countries, such as

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[1] Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution were successfully ratified on June 12, 2014, officially recognizing indigenous peoples and committing to the promotion and protection of autochthonous languages.

Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador and Bolivia, which have become beacons of indigenous

contestation where indigenous actors have successfully organized to bring about change[2] (Yashar

2005, 55), El Salvador presents a distinct scenario. There is a widely held assumption in El

Salvador that there are no indigenous peoples in the country (Tilley 2005; Cohen 2003). As

Brysk (2000) notes, "[u]ntil quite recently...El Salvador denied the very existence of their

half-million indigenous citizens" (61). Most Salvadorans continue to view the nation as being

almost exclusively mestizo and see the Indian as a figment of the past (Tilley 2005). In other

words, mestizaje is so deeply entrenched in Salvadoran discourses and national narratives, that it

reinforces assumptions that there are simply no indigenous people in the country (Tilley 2002,

352). Within this context, Izalco is a town with a history of ethnopolitical struggles that has

nonetheless been immune to the myth of mestizaje (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 20; Rodriguez-

Herrera 2007, 83; Ching and Tilley 1998, 121). In addition, indigeneity permeates various

aspects of everyday life in Izalco, whether it may be through discourses, images, traditions or as

it relates to collective memories of the 1932 massacre. Given these reasons, Izalco is an

important site in the study of indigeneity.

The emergence of indigenous actors into the social and political spheres in El Salvador comes at

a time of a wave of indigenous mobilization across Latin America. Indeed, Latin American

societies are undergoing a number of transformations, resulting from the rise of indigenous

actors and their emergence as political actors (Le Bot 2009; Escobar 2010). Specifically,

indigenous social movements are challenging ideas that Latin American states are homogenous

mestizo nations and individuals are organizing on ethnic grounds to bring about broader social

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[2] Yashar (2005) qualifies Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia and Ecuador as being among "the most densely populated indigenous countries in Latin America", where indigenous groups benefitted from both the capacity and opportunity for successfully organizing (55).

transformations (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998). They demand the recognition of their collective ethnic identities by seeking constitutional recognition at the state level, and international recognition by pressuring states to adhere to international regimes, guaranteeing indigenous people the protection of their collective rights (Mendez 2010; Rus, Hernandez Castillo and Mattiace 2001; Brysk 2000).

Accordingly, indigenous actors across Latin America are changing how individuals are relating to the state (Escobar 2010). They are organizing and exercising their political weight to transform their contexts and carving out spaces within states and at the international level, thereby changing how individuals relate to state and non-state actors across boundaries (Mendez 2010; Brysk 2000). Transnational indigenous networks have also emerged, which are characterised by a sense of a shared identity and shared struggle in the face of difference (Brysk 2000; Le Bot 2009; Alvarez et al. 1998; Latorre 2013; Mendez 2010). In addition to their attempts to influence their institutional contexts (political, social and economic), indigenous actors are drawing attention to and reviving different worldviews (*cosmovisiones*) that alter how people relate to one another and how they relate to their environments (Walsh 2011; Gudynas 2011). For these reasons, indigenous actors are not *just* ethnic actors, but through their ethnic claims, they have become political actors who propose alternatives to contemporary political, social, ecological, environmental and economic contexts (Le Bot 2009).

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1.1   Why El Salvador?

El Salvador is surrounded by countries where ethnopolitics have been a prominent issue. Perhaps most notably, Guatemala has seen considerable indigenous mobilization; its civil war which lasted from 1960 to 1996 was deeply enveloped in ethnic politics (Jonas 1991; Warren 1998). Honduras has also seen a rise in ethnic mobilization (Metz 2010; Vacanti Brondo 2013, 207). Nicaragua's history is also deeply embedded in ethnic mobilization, which continues to be evidenced in light of recent land claims (Gould 1998; Gonzalez 2012). Unlike Guatemala, "by 1940 official and popular discourse in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua not only described their societies as mestizo, they posited that Indians had ceased to exist at some forgotten time in the deepest recesses of historical memory" (Gould 1998, 167). These countries also share the experience of "bitter defeat" of indigenous population, comparable to El Salvador's 1932 massacre (Gould 1998, 167).

However, whereas people from neighbouring countries have since mobilized on ethnic grounds, the legitimacy of indigenous groups continues to be negatively affecting indigenous organization in El Salvador and indigenous mobilization is scarce. To date, indigenous organization in El Salvador has been sporadic and limited in scope, participation and representation (Tilley 2002, 540). Apart from *cofradías* organizations and the organization in the 1930s that led to *la Matanza*, indigenous organizations with a political agenda only emerged in 1965 with the appearance of National Association of Indigenous Salvadorans (*Asociación Nacional de Indígenas Salvadoreños*, ANIS) (Tilley 2002, 543). ANIS gained visibility in 1983, after a major massacre on its communal land led to increased support (as many as 40,000 members from various ethnic affiliations) (Tilley 2005, 38). However, this phenomenon was short-lived, as

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offshoot organizations began to emerge from the mid-1980s through to the mid-1990s (Tilley 2002, 539-40). Still, Tilley notes that the emergence of new organizations has not resulted in increased membership and rather than having broad legitimacy, leaders are often self-appointed and can rarely produce membership lists (Tilley 2002, 544). Tilley (2005) observes that "most of the organizations were composed of kin networks" (39). Furthermore, increase in the number of indigenous organizations often coincides with the availability of funding for indigenous initiatives (Tilley 2002, 542).

Moreover, the myth of mestizaje is deeply entrenched in El Salvador (DeLugan 2016, 145). For instance, while travelling to El Salvador during my first field research trip in 2012, a U.S. expatriate and businessman from North Carolina questioned my decision to study indigenous peoples in El Salvador and urged me to go to Guatemala and Mexico instead, where I would find people who speak native languages and still live in remote areas away from civilization (Miami, April 2012). The idea that there would be indigenous people in spite of the absence of ethnic markers (distinct language, territory, dress and culture untouched by modern civilization) was incommensurable to him. In a similar encounter, a university student from Santa Tecla studying engineering in San Salvador was astonished at the idea that there might be indigenous people left in El Salvador (Santa Tecla, April 2012). In yet another encounter during a subsequent trip to El Salvador, a Salvadoran businessman in the sugar cane industry asserted that there were no indigenous people left in El Salvador, as they had all lost their dress, customs and language and encouraged me to travel to Guatemala instead where I would be able to study real indigenous people (Los Angeles, April 2012).

Indigenous people in El Salvador are involved in a fundamental struggle: the recognition of their identities as indigenous, rather than simply an element from which the national Salvadoran identity derives. It could be argued that indigenous people are in a constant process of negotiating their ethnic identities. Elsewhere in Latin America, most indigenous groups have been able to assert their identities—with more or less success—based on common territory, language and customs. This is not the case in El Salvador where there is no distinct language, territory or even customs that necessarily characterize indigenous people. In this case, the premise of ethnicity revolves around the absence of indigenous people, what indigenous people refer to as the "invisibility" that they are attempting to surmount. As Tilley (2005) puts it, "indigenous people today can make no political demands based on their history of extinguished sovereignty because it was another people or nation (culture), now vanished, which lost that sovereignty. Any claim by indigenous movements of an organic continuity with the preconquest culture is, in this light, a political fantasy not worth serious consideration" (Tilley 2005, 104).

The nascent and at the same time struggling indigenous movement in El Salvador does not have much popular support and most people with whom I spoke during the course of this research were skeptical about indigenous claims (DeLugan 2006, 147). This dynamic signals, at best, a lack of recognition and understanding of indigenous identities and their demands. At worst, it signals the perpetuation of social inequalities resulting from safeguarding the ambiguities and incongruities of a unitary Salvadoran national identity. To be sure, mestizaje in El Salvador, as in other parts of Latin America, is a political project and a process through which Latin American states gained their "mark of national distinction" (Tilley 2005, 197). Mestizaje can be described as a series of nation-building exercises, which affected the self-identification of a vast majority of Latin Americans within perceived ethnically homogenous nations. On mestizaje, Taylor

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(2006) observes that "the figure of the mestizo is cultivated as the symbol of national unity and is therefore the privileged referent in the construction of political and cultural subjecthood" (824), which tends to be seen as a way to distinguish oneself from imperialist/colonial forces and to affirm a unique identity and culture. In this respect, El Salvador's experience with mestizaje and the prominent nationalist rhetorics and practices effaced the Indian from the social consciousness (Gould 1998, 6).

Mestizaje as an institution was propagated in the 1930s, at a time when discourses of racial superiority were floating in the international sphere (Tilley 2005, 199). By asserting racial uniqueness and disassociating themselves from the stereotypical Spanish characteristics, Latin American states could therefore have credibility in the international scene (Tilley 2005, 191, 197). As Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008a) further describe, "[s]ince the early twentieth century mestizaje, understood as a nation-building myth of race mixture and a cultural process of 'deindianization,' has contributed substantially to Central American and Latin American nationalist ideologies and played a key role in shaping contemporary political culture" (xv). In El Salvador, the process of mestizaje is reflected in the indigenous symbols that "became embedded in the nationalist mythohistory" and the appropriation of characteristics of mythical indigenous heroic figures (Tilley 2005, 204). Tilley also posits that mestizaje was an intellectual exercise, given that the intelligentsia bought into the idea of a mestizo nation in El Salvador, and comments that "conversion of mestizaje reflects a larger strategic shift in the states racial-nationalist doctrine, which the sudden switch to mestizo in the birth records also reflected. The indigenous presence was being erased in the records" (Tilley 2005, 208).

Taking the study of the concept further, De la Cadena (2005) positions mestizaje not simply as a

biological process, but one that has contemporary articulations, which contains "several

hybridities" that resurface at various points in time (262-3). In De la Cadena's words:

> As a discursive formation comprised both by the assertion and the denial of its
> re-generative, nation-building potential, *mestizaje* is best characterised as a
> multi-layered and open-ended political discussion articulated across a thick
> intertextual network comprised of literary and scientific texts, political and
> artistic events, murals and paintings, museums and state policies (273).

Keeping with these discussions on mestizaje, I also refer to mestizaje as a political project and

process that began with colonization, with the imposition of Spanish hegemony, and continues

under the multifaceted precept of erasure of indigenous expressions (knowledge, practices and

discourses).

As evidenced during the course of this research, the idea of "indigenous" people and

"indigenous" groups lack legitimacy in the eyes of most Salvadorans.[3] A widespread belief that

indigenous people have either disappeared or are on the verge of disappearing permeates the

everyday discourses, attitudes and beliefs of non-indigenous people. Sometimes this can also be

observed among self-identified indigenous individuals. In other words, people of different

backgrounds predominantly resort to rehearsed transcripts[4] about indigenous identities.

Discursively, many of the people interviewed (both indigenous and non-indigenous) refer to

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[3] Despite the elusiveness of the concept at the practical level, indigeneity has become a matter of public discourse, as reflected in Sánchez (March 8, 2012), political parties are positioning themselves vis-à-vis ethnicity. Most recently, the concept of *buen vivir* (defined in a subsequent section) became a central point of debate, as it was pivotal in Salvador Sánchez Cerén's 2014 presidential campaign (Sánchez Cerén and Ortiz 2013).

[4] This is a term that I explore throughout the dissertation, which describes how many of the people encountered during the course of this research view indigeneity. Specifically, there are certain themes and patterns that people resort to when they describe indigeneity. These are reminiscent of memorized statements that people make on cue when the topic of indigeneity is raised in conversation. Among these is the notion that indigenous people have ceased to exist, that they disappeared as a result of the massacre in 1932 and that there are certain women who still wear traditional dress in a neighbouring town.

indigenous people as having declined in numbers and appearance after the 1932 massacre that president General Maximiliano Martinez Hernandez orchestrated to rid the country of communism (with which he associated indigenous people). They claim that those who did survive dropped their traditional clothing and stopped speaking their native language, *Náhuat*, out of fear of repression. Certain people do admit that there are descendants of indigenous people present in the country, but they also assert that they are no longer indigenous, because they have lost their language, dress and customs or "*se plegaron*"[5] (non-indigenous Izalco landowner, Izalco, March 2012). As a result, various people with whom I spoke attributed little legitimacy to indigenous people who have begun to re-assert their indigenous identities, as further discussed in this dissertation.

Furthermore, ideas and attitudes present in discourses indicate that to be an Indian is a source of shame. According to some informants, while there may not be many Indians in the country, certain people have not lost their *Indian-ness*. People who attempt to re-discover their cultural heritage often feel judged because iterations about indigeneity carry negative and belittling connotations (self-identified indigenous teacher, Izalco, March 2012). Pejorative expressions, such as the terms "*indio,*" are used to describe someone who is stubborn or unrefined; similarly, the term "*indianadas*" is used to describe something unsophisticated or doing things the way an Indian would do it (meaning in a backwards manner) (indigenous teacher, Izalco, March 2012).

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[5] *Plegarse* is a reflexive verb that literally means *folding, conceding* or *submitting oneself.* People generally use it to describe the act of folding and putting away indigenous clothing and conceding to mestizo culture, especially as a result of the 1932 massacre. The fact that I heard this term being used in a negative context, referring to "having made a mistake and suffering the consequences" is somewhat intriguing in light of subtle discourses. It raises the question of whether, according to some people, indigenous people brought the massacre upon themselves. I have not conducted sufficient research on this to arrive at a conclusion. Nevertheless, I believe it is still worth mentioning in light of subtle cues that shape collective understandings and imaginaries of indigeneity.

People use these terms in their everyday discourses, and in doing this, they associate the mere concept of indigeneity with inferiority.

Moreover, it is common for non-indigenous and indigenous individuals to speak negatively of certain indigenous people in the town, especially when they are involved in the political struggles for recognition. Non-indigenous people interviewed sometimes referred to the struggles of indigenous activists as being self-serving and detrimental to the nation (retired teacher, Izalco, March 2012; resort worker, Izalco, June 2012). Similarly, among indigenous individuals, questions about the (in)authenticity and (il)legitimacy of other indigenous people reinforce the alienation that certain indigenous people feel, which makes recognition and legitimacy all the more difficult as a whole. These negative connotations cause discouragement among prominent indigenous leaders who are pursuing indigenous rights (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). In addition to leaving indigenous people feeling alienated due to fear and shame brought on by self-identifying as indigenous, it also hinders the indigenous movement which should function as a "community" (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013).[6]

Recognition of an indigenous presence has been central to indigenous struggles in El Salvador, at the level of self-perception and external perception (in relation to the state and non-indigenous people). Specifically, there is an element of self-recognition as indigenous that is involved in the process of identity construction. Self-identified indigenous and non-indigenous people in El Salvador acknowledge that they have certain indigenous roots. Indeed, the boundaries between

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[6] It is worth mentioning that according to contemporary indigenous movements that are also proponents of the *buen vivir* cosmovision, "well-being is only possible within a community (Gudynas 2011, 441). This is not something that was highlighted to me during this interview. I did take note, however, of the importance of "community" that was implicitly stated in this instance.

indigenous and non-indigenous are unclear and may even shift depending on people's contexts (Tilley 2005, 56). However, while most people encountered during the course of this research see indigeneity as a distant culture which influences Salvadoran culture as a whole, some people see themselves as embodiments of indigenous culture in its fullness. As such, both self-identified indigenous and non-indigenous people have affinity to indigenous symbols, thereby making the quest for indigenous recognition all the more difficult. Still, self-identified indigenous people see indigenous symbols as being void of indigenous meaning if they are not coupled with an indigenous self-identification (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013).

Unsurprisingly, a related struggle of indigenous activists has aimed to instill indigenous pride, which would allow people who have lost their sense of indigenous identity to rediscover it and contribute to the growth of the indigenous movement (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013; CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). Indeed, the notion of self-perception is further complicated given that according to certain indigenous activists, many people in El Salvador may not perceive themselves as indigenous because they are not aware of their indigenous identity (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013). According to this activist, the indigenous movement's success will not depend on another foreign or state-led project; it will have everything to do with self-identification and indigenous peoples themselves defining their own needs.

On the other hand, the struggle for recognition is also evident at the level of external perceptions, whereby indigenous people seek recognition from Salvadorans at large and from the state. This is a major challenge in a country where the large majority of people identify as mestizo (Tilley 2005, 532). Usually, even indigenous people seeking the recognition of their ethnic uniqueness

do not possess certain visual or linguistic identifiers that people associate with being "ethnic"

from the outside, with the exception of select remote areas where older women have retained

Náhuat dress and language (Tilley 2005, 533). To some extent, overt displays of "indigeneity"

happen most often in the public realm as a performance (for example, at special holidays, public

rituals and demonstrations), reflecting ways in which indigenous people have aligned themselves

with the indigenous movement (Tilley 2002, 546). External perceptions of indigeneity have

played a critical role in shaping attitudes towards indigenous peoples, and in El Salvador, there

are very few people who most would consider as possessing truly "ethnic" characteristics that

validate their claims to indigenous distinctiveness, again, with the exception of elderly people

who may still speak Náhuat and wear traditional clothing (most people I spoke to see themselves

and others in El Salvador as being mestizos) (Tilley 2005, 533). Given that indigenous claims are

legitimated through others' perceptions,[7] recognition also involves a struggle at the level of

common ideas, practices and discourses, which will become more evident in the chapters that

follow.

1.1.1   Indigenous Institutional Struggle

Most recently, indigenous groups have also been involved in a struggle for institutional

recognition, broadly reflected in the calls for the adoption of the ILO's Convention 169 and the

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[7] In much of Latin America, successful indigenous mobilization has occurred through mass mobilizations through which indigenous groups achieve visibility (Brysk 2000). In Peru, for instance, the non-governmental organization activists were largely responsible for identifying an ethnic population and in ensuring they had access to education in their native languages, despite the fact that many of the people being identified as ethnic wanted access to Spanish education (Garcia 2003).

UNDRIP, which was expected at the time of my fieldwork to further set the stage for a national struggle for constitutional reform (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013; see also Tilley 2002, 543).

While the state has made some attempts to recognize indigenous peoples, efforts remain isolated and are, for the most part, politically motivated. This is based on personal observations from the 2012 elections of legislative assembly deputies, where party lines clearly delineated stances on indigenous people and issues.[8] Furthermore, both the left-leaning Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional,* FMLN) and the right-leaning Nationalist Republican Alliance (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*, ARENA) city mayors who were in power at different points over the course of this research, co-opted different indigenous people for political support and their partisan discourses revealed the interest behind this support. An independent indigenous researcher and an indigenous city councillor reiterated this politicization of indigenous causes (March 2012, Izalco).

Nationally, governments have supported institutions that promote indigenous heritage, such as the Dr. David J. Guzman National Anthropology Museum (*Museo Nacional de Antropología Dr. David J. Guzmán,* MUNA*)*, cultural centres (*Casas de la Cultura*) and the development of different archaeological sites (Tazumal, Joya de Cerén and San Andres). Moreover, the state has erected commemorative monuments, instituted indigenous roundtables and promoted a number of cultural outlets through the 2005 decree that formed the Culture Secretariat (*Secretaría de la Cultura*, Secultura) and the National Directorate for Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Diversity (*Dirección Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas y Diversidad Cultural*) (Asamblea Legislativa, Diario

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[8] See Sánchez (March 8, 2012)

Oficial, vol. 369). The state has also been involved in teaching children indigenous culture and language in certain state-run schools, including *Centro Escolar Mario Calvo Marroquín* and most recently, *Centro Escolar Pedro F. Cantor* in the Izalco core.

The institutional struggle for indigenous recognition is also present at the municipal level. For one, indigenous actors have lobbied the state for space in state institutions, as was pointed out by *cofradía*[9] members, an indigenous musician and activist, indigenous teachers, and an indigenous city councillor. Recently, there has been some conciliation. For instance, the FMLN city mayor instituted an indigenous roundtable, where various indigenous representatives would meet to provide recommendations on indigenous affairs (indigenous city councillor and member of the roundtable, Izalco, April 2012). The municipality has also provided support for indigenous cultural development by donating money for events or simply in principle (Izalco Mayor, Izalco, March 2012). Another instance of state support for indigenous people came with the establishment of a monument commemorating the 1932 massacre at El Llanito, Izalco, which the Indigenous Community Foundation of Los Izalcos (*Fundación Comunidad Indígena de los Izalcos*) erected in 2011, in collaboration with the municipal government and the national government (both under FMLN leadership). While these examples certainly reflect a step in the direction towards recognition of indigenous peoples and their demands, consideration for indigenous culture is often overlooked in the development and implementation of projects. For instance, with regards to the monument at El Llanito, little attention was given to the sacredness

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[9] An indigenous and religious organization described in detail in chapter three.

of the ground that the site of the monument represents and the concern of some, that stepping on the sacred ground is an affront to indigenous beliefs (independent researcher, Izalco, March 2012).

While there are many ongoing challenges at the personal and institutional levels for indigenous people, as documented in this introduction, there have also been successes that are bringing about recognition for indigenous people and for their collective rights. Some language schools have surfaced and despite little state or local support, there are a few committed people who are taking on the cause of linguistic rights and recognition of indigenous identities (including the teachers, musicians, artisans, and religious leaders associated with *cofradías* that I interviewed). As a result, it is likely that awareness of the movement and the causes is also increasing among Izalco residents despite the skepticism most informants have regarding indigenous people.

This level of support for indigenous programs did not always exist; indigenous children simply integrated into state-run schools in the past and their education was in Spanish (retired teacher, Izalco, April 2012). Today, however, several schools are promoting indigenous culture, as evidenced in Izalco. Yet, the institutionalization of Náhuat programs continues to be a challenge, given that little support exists from the state insofar as enabling indigenous teachers in promoting indigenous cosmovisions through appropriate training (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013). Projects aimed at promoting indigenous culture and language are often funded personally by the indigenous people running them, despite the fact that these are run by the state (if they receive funding from the state it often comes late, to the detriment of these projects). According to an indigenous activist, in order to compensate for the lack of state funding, the teachers who run language and culture programs in Santo Domingo de Guzman, fund the projects themselves by

selling food they prepare to participants (Izalco, July 2013). Similarly, as seen at the Izalco *Casa de la Cultura*, contributions from the public are often what allow staff to fund cultural activities.

As will be seen in this dissertation, the issue of teaching the Náhuat language has revealed further struggles taking place at the everyday institutional level. Náhuat teachers face prevailing negative attitudes towards what many people see as an "antiquated" culture and a "waste of time" (various *Izalqueños*, Izalco, May 2012). In short, attempts at inclusion of indigenous people and principles at the institutional level fall short of reflecting an indigenous cosmovision and have left indigenous people feeling further disenfranchised because the state is not responding to their demands (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013).

1.1.2   Researching Indigenous Identities in El Salvador

The issue of recognition goes beyond the everyday level and has also inevitably posed a practical and theoretical challenge to academics who study ethnicity in El Salvador. Unlike other cases in Latin America, who and what to study is largely elusive in El Salvador, given the absence of visual identifiers or distinct language that generally guides ethnicity scholars. This peculiarity has meant that scholars have identified different ways to study ethnicity that highly vary in their epistemological and ontological approaches. Scholars have had to identify precisely who it is they are studying, for which they have used various qualitative and quantitative tools, and this has coincided with the escalation of debates over the definition of "the indigenous" in the Salvadoran context. In other words, both in practice and academia, there is no clear definition or consensus of who should be considered indigenous.

To paraphrase Tilley (2005), a number of studies have relied on quantifications using census

data, birth records, civil registries, and ethnographic data to determine the degree to which

indigenous people continue to exist (Tilley 2005, 170-177).[10] Yet, Tilley notes that numerous

inconsistencies in record-keeping practices of ethnic origin render quantifications of the

indigenous population unreliable (Tilley 2005, 186). At best, such record-keeping practices are

highly useful in assessing perceptions of ethnicity at the time clerks recorded the data

(Tilley 2005, 186). To complicate matters further, quantitative studies are often questionable

given the political environment in the country, because of the perceptions that certain groups

have an interest in inflating or undermining the indigenous presence (indigenous activist, Izalco,

July 2013).

Nevertheless, research on indigenous identities has been dominated by a desire to identify an

indigenous *population* quantitatively regardless of the political motivation (for example, to prove

or discredit indigenous claims). In summary, whereas the 2007 state census placed the

indigenous population at 0.2 percent (República de El Salvador, Censo De Población Y Vivienda

2007), other studies estimate that the indigenous population reaches 10 and 12 percent

(Lara-Martinez in Schultze-Jena 2010; Unidad Regional de Asistencia Técnica, RUTA 2003).

The different numbers are easily explained by the various methodologies used to identify

indigenous people, the implications of which are explored in more detail in the following

chapter. Indeed, the elusiveness of ethnicity and who qualifies as indigenous for Salvadorans has

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[10] Attempting to quantify indigenous people is not a new exercise in El Salvador and historically, quantifications of indigenous people have had different (political) motives. On the one hand, indigenous advocates have attempted to demonstrate to the state that there remains an indigenous influence in the country (RUTA). On the other hand, state quantifications tend to undermine the indigenous presence in favour of the mestizo nation (República de El Salvador, Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2007).

certainly affected how researchers conduct their studies and reflects some of the debates

happening around the topic of ethnicity and indigeneity across the globe, as discussed further in

the next chapter.

1.2   *"La Lucha Contra la Invisibilidad"* (The Struggle Against Invisibility)

In the midst of narratives that (re)assert the homogenous mestizo nature of Salvadoran society

and the decline of indigenous populations, a number of indigenous individuals from Izalco have

taken it upon themselves to "combat" what they refer to as the "invisibility" of indigenous

peoples in El Salvador ("*la lucha contra la invisibilidad de los pueblos indígenas"*) (indigenous

activist, Izalco, July 2013). During the course of this research, I encountered individuals who are

(re)discovering their indigenous identities in ways that promote alternative worldviews to the

dominant ethno-centric paradigms that have dominated state and national discourses. These

indigenous individuals are often active in transmitting their indigenous worldview to other

people who like themselves have embraced their ethnic identities. These cosmovisions or

worldviews tend to differ from views that adhere to nationalist paradigms, the latter of which

homogenize the nation and contribute to the invisibility of indigenous peoples. Indeed, according

to indigenous actors, at the heart of indigenous struggles stands a "different cosmovision" that

seeks to promote "a different paradigm" between humans and their environments (CCNIS

activist, San Salvador, July 2013). Even as some individuals experience their indigenous

identities through colonial institutions such as the Catholic Church, they continue to view their

indigeneity as central to their collective identities, thereby challenging official discourses of the

Catholic Church and of the Salvadoran state. While indigenous peoples' visions, objectives and

methods of engagement are often fragmented and despite their presumed low number (in terms

of those who self-identify as indigenous), they nevertheless share a sense of solidarity as they promote the preservation of native languages, cultural heritages and collective rights. Therefore, as indigenous actors promote indigenous consciousnesses and transmit their traditions and belief systems to people across different social strata, they are also becoming political actors in the indigenous struggle.

Moreover, outside of El Salvador there is a growing indigenous presence resulting from the prominence of indigenous issues at the international level, from which indigenous actors in El Salvador are benefitting (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). Indigenous individuals and groups are aligning themselves with other indigenous organizations, such as the Central American Indigenous Council (*Consejo Indígena de Centro America*, CICA) and the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (*Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Americas*, ECMIA), and participating in various fora that are bringing attention to the indigenous cause. These groups share knowledge with each other about common causes and strategies of contestation (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). The fact that Salvadoran indigenous groups have "borrowed" certain concepts, namely that of *buen vivir*[11] is reflective of a new way of conducting international affairs (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). According to this same informant, how indigenous people are interacting and collaborating with other indigenous individuals and groups transgresses the "imaginary" boundaries that have been imposed by states (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). To him, the world is borderless, and as such, sharing of ideas should not be constrained by national boundaries (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). Instead, he is content knowing that the concept that indigenous

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[11] Simply put, *buen vivir* refers to living well or in harmony with others and with nature (Walsh 2010, 5). I define this concept and describe its nuances in more detail in the literature review.

counterparts are using elsewhere in *Abya Yala*[12] can help indigenous people in El Salvador to

frame their cause (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013).[13] The indigenous people

interviewed for this research are therefore not merely promoting a new paradigm in terms of

human-human relations and human-environment relations; they are also promoting a new

paradigm in which different actors interact with one another outside of state boundaries and in

the way that these actors relate with the state.

Despite these accomplishments, the indigenous actors I have interviewed continue to feel

disempowered and marginalized at the decision-making levels, as this research will further

demonstrates. Indigenous people face discrimination at the everyday level when people mock

their beliefs or see their causes as antiquated and in need of becoming modernized (indigenous

school principal, Izalco, March 2012). They face discrimination when people frame their

identities in terms of the past without any present saliency. They are also subject to institutional

discrimination, given the ways that state officials shape indigenous demands in a manner that

downplays the political aspects of the indigenous movement and relegates indigenous claims to

cultura, meaning traditions with no political saliency (based on conversation with state officials,

Izalco, April and July 2012). The claims of indigenous organizations continue to be disregarded,

as evidenced in the ongoing struggle towards El Salvador's ratification of Convention 169 of the

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[12] The term that indigenous actors are using to refer to America as a way of decolonizing the term.

[13] A study recently described a case of cross border exchanges between Mapuche peoples living in Chile and Argentina. According to Warren (2013), there is a sentiment of belonging among the Chile and Argentina Mapuche peoples that transgresses state borders. The idea that exchanges do not conform to traditional state boundaries is significant and shows palpably how indigenous nation-building is occurring outside of traditional state boundaries. As Dunbar-Ortiz (2007) notes, state borders are a post-colonial construction (88). The idea of a borderless world is something that some indigenous people long for. In Dunbar-Ortiz's words: "…it is important to consider the importance of the pan-Indian, even-pan-indigenous movement that has emerged during the past thirty-five years… For some, there is a concept of a stateless, borderless hemisphere, within which autonomous, self-reliant ethnic entities, manifesting many cultures, speaking many languages, lived peacefully side by side" (88).

ILO, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and until recently, the Constitution for the formal recognition of indigenous people (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). According to this CCNIS activist who participated in the working group for constitutional reform, there had been little progress in the area of formal recognition of indigenous people and indigenous rights, and at the time of this research, the UN Declaration had been approved by a state working group, but because of internal disagreements about the wording of certain clauses, it had not been ratified (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). Indeed, "the struggle continues" or "*la lucha sigue*," as Nansin, an indigenous activist reminded me (Izalco, July 2013).

1.3   Research Question and Argument

The research question guiding this dissertation is: How do people understand and experience indigeneity in Izalco and what does this reveal about the politics of ethnicity? This research question is critical to understanding indigenous expressions without limiting my analysis to people who would be traditionally considered "indigenous" because they project certain "ethnic" characteristics. This then allows me to surmount the theoretical stalemate in the study of indigeneity in the Salvadoran context. It also allows me the flexibility to trace the concept of indigeneity to understand how people, both indigenous and non-indigenous, are giving meaning to indigeneity vis-à-vis indigenous actors, mestizo society, and the mestizo state and nation. By conceptualizing the peculiarities of the indigenous experiences in Izalco, I also provide a starting point for future research that will position the Salvadoran experience within the global indigenous movement.

My first argument is that to better understand indigeneity in Izalco, it is more effective to trace the *concept* of indigeneity rather than focusing on the people. This is in line with Brubaker's (2002) constructivist critique of "groupism," which is the tendency to use designations to collectively identify an ethnic group without problematizing the lack of internal homogeneity (170). As a constructivist, Brubaker argues, "[e]thnicity, race and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded and enduring 'groups' encourages us to do—but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms" (167). When looking at indigeneity as a concept (or a category in Brubaker's terms), it becomes clear that what is at play in Izalco is what Mignolo (2007) refers to as "coloniality" (450). The colonial discourse, perpetuated by various actors and institutions, has attributed a fixed meaning over time to the category 'indigenous'. But the very content of this category is now being disputed, as new actors are attempting to change the meaning of 'indigenous' and 'indigeneity'. In other words, one of the major obstacles for the indigenous movement is the pervasiveness of colonial relations in various spheres of life and in various forms, as described in the empirical chapters that follow.

My second argument is that people in Izalco tend to understand indigeneity within the spectrum of ritualistic practices, discourses, appearances and languages that are rooted in the past. Presently, however, archetypal understandings of indigeneity that figure in public discourses and practices are starting to conflict with the experiences of indigeneity and are revealing struggles over the parameters of such indigeneity. By exploring their cosmovisions, language and thought, indigenous people are starting to re-define what constitutes as "indigenous," giving present meaning to their indigenous identities and challenging narratives that treat indigeneity as a

remnant of Salvadoran national identity. As indigenous people explore their indigenous identities, however, they are also met with opposition from people with deeply rooted skepticism towards indigenous people and their claims.

1.4   Outline of Chapters

The first part of this dissertation contextualizes the research. Accordingly, chapters two and three provide the theoretical and methodological foundations for the research. These chapters shed light on the implications and limitations of researching ethnicity in El Salvador. The fourth chapter, on the other hand, provides an overview of Izalco's history, while paying close attention to the 1932 massacre.

Chapter five is the first empirical chapter. In it, I analyze *Día de la Cruz* celebrations to discuss three distinct experiences of indigeneity that demonstrate how a conceptual approach exposes relations of coloniality that go beyond ethnic cues. In chapter six, I continue probing the concept of indigeneity by looking at silenced discourses through storytelling practices. Specifically, this chapter looks at narratives and stories relating indigenous supernatural experiences. This chapter reveals how at the everyday level, people tend to favour rationality and modernity to the detriment of indigenous thoughts and ideas about reality. In chapter seven, I examine how indigenous portrayals (images, performances and visual symbols) are contributing to unitary or homogenizing ideas of indigeneity. Indigenous portrayals in Izalco (and elsewhere in El Salvador) promote conceptions of indigenous people that are feminine, dressed in traditional clothing, passive and dying. When people diverge from these standards, they compromise their legitimacy as indigenous. Finally, in chapter eight, I examine how visibility has been contingent

on market economy participation, as reflected in the tourism industry. Specifically, this chapter examines how the market economy favours certain indigenous representations through tourism campaigns and Náhuat language promotion. In this chapter, I analyze one of the rationales used when individuals explore their indigenous identities; namely, because it is profitable. As such, this chapter reveals that people generally support indigenous representations insofar as they are valuable, which further reinforces modernity and markets.

In the ninth and final chapter, I conclude the dissertation and examine the implications of indigenous practices, representations and social interactions in Izalco. I also explore the impacts that local indigenous politics might have on the indigenous movement in El Salvador and on the study of ethnic relations.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The growing influence and visibility of indigenous actors in Latin American politics has been studied extensively. Otero (2003) states that "more books were published about the Indian question between 1994 and 1999 than during the rest of the twentieth century" (249). This was largely due to the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. The mere volume of the research, which attempts to describe, contextualize and explain recent indigenous mobilization, is a testament to the complexity of the issue at hand. In this chapter, I provide an overview of key findings in Latin America to position the Salvadoran experience within the broader umbrella of Latin American indigenous studies. In considering the theoretical challenges evidenced in El Salvador, I also demonstrate how this case study can inform other contexts on the utility of beliefs, perceptions, values, institutions, and meaning-making in social inquiry.

2.1   Theoretical Problem

Specifically, the case in Izalco presents a theoretical challenge in the study of indigeneity. More than demonstrating how indigenous people and groups are asserting their identity, the main challenge lies in parsing indigeneity and ideas about the existence or absence of indigenous people. As Tilley (2005) puts it, El Salvador is the site of "a metaconflict – that is, a contest among rivals to define the very nature of the conflict, or whether any conflict exists at all." In other words, the metaconflict concerns "[d]ifferent and competing ideas about 'what is an Indian'" and whether Indians exist at all (Tilley 2005, 15-6). More precisely, she uses metaconflicts in the context of Rwandan Hutus and Tutsis to describe situations where ethnic

factions questioned "the very nature of the groups themselves" (15). As is to be expected in instances of ethnic conflict, in Izalco, defining who is an Indian is "emotionally and politically charged" (16).

In El Salvador, there is a significant divergence between the numbers that the state has produced and the numbers that indigenous advocates have produced in terms of the size of the indigenous population. According to the 2007 state census, the indigenous population in El Salvador amounted to 0.2 percent out of 5.7 million Salvadorans (República de El Salvador, Censo De Población Y Vivienda 2007). In contrast to state numbers, according to a collaborative report between National Culture and Arts Council (*Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y el Arte*, CONCULTURA), the World Bank, and indigenous groups, indigenous peoples account for 10 to 12 percent of the Salvadoran population (RUTA 2013, 13). Lara-Martinez (in Schultze-Jena 2010) corroborates these figures, stating that 10 percent of the population in El Salvador is indigenous (1).

The difference between these quantifications is due in part to the criteria that people used to identify themselves. The state census asked two questions from which they determined the number of indigenous people in the country: "Based on your ancestors and/or customs (habitual practices), do you consider yourself as originating from an indigenous people group? Which one?" (*¿De acuerdo a sus antepasados y/o costumbres usted se considera de origen de algun pueblo indígena? ¿Cual?*) (Ministerio de Economía 2006, 319). Following the census, indigenous people and representatives of indigenous groups expressed their concerns over the way that the state determined the presence of indigenous identities and questioned the methods of inquiry.

Activists argued that limiting the survey to two questions to determine ethnic identity made it problematic because the emphasis was on belonging based on race, origin and ancestry.[14] Indigenous advocates called for a more inclusive census question which would have allowed people to define themselves as indigenous more broadly. Alternative wordings included: According to your ancestors, traditions and customs, do you consider yourself a member of an indigenous people group? (*¿De acuerdo a sus antepasados, tradiciones y costumbres usted ¿se considera miembro de un pueblo indígena?*).[15] In contrast to the state census, the RUTA report took into account traditions which differ from customs (habitual practices). Traditions refer to having ancestral beliefs and spirituality, wearing certain pieces of clothing, being recognized as indigenous by other people, having artisanal skills specific to a region, transmitting regional oral traditions, and demonstrating reverence towards the Earth as reflected in indigenous cosmovisions (RUTA 2013, 14; CCNIS 2013, 7). In summary, at the core of these quantifications lies a different understanding of indigeneity. For indigenous advocates, determining ethnic identity goes beyond race and habits – it also includes *traditions* that have been passed on over generations.

Another example the difficulty associated to indigenous quantification relates to the recent constitutional struggle that activists mentioned. At the time of this research CCNIS organizations had recently moved a motion in the legislative assembly to officially recognize indigenous peoples by amending article 63 of the Constitution (Asamblea Legislativa, Dictamen no. 135,

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[14] See Martinez (May 30, 2008), and Benítez (May 30, 2008), where in both of these articles, indigenous people express their discontent with the wording of the census question because of its limited scope of ethnic identity.

[15] See Grégori (July 2, 2007), which contains the wording that Betty Perez, CCNIS representative, and other stakeholders proposed for the census.

Comisión de Legislación y Puntos Constitucionales).[16] CCNIS organizations urged the state to

adopt measures to allow indigenous people to maintain and develop their ethnic and cultural

identity, cosmovision, values and spirituality through constitutional reform. While the legislative

assembly approved the proposal for constitutional reform on April 15, 2012, deputies delayed the

ratification of the proposed change (CCNIS 2013). According to one informant who participated

in the drafting of the proposal and in the consultation process, a major obstacle preventing the

constitutional amendment from being ratified was the choice of words used to describe

indigenous individuals (Izalco, July 2013). The fact that the article calls for the protection of the

indigenous *peoples* (or *pueblos*), rather than the indigenous *population* (or *población*) was at the

centre of this debate. As was the case with the census, the informant noticed that a "population"

was subject to quantification as defined by the state (strictly through racial terms). As previously

discussed, according to state calculations, the indigenous population is approximately 0.2 percent

and as a result, those who would benefit from state recognition were very few. The term

"population" was therefore unacceptable for indigenous organizations because in my informant's

opinion, the state tends to downplay the indigenous presence.

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[16] As it stands, Article 62 of the constitution states that Autochthonous languages spoken within the national
territory form part of the cultural heritage and shall be preserved, diffused and respected ("*Las lenguas autóctonas
que se hablan en el territorio nacional forman parte del patrimonio cultural y serán objeto de preservación,
difusión y respeto*"). Furthermore, Article 63 presently states that the country's artistic, historical, and archaeological
richness is a national treasure that the state must protect and preserve ("*La riqueza artística, histórica y
arqueológica del país forma parte del tesoro cultural salvadoreño, el cual queda bajo la salvaguarda del Estado y
sujeto a leyes especiales para su conservación*").

How can the concept of "peoples," which has been the preferred term of indigenous actors in El Salvador, help to frame indigenous identities and their experiences?[17] The problems with the concept of population have been raised in other countries, where it is seen to be "a tactic, or technique of rule… [that] displaces not just specific Indigenous modes of governance and land tenure but the authority of Indigenous peoples to decide for themselves how they should be governed" (Rifkin 2014. 151). In essence, Rifkin criticizes the notion of population because it enables the state to assert and justify its control over a given territory and a group of racialized subjects (161). This is a concept that I explore further, as it relates to initiatives aimed at quantifying the indigenous population in El Salvador (section 2.1.3).

However, according to my informants, protecting the rights of "peoples" would allow recognition and self-identification based on criteria that the state neglects in its definition of indigenous people. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of protecting indigenous peoples regardless of the size of the population is also at the core of the debate, precisely because indigenous groups are still in a stage of raising awareness of indigenous causes and building pride in indigenous individuals. The term "peoples" implies a broadened scope of indigenous identities and relies on self-identification through cultural re-discovery (indigenous educator, Izalco, July 2013).[18] Consequently, the distinction between indigenous "peoples" and

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[17] To clarify, the debate about the use of the term "peoples" versus "population" happened between the state and civil society within El Salvador. The indigenous stance was that focusing on peoples would allow for broader indigenous identification, referring to the various categories that indigenous advocates often use for the purpose of self-identification. The more nuanced approach stood in opposition to the rigid identification categories that the state uses, which rely on lineage. Personally, I found this debate between actors intriguing and compelling. Having investigated this further, I found that many in the academic community also find problems with the notion of population in a governmentality sense, as it reflects state attempts at making people legible. People then become statistics which the state manages on the illusion or presumption that groups are homogenous.

[18] Other indigenous groups have emphasized the distinction between peoples and population. See "Indígenas: ¿pueblo, población o minoría?"(August 9, 2006)

"population" represents an important theme at the practical level because it supports indigenous actors in their awareness-raising efforts, through which they substantiate their constitutional claims. What is evident from this brief discussion on the tendencies to portray indigenous peoples in quantitative or essentialized terms is that they often cause many indigenous people to feel invisible, given that many of them would not be considered indigenous by state standards (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013).

When researchers account for a broader range of indigenous people through self-identification, they do not fully explain how people experience indigeneity, as evidenced in this dissertation. As reflected in the example of constitutional reform, indigenous groups in El Salvador are least interested in a quantification of indigenous peoples using racial and essentializing criteria. In other words, they are more concerned with identification through self-representation that comes from their ancestral traditions and customs, relationship with the earth, and affinity to indigenous cosmovisions. Given that the purpose of this research is to attempt to provide an account of the way in which people construct notions of indigeneity, I consider it inappropriate to simply examine the indigenous population. This is in essence what self-identified indigenous people and their advocates hope to convey through the focus on self-representations, as they struggle to be recognized as an indigenous *people* rather than a population that essentializes them and renders their experiences invisible (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013).

To be clear, identifying who is an Indian in Izalco is a difficult task that is not aligned with the objectives of this dissertation. To identify Indians is to obscure how people experience indigeneity. Tilley (2005) notes that to effectively understand the question of indigeneity in

El Salvador, one must look beyond the people who may or may not embody ethnic characteristics:

> Indianness—'indigenous-ness,' indigeneity—is a discourse, in the sense described by Michel Foucault: something that seems to have objective existence (here, Indians) but which is actually a *set of ideas and practices about that object*: the body of beliefs, perceptions, values, institutions, and social relations strategically assembled over time to compose Indianness (18-19).

As demonstrated later in this chapter, the study of indigenous identities has often involved observing "ethnic" characteristics, such as language, dress, and territory in order to examine a given ethnic group. This is problematic in Izalco because identifiers usually understood as being indicative of an indigenous population are not present in this particular case. Alternatively, it may be more accurate to examine experiences of indigeneity from a constructivist lens, which would allow me to engage with expressions of indigeneity through external identifiers but would not be limited to such identifiers. This stance positions my research for a more fruitful analysis that also accounts for instances in which people who, though they may not necessarily self-identify as indigenous, have experienced indigeneity to some extent. In essence, it is the study of how a concept operates through beliefs, perceptions, values, institutions, and social relations, which contribute to understandings of indigeneity, define indigeneity, and shape indigenous expressions (including indigenous expressions evidenced within the indigenous movement).

2.2   Different Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Indigeneity

2.2.1   Defining Indigenous Identities

Despite the prominent use of the terms "indigenous" and "indigenous peoples," there is much

discussion about the definition of the terms, as well as their theoretical and practical implications

(Field 1994; Barnard 2006; Lee 2006; Kuper 2003, including the subsequent replies following

the article). Most recently, defining the parameters of indigenous peoples has been influenced by

scholars who have moved away from primordialist conceptions of identity towards definitions

based on social construction and self-representations (Gil-White 1999; Brysk 2000). In many

ways, defining indigenous identities has moved away from primordialist methods that use

biological race, ancestry, and visual and linguistic identifiers to denote those who are indigenous,

and who assert their cultural distinctiveness. Stavenhagen (2013) states that "[i]t is a well known

fact that biological factors do not account for the differences" between groups, as demonstrated

between groups that may appear ethnically similar, such as mestizos and Indians (5). In

Stavenhagen's words:

> ...we are not dealing with two races in the genetic sense of the term. It is true, of
> course, that in a general way the so-called Indian population answers to biologic
> traits corresponding to the Amerinds and equally, that the so-called Ladino
> population shows the biologic traits of the Caucasoids. But even though Ladinos
> tend to identify with whites, in fact they are generally mestizo. It is the social and
> cultural factors which are taken into account to distinguish one population from
> the other (5).

This characterization of ethnicity significantly diverges from studies that once examined ethnic

identity on the basis of linguistic or visually-identifiable, primordialist traits in Latin America

(Adams 1956; Adams 1957).[19] While a great deal of academic literature has moved away from essentialist methods of framing identities, many works continue to see indigeneity as being inscribed in physiological characteristics, language, tradition, or observable characteristics, as used in Gandelman, Ñopo and Ripani (2011).

Nevertheless, when referring to indigenous peoples, it is generally understood to mean "natives, aborigines, tribes, autochthons, pueblos originarios (original people), and many other labels that are meaningful at the national or regional levels, such as Indians, First Nations, and Adivasis" (Stavenhagen 2013, 46). It is also understood that "indigenous" also implies a collective experience of "peoples under colonial domination" (Stavenhagen 2013, 46). For the most part, scholars and practitioners' definitions of "indigenous" and "indigenous peoples" allude to the colonial experience of peoples in different parts of the world, including, but not limited to North and South America, Australia and Africa (Stavenhagen 2013, 46). However, as Stavenhagen (2013) further points out, consensus regarding the definition of "indigenous" and "indigenous peoples" has not yet been reached; among the reasons for this is the different interpretations of the terms and the different contexts in which the terms are applied (46-47). As Stavenhagen (2013) notes, there is a great deal of "ambiguity surrounding the definition of 'indigenous'" (46).

Various authors rely on the UN's guidelines to define indigeneity (see Hinch and Butler 2010, and Gandelman et al. 2011, for examples of works that begin their analysis using the UN

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[19] This is certainly the case in Central America, where studies on indigeneity have been highly influenced by Adams (1956), who carried out extensive fieldwork to determine the ethnic compositions of the Central American territory. Adams' attempt to shed light on the social, economic, demographic and political characteristics of the surviving indigenous populations is to be commended because of the intention and breadth of the work carried out. However, his work merely relies on external representations of indigeneity (dress and language), does not problematize what it is to be indigenous, and does not take into account self-identification beyond primordial understandings of identity.

definition).[20] Yet, it is important to emphasize that the UN has not officially defined what "indigenous" means; their guidelines simply "outline the characteristics of indigenous peoples" (United Nations Development Group's Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues 2009, 8). Broadly speaking this means that they rely on Cobo's definition of identities. According to Cobo, characteristics of indigenous peoples include: people with tribal allegiance with a distinct social, cultural, and economic structure as the dominant culture; people who are "regarded" as being descendants of peoples who inhabited a given territory at the time of conquest; as well as people who self-identify as indigenous (and tribal) (United Nations Development Group's Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues 2009, 8). As such, one of the commonly used codifications to define "indigenous" is by using the existing institutional framework. In this manner, Butler and Hinch (2007) define indigeneity on the basis of identifiable characteristics, such that individuals have distinct and traditional language, institutions, traditions, modes of production, as well as a deep connection to their place of origin (5). Nonetheless, they offer a working definition that is confined to the institutional framework.

The ambiguities that surround the term "indigenous peoples" also come from its different usages, as demonstrated below (Lee 2006). When it comes to the different uses of the term "indigenous," Lee (2006) points out that the different ways in which academics, practitioners, and states use the term is at the core of the theoretical ambiguities surrounding it and the political implications that follow (458). Lee (2006) also reflects on the ambiguity of the term both in theory and in practice, but concludes that despite the unproblematized uses of the term "indigenous," the

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[20] The UN does not have an official definition of "indigenous peoples." What the UN does offer is a set of guidelines to address indigenous issues (see United Nations Development Group's Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues 2009).

instrumentalization of indigeneity can be useful because it provides the means for people to organize and make collective demands (458).

On the other hand, Kuper (2003) is among the critics of the use of the term "indigenous" as a social category and is against its instrumentalization because of the ambiguities the term carries at the theoretical and practical levels (390). According to Kuper (2003), "rhetoric of the indigenous-peoples movement rests on widely accepted premises that are nevertheless open to serious challenge...The initial assumption is that descendants of the original inhabitants of a country should have privileged rights, perhaps even exclusive rights, to its resources" (390). Furthermore, Kuper (2003) argues that while discursively the term "indigenous" has replaced terms that once evoked fear or that had pejorative connotations (such as primitive, tribal, hunting, or nomadic), the meanings surrounding the term have not been supplanted (389). Kuper (2003) suggests that indigenous peoples and indigenous rights "distract attention from real local issues" (395).

Recently, researchers have emphasized ethnic identities as categories of self-identification that people construct based on subjective and inter-subjective meanings (Brysk 2000; Weismantel, 2001). Rather than portraying indigeneity as static, these authors demonstrate that the understanding of indigenous identity varies across time and space. In other words, how indigenous people define their indigeneity changes on the basis of their economic, gender, political and geographical contexts (Colin 2013, 494; Little 2005b, 80; Radcliffe 2010, 300; Garcia 2003, 71). It is in this sense that Rasch remarks that in Guatemala, as in other contexts, "neither 'indígena', 'Maya' nor 'Ladino' are fixed categories... indigeneity is constantly negotiated" (Rasch 2012, 81). The notion that ethnic categories are not fixed, but rather in flux is

especially helpful. Specifically, while largely recognized by Guatemalan society and in spite of

the racism that plagues its society and its institutions (Brett 2011; Rasch 2012; Scull 2009),

indigenous peoples in Guatemala have undergone several periods of self-definition. Warren

(1998) observes with respect to the Pan-Mayan movement, an attempt at uniting "Mayas across

language groups and communities to build a national movement", that self-definition preceded

political mobilization (171). According to Warren, an indigenous person in Guatemala described

indigenous people as "street children who did not know their parents and therefore could not

plan for the future" (169). Warren notes that after overcoming the sense of identity loss, there

was a period of defining the "future direction for Mayan nation-building and concrete priorities

in education, legal issues, and self-administration" (169).

The construction of (inter)subjective meanings is also evidenced in Brazil, where the Tapeba

people went through a period of re-discovery of their language, customs, and cosmovision after

having "lost" their identity (Piorsky Aires 2012). The author describes how the Tapeba used

cultural symbols as part of their struggle for recognition (festivals, music, religious rituals, and

appearance) in order to prove to the rest of the population that they were indeed indigenous,

thereby defining the parameters of their indigenous identities. Hence, indigeneity was defined on

the basis of articulations of constructed notions of "indigeneity" as related to the interests of the

perceived ethnic group (Piorsky Aires 2012, 322).

In yet another case, Latorre (2013) examines the construction of ethnic identities through the

mobilization against the development of the shrimp-farming industry and the displacement of

mangroves in coastal Ecuador. In this case, fostering cooperation with groups in neighbouring

regions required a re-definition of ethnic boundaries, which further contributed to the

re-imagination of ethnicity in the entire region (82). Radcliffe (2010) shows that the process of

cartographically mapping indigenous identities has also contributed to the re-imagining of

indigenous identities in Ecuador (300). Radcliffe notes that while maps were instrumental for the

state in developing and implementing policies aimed at indigenous peoples as well as

engendering nationalist sentiments, they also "became a component of the [Confederation of

Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE] political project, an element of a spatial politics

to show ethnic groups' widespread distribution across the nation-state. As a meaningful item, it

demonstrated 'who we are, where we are in civil society', in the words of an indigenous leader"

(300).

There are various other examples illustrating how indigenous identities (re)construct their ideas

of indigeneity in Latin America, whether depicting specific moments in history or the ongoing

process of identity definition. What is central to these cases is the way that indigenous

populations are re-discovering meaning from within. In Latin America, indigenous movements

have come to challenge dominant perceptions of the ethnic, cultural, and political composition of

states, which until recently had been largely viewed as ethnically homogenous (both within and

outside of the state) (Le Bot, 2009).

2.2.2   Institutional Approaches to Indigenous Politics

A prominent stream of indigenous research deals with the role of ethnic mobilization in the

process of democratization – that is, how political actors organize for inclusion and participation

in state institutions (Munk 2004, 438; Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor 2012, 18). For instance,

Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor (2012) look at the constitutional amendments through which

indigenous people in various South American countries have acquired state recognition and inclusion, a significant shift in Latin American politics (Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor 2012, 18). In Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia, "constitutions were perceived as instruments to reconfigure the relationships between the state and citizens, by broadening participation rights and enshrining new social and collective rights" (Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor 2012, 19). Particularly in Bolivia and Ecuador, altering the constitution meant that the concept of a multicultural and multi-ethnic society became institutionalized, which altered perceptions of the composition of the state (Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor 2012, 21).

Within the scope of struggles towards mobilization for democratic representation, Van Cott (2005) studies the successes (and failures) of political party formation – that is, "organization[s] authorized to compete in elections, the majority of whose leaders and members identify themselves as belonging to a nondominant ethnic group, and whose electoral platform includes among its central demands programs of an ethnic or cultural nature" (3). In another work, Van Cott (2003) also seeks to understand the rise of indigenous actors through political party formation around ethnic cleavages in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru and Argentina. The author investigates accounts of indigenous population size, demographics, party system, electoral system and electoral environment as factors that contributed to indigenous political party formation (20). She demonstrates that the success of indigenous political parties is not contingent on a high indigenous population. She provides the example of Venezuela and Colombia to illustrate the point that successful organization occurred despite the lower numbers of indigenous people. Namely, in "Colombia and Venezuela, where the indigenous proportion of the population does not exceed 3 percent, ethnic parties elected governors in several states and achieved representation in the national legislature..." (2). Conversely, the author also looks to

Peru, as an example where a higher indigenous population (as high as 47% according to some estimates) did not successfully organize. Indigenous peoples in Peru were less organized than in Venezuela and Colombia, in part as a result of the institutional space that restricted association and made it difficult for parties to consolidate support (Van Cott 2003, 140). Additionally, classist mentalities permeated political association efforts and eclipsed ethnic claims (Van Cott 2003, 141).

Yashar (2005) also looks at the relationship between ethnic cleavage formation and mobilization in Bolivia (60-70% indigenous) and Ecuador (30-38% indigenous), providing comparisons to other countries with high indigenous concentration (Guatemala, 45-60% indigenous; Peru, 30-40% indigenous; Mexico, 12-14% indigenous). The author argues that in places where effective indigenous mobilization occurred (most notably in Ecuador and Bolivia), the "politization of ethnic cleavages" was enabled by the disruption to local autonomy that had been fostered by corporatist regimes (and which was later challenged by the neoliberalization of states) (21, 57). Corporatist regimes strived to turn Indians into peasants and "unwittingly institutionalized autonomous spaces for indigenous people" which favoured organization (60). Yashar adds that largely "unmonitored local spaces were created where indigenous people could sustain their local indigenous identities and forms of governance"; these communities eventually "grew beyond the de facto reach of the state" (60). According to the author, indigenous mobilization was further helped by the existence of networks across ethnic groups, which permitted the means for association beyond regional identification (i.e. identifying not just with a local community, but as *Indian*) (71).

Institutionalist frameworks certainly help to explain the important role that interactions between the state and indigenous groups play in shaping ethnic identities and the pivotal role of timing in the success of indigenous mobilizations. While this is important to consider in the case of Izalco, my main concerns are first, what happens outside of state institutions, and second, the construction of identities. In other words, the *formation* of ethnic cleavages is often taken for granted in institutionalist literature and indigeneity is reduced to a functional definition based on ancestry (Van Cott 2005, 2). One tendency in institutionalist literature is to treat linguistic and geographical categories as indigenous markers without problematizing the concept of indigeneity (for examples see Jackson 2002; Yashar 2005; Van Cott 2003; Rice and Van Cott 2006; Levi 2002; Butler and Hinch 2007; Bossen 2005; Goldin 2005). Looking at spoken languages or inhabited territory, although helpful to understand indigenous organization and mobilization, do not fully explain how indigenous identities form, especially when dealing with nascent identity social movements.

Furthermore, when Yashar (2005) explains the likelihood that an indigenous movement will arise, she implies that there is a clearly defined and recognized indigenous population coupled with the right structural environment. One of the issues that most surprises Yashar is the relationship between indigenous population size and the likelihood of effective mobilization along ethnic lines. For example, when does a high/low concentration of indigenous people yield positive results and when does it not. This focus on population size means that she is less explicit about how conceptions of ethnicity come to be in the first place. She also treats "indigenous" as a fixed category without considering how meanings around the concept of "indigenous" and "Indian" change across time and region. To further exemplify, the author grapples with the case of Peru, where there was no effective indigenous movement along ethnic lines (comparable to

that of Bolivia and Ecuador). Despite sharing the same structural factors as its neighbouring countries, including a high indigenous population, Peru stands as an anomaly. This is because a high indigenous population is expected to generate effective indigenous mobilization (Yashar 2005, 240). The author does offer some insight as to why the indigenous movement did not form in Peru as expected. The reason being that certain structural factors were not present or that actors prioritized classist interests.

Similarly, Van Cott's (2003) analytical framework is useful to understand indigenous organization, but it does not fully capture the complexity of contexts where indigenous peoples feel as though they have been erased from the social consciousness. Even in dealing with the Peruvian exception, where indigenous mobilization was not comparable to neighbouring Ecuador and Bolivia, the author pre-supposes the existence of recognizable indigenous peoples (144). This is different from El Salvador's situation in that people in El Salvador are at a stage where identity recognition is at stake. Indeed, institutionalist stances take for granted the existence of ethnic parameters and seldom problematize the parameters upon which ethnic claims are founded. Accordingly, institutionalist approaches cannot fully account for the emergence of indigenous peoples and nascent movements in countries where indigenous peoples are not widely recognized, neither can they account for the process of defining individual and collective identities.

Perhaps more importantly, institutionalist approaches do not deal effectively with the colonial experience and at best reflect how the state *manages* ethnic relations, rather than critically assessing the implications of socialization into the political party system. For now, it suffices to

point out that from a decolonial perspective, which I define and discuss in more detail below, political parties reinforce discriminatory relations:

> Represented as the will for improvement, the coloniality of the modern State justifies its exercise of discriminatory and annihilating practices against forms of life deemed inferior. As part of the only valid social contract, this coloniality translates into organized politics – namely, the bloodless dispute among adversaries for the definition of the hegemonic order. Organized politics (the activities transpiring through, for example, partidos políticos, federaciones, and sindicatos) have systematically privileged ways of being identified as modern, and have discriminated against those they identified as non-modern (De la Cadena 2008, 341).

2.2.3   Quantifying Indigeneity

Within institutionalist streams, indigenous peoples have been subject to quantification. In certain instances, quantification of a population is useful because it conveys a sense of legitimacy, when it comes to protecting indigenous people and justifying state intervention (Van Cott 2005, 52; Viatori 2012, 437; De la Cadena 2008, 341). According to Garilao (1987), indigenous organizations must, in certain instances, demonstrate through their numbers that they have a certain degree of support from the general population in order to receive financing for projects (118). As seen through successful uprisings in Latin America, large-scale mobilizations have increased the visibility of indigenous people and the weight of their demands (Mendez 2010; Rus, Hernandez Castillo and Mattiace 2001; Brysk 2000). For instance, Pleyers (2013) shows that the success of the Zapatista movement was in part due to the large-scale indigenous solidarity network that emerged following the uprising (113). In other cases, quantification may provide a strategic advantage for indigenous people from which to promote indigenous issues. Brysk (2000) points out that "large numbers of Latin Americans have an indigenous or mixed heritage but do not identify themselves as culturally indigenous or live in Indian communities.

Growing Indian rights mobilization has begun to reverse this trend in some areas, increasing

ethnic identification and cultural pride as well as 'safety in numbers'" (6).

In response to indigenous quantification, I turn to theorists who question the utility of numbers in

the portrayal of social phenomena. In relation to statistical analysis, Rose (1991) states that:

> ...numbers do not merely inscribe a pre-existing reality. They constitute it.
> Techniques of inscription and accumulation of facts about 'the population', the
> 'national economy', 'poverty', render visible a domain with a certain internal
> homogeneity and external boundaries. In each case, the collection and aggregation
> of numbers participates in the fabrication of a 'clearing' within which thought and
> action can occur. Numbers here delineate 'fictive spaces' for the operation of
> government, and establish a 'plane of reality', marked out by a grid of norms, on
> which government can operate (676).

The previous quotation is from a review essay in which Rose explores the power of numbers and

quantifications. Rose notes that numbers and politics are "reciprocal and mutually constitutive"

(675). Rose further notes that numbers are a structuring and governing mechanism that have

come to order both private and public life in contemporary democracies (674). He demonstrates

that information presented as factual renders people less complex, thereby facilitating the

exercise of state power (680). According to Rose, quantifying populations occurs because states

"search for objective rules to eliminate subjective judgement" about the people within a group

and enables governments to govern on the basis of their objective knowledge (680). In analyzing

Patricia Cline Cohen's work on the reliance of numeric interpretations of American people, Rose

notes that for governments, "[knowing] the exact dimensions of heterogeneity would compensate

for the lack of homogeneity... Facts would dispel the factious spirit" (CP, p. 155). Facts, being

above factions, would illuminate that overarching realm within which the nation was to be

unified in a single moral universe" (684). In Rose's words, "[statistics], in enabling the taming

of chance, in turning a qualitative world into information and rendering it amenable to control, in

establishing the classifications by which people come to think of themselves and their choices, [appear] to be bound up with an apparatus of domination" (677). In this sense, individuals build their identities on the basis of archetypal categories that are reinforced through statistics. As such, unpredictable behaviours that fall outside of the scope of social trends are not accounted for under the precepts of statistical reasoning, which leads to the inability of statistical analysis to fully capture certain aspects of societal phenomena.

2.2.4   Materialist Approaches to Indigenous Politics

For the purpose of this thesis, I group materialist approaches into two camps with varying epistemological and ontological commitments. One approach analyzes Marxist movements and indigenous groups, focusing on the owners of the means of production and the non-owners (Wade 1997, 22). Van Cott (2005) explains that historically there has been a tight link between leftist and indigenous movements in Latin America, as part of class-based struggles of the twentieth century (37). Leftist organizations have been allies in the struggle against neoliberalism and in the struggle for wealth redistribution (Van Cott 2005, 37). On this subject, Le Bot (2005) notes the centrality of class in early indigenous mobilizations:

> The 1960s and 70s marked the gestation, birth and emergence of modern Indian movements. At this time, indigenous struggles were essentially peasant struggles. Like other peasants, Indian demands were mainly economic and social, centred on questions of land access, credit, market reform and the demand for various (state) services. The central stakes were thus agrarian reform, the conditions of production and trade, and integration into national society and the 'modern' way of life. Claims to cultural specificity did appear but tended to be marginal and closely linked to more 'generic' economic and social demands. Mobilization took place mainly under the auspices of classical labour unions or political parties, sometimes in cooperation with state (government) or ecclesiastical organizations (2).

The close links between the political left and indigenous movements has continued to exist even more recently, although contemporary indigenous movements are seeking to move "beyond Left-Right formulations" under left-leaning leadership (Escobar 2010, 6). Nevertheless, the link between the political left and indigenous actors is perhaps most evident in countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia, with the introduction of *buen vivir* into their state constitutions (Escobar 2010, 11). At this point, however, I wish to turn my attention to the Zapatista movement to discuss the intersection between materialist approaches and indigenous politics in more detail, while highlighting the eventual breaking point between indigenous actors and the political left.

Specifically, on January 1, 1994, Subcomandante Marcos led the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatisa de Liberación Nacional*, EZNL) in declaring "class warfare" on the Mexican state (Eisenstadt 2011; Washbrook 2005, 421). At the time, Zapatistas in Chiapas demanded electoral reform, government accountability, economic reform and inclusiveness of indigenous people (Washbrook 2005, 418). An important aspect of Zapatista struggles was the firm stance against neoliberal globalization, which Zapatistas argued was at the root cause of social and economic inequality and marginalization of peasants (Collier and Collier 2005, 451, 453). In the EZLN's First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (issued on December 31, 1993), the actors identified themselves and their cause in Marxist terms, as the poorest people in the land (Vanden Berghe 2005, 18).

The tight link between class-based demands and mobilization spurred attempts to ideologically situate the movement, questioning whether the Zapatista movement represented a residue from Cold War struggles or whether it reflected the dawn of a new type of movement (Vanden Berghe 2005, 19; Levi 2002, 5; Mora 2007, 75). Pitarch (2004, 96) and Vanden Berghe (2005, 21) note

that in its initial stages, EZLN discourse was consistent with twentieth century Marxist-Leninist ideology. Pitarch highlights that EZLN members described their objective as a class struggle and at least initially, there was a perception that little distinguished the Zapatista uprising from guerrilla mobilizations elsewhere in Latin America (97).

However, while Vanden Bergh (2005) reiterates the notion that the Zapatista struggle began as a class struggle, there was a breaking point with the political left rather early on (21). As negotiations with the state moved forward, there was an emphasis on the ethnic aspects of the Zapatista struggle (Pitarch 2004, 97). Washbrook also notes that the ethnic character of the Zapatista uprising has since become more evident, to the extent that Chiapas has become synonymous with indigenous struggle (Washbrook 418). Washbrook (2005) also rejects solely materialist interpretations of this event and the notion that the Zapatista uprising was aligned with traditional guerilla movements because the Zapatista support base was already involved in indigenous struggles well before the 1994 uprising (420). Likewise, Leyva Solano (2005) and Harvey (1998) highlight the ethnic character of the Zapatista movement by asserting that the indigenous cause played an intrinsic role in indigenous people supporting the Zapatista movement even prior to January 1994.

To be clear, there are other elements that help to explain the EZLN's move away from Marxist discourses. Hale (1997) also describes that by the end of the 1980s, there was a tendency to steer away from one-size-fits-all classist social movements, embracing identity politics and grassroots organization (568). Hale, among other scholars like Arturo Escobar, further notes the emergence of new kinds of social movements that are a breaking point with class-based movements (569). Garcia Rojas (2013) also notes that while Zapatista discourses were consistent with traditional

guerilla discourses, the EZLN's willingness to dialogue with the state created a space from which to engage broader social strata, which demonstrated the dawn of a new movement (31). Another breaking point with class-based politics can be observed in the theory that leftist movements have largely marginalized indigenous movements. For instance, Dunbar-Ortiz's (2007) problematizes the link between indigenous groups and the left, arguing that leftist movements have generally shut out indigenous people of their struggle, thereby distancing indigenous movements from political left movements (85). The author goes on to argue that indigenous incorporation into leftist movements is more aligned with indigenist tendencies (87). This resonates with Van Cott's (2003) observations about the relationship between the left and indigenous organizations in Peru, where class-based politics overshadowed identity-based demands (141). As Otero (2003) also states, "[a] downside of Indian participation in electoral politics, though, has been a fragmentation of their organizations that has resulted from various non-indigenous parties trying to lure Indian representatives to their ranks" (251).

For the purpose of this dissertation, it is worth noting that materialist perspectives provide important insight on the study of ethnicity in Izalco. For instance, international economic conditions of the 1930s pressured the price of coffee downwards, which arguably created class and/or ethnic tensions that led to the massacre (Lindo Fuentes, Ching and Lara Martinez 2010, 82). The 1932 massacre provides an example as well of an intersection between class and ethnicity, given the idea that social inequalities have historically contributed to tensions between ruling elites, the military and peasants/indigenous-peasants (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2010, 91). Furthermore, the perception of a state that vilified indigenous peasants as communists in order to rationalize its genocidal tactics is also worth exploring, as an intersection between class and indigeneity. I explore these tensions in more details in chapter four.

Insight from materialist theories is also important to this thesis insofar as it provides a basis for analysis of perceptions of opportunity and of economic development in relation to the tourism industry, as explored in chapter eight. Specifically, cultural Marxist perspectives have effectively explored how culture industries fit within the broader capitalist political economy (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002; Rodriguez and Murphy 1997). The idea of capitalist cultural production, can certainly serve as a starting point from which to understand the global tourism industry not simply as an economic process, but as a process that works on the basis of images and symbols that maintain the global capitalist order (Enloe 1989). From this stance, we can begin to appreciate some of the effects of the global tourism industry, which Enloe describes as "creating a new kind of dependency for poor nations," as they rely on tourism revenue for development and economic growth.

Materialist angles can also help to explain questions surrounding development and economic viability, as explored in chapter eight. Using a framework that sees the potential of tourism as a means of development, Bartholo, Delmaro et al. (2008) examine different paths to developing tourism industries in Brazil. Specifically, the authors note that while mass tourism can be socially, ecologically and economically detrimental, community tourism provides an alternative model that can engage local communities, allow them to benefit from tourism and provide a means towards sustainable development. The authors signal to a shift in how we view tourism, which "implies thinking in terms of a tourism policy that is part of a broader development policy whose focus is social inclusion – that takes cultural identity and citizenship as the basis for the effective exercise of substantive freedoms" (107). The authors take a holistic ("participative" and "situated") view of tourism to allow communities to benefit from tourism, thereby promoting a "positive" view of development that is not exploitative (110).

Moreover, Little (2005b) examines the challenges related to organization among Maya handicraft vendors in Guatemala. He demonstrates that while formal channels of organization have had little impact in protecting the rights of Maya handicraft vendors, individuals have developed informal strategies that they employ collectively in order to evade discrimination and harassment from authorities and the state in Antigua Guatemala. Vendors capitalize on the sympathy of local tourists to protect themselves and modify their selling practices (timing and location) in order to get a share of the tourist market. With respect to Mayan culture, the author argues that tourism is contributing to the preservation and "revitalization of Maya culture" (91). In terms of organization, the author argues that "increased appeal of Maya in the global political, economic, and social spheres, especially that of international tourism, has opened a space within the violent anti-Maya politics of Guatemala for them to gain a livelihood and act politically to protect their cultural and economic interests. In fact, vendors from the most war-ravaged areas of Guatemala went to Antigua to escape the violence, recognizing that the presence of large numbers of foreigners would help keep them safe" (94-95). Yet, experiences from Guatemala demonstrate that indigenous people are still profitable and while "handicrafts vendors reap [some] economic benefits from tourism, the big winners are the hotels and restaurants" (93). This means that the "colonial legacy...[which] has been recast as the nation-state becomes less concerned with handicrafts vendors as problems and more concerned with using them to attract tourists" (94).

While the studies and frameworks outlined above certainly help to frame exploitation and socioeconomic imbalance in economic relations, adopting a solely materialist framework risks treating ethnicity and racial relations in isolation of the colonial past. One of Mignolo's (2007) main critiques of materialist approaches is that they do not place enough emphasis on the

colonial experience. Given that modernity and coloniality are two articulations of the same process, Mignolo argues that "coloniality is constitutive of modernity, in the sense that there cannot be modernity without coloniality" (464). He further notes that "[a]lthough 'against' capitalism (and indirectly empire), [Karl] Marx also remains within the macro-imperial narrative because he misses the colonial mechanisms of power underlying the system he critiques" (483). Yet again, albeit using dependency theory as a starting point, Mignolo (2002) validates the concepts of core and periphery states that came out of Cardoso and Faletto's 1979 thesis to explain underdevelopment in Latin America, but goes further to suggest that examining coloniality is central to fully understand Western development and modernity. In other words, dependency theory posits that underdevelopment "derives from the relation between 'peripheral' and 'central' societies" and the structural, historical imbalance between states in the context of industrialization (16). The theory suggests that while core states specialize in the production of industrial goods, peripheral ones specialize in the production of raw materials (17). From this perspective, both core and periphery are part of a "world productive structure" in which peripheral states are "complementary and subordinate… from the standpoint of the international capitalist system" (18).

Mignolo (2002), however, takes the concept further by problematizing the ideas it contains about coloniality. He states that "'historico-structural dependency' should not be restricted to the center/periphery dichotomy. Rather, it should be applied to the very structure of the modern/colonial world-system and capitalistic economy" (62). Given that colonial relations are central to systemic relations of dependency, it is therefore crucial to dive deeper into the study of coloniality. For this reason, Marxist frameworks alone cannot explain ethnopolitical processes. The following section deals with coloniality and the gaps that decolonial frameworks have

helped to fill in relation to the study of indigenous identity politics, which can better inform indigeneity in Izalco.

2.3   Theoretical Foundations: Decolonial Approaches and *Buen Vivir*

For a number of scholars, including Mignolo (2006), Walsh (2010) and Gudynas (2011), Western modernity and coloniality are at the heart of contemporary social and ecological problems. For Mignolo (2006), coloniality is central to the study of ethnic relations because of the way that it has permeated power, knowledge and the self (83). Walsh (2010) goes further, exposing the tight relationship between "capitalism and the 'culture of death' of its neo-liberal and development project," which has been founded on coloniality (18). One of the main objectives of decolonial scholarship is therefore to analyze how to rid everyday articulations of colonial influences which tend to normalize society into categories in favour of modernity, progress and the market economy over people and nature (Mignolo 2006, 13). Mignolo (2007) refers to this as "de-linking" from modernity/coloniality or *desprenderse* from modernity/coloniality. This means moving away from "coloniality of knowledge controlled and managed" by capitalist values that became dominant across the globe as a result of Western colonialism. It further reflects a "vision toward a world in which many worlds can co-exist" also known as a "pluriverse" (463, 497). As such, decolonial scholars refer to the decolonial "turn" as the "re-construction and the restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities,

subalternized knowledges and languages performed by the Totality[21] depicted under the names

of modernity and rationality" (Mignolo 2007, 451).

It is from the framework of decolonizing power, knowledge and the self, that *buen vivir* has

emerged as an alternative to modern capitalist paradigm (Gudynas 2011, 447). *Buen vivir* is a

concept with roots in South American indigenous thought, which if often translated into English

as "living well" or "collective well being" (Walsh 2010, 15). The concept of *buen vivir* gained

visibility in Ecuador, as *sumac kausay*, meaning "fullness life in a community, together with

other persons and Nature" in Kichwa (Gudynas 2011, 442). Nevertheless, there are similar

articulations of the concept in other cultures (for example, the Aymara concept of *suma qamaña*

in Bolivia and the Mapuche concept of *küme mongen* in Chile, which both share commonalities

with the concept of *buen vivir*) (Gudynas 2011, 442, 443; Thomson 2011, 449). Lead *buen vivir*

scholars have characterized the term as being reactionary to modern Western modes of

extractivist development (Gudynas 2011, 441; Thomson 2011, 448). As Gudynas explains, the

concept of *buen vivir* "emerged in reaction to classical development strategies, either due to its

negative social or environmental impacts, or the debatable economic effects" (442). As a

transformative worldview (or cosmovision), *buen vivir* therefore "offers new answers to

post-development questions, while reinforcing cultural identity and promoting alternatives to

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[21] Totality refers to the predatory nature of the modernity/rationality logic that inserts itself through colonial relations to the detriment of other ways of being; it is the replacement of *other* subjectivities. In this vein, decolonial literature calls for a *pluriverse* in which many subjectivities coexist, rather than an exclusionary *universe* where capitalist tendencies prevail (Mignolo 2007, 451).

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Western Modernity" (Gudynas 2011, 444-5). The concept also encourages a contextual approach to the problems of modernity, given that:

> …ideas of Buen Vivir are specific to each culture, with its own language, history, specific social and political contexts, and placed in diverse environments… There is no room for an essentialist position. Furthermore, is not possible to identify one idea of the Buen Vivir as the best one that became a standard reference to be followed by all others indigenous groups in Latin America. As an example, the *suma qamaña* position is only possible in the cultural and ecological landscapes of the Andes. There is no sense in trying to apply the concept to other regions; other cultures will have to explore and build their own Buen Vivir (Gudynas 2011, 444).

Since the concept is in itself a framework, it provides a starting point from which to analyze and to question coloniality broadly. More specifically, to give an example of the scope of this transformative paradigm, "*'buen vivir'* discourse has grown considerably, with a particular non-Western approach, which challenges us to decolonize our minds as well as our economies," (Thomson 2011, 449). In summary, what stands out from this discussion on decoloniality is the pervasiveness of coloniality, which has permeated social relations in Izalco and El Salvador at large.

Firstly, in the absence of identifiable visual traits, decoloniality becomes a framework for social scientists to analyze ethnic relations regardless of the actors involved. In the case of El Salvador, this approach allows me to investigate hindrances to indigenous expressions in various realms (religious practices, discourses, visuality, education), rather than just a group with certain essentialist characteristics. Secondly, one of the key struggles according to the few indigenous activists in Izalco is that people do not recognize themselves as indigenous. Simply looking at identifiable characteristics would simply reproduce the impasses discussed earlier in this chapter.

The concept of decoloniality is especially important to Salvadoran contexts because colonial relations have impacted forms of indigenous expressions and experiences in various forms. What this thesis proposes is that obstacles to indigenous expressions do not simply lie at the institutional level, but more importantly, they lie at the micro and personal levels. As has been already stated, in the absence of ethnic identifiers, there are still elements of indigeneity that are subject to (de)colonial tensions. The following sections attempt to highlight the areas where colonial relations persist: knowledge, visuality, and economic relations. I refer to these areas as sites where coloniality has surfaced in other contexts, in order to later reflect on El Salvador's experience with indigeneity and the pervasiveness of colonial relations.

2.4   The Colonization of Knowledge

The colonization of knowledge and forms of knowing have recently become an important focus of indigenous scholarship, given the extent to which indigenous knowledge has been delegitimized under the precept of modernity (De Carvalho and Florez-Florez 2014, 123; Wilson 2004, 359). As Wilson (2004) points out:

> It was hammered into our heads that our Indigenous cultural traditions were inferior to those of Euroamericans and Euro-Canadians, that there was nothing of value in our old ways, and that those ways were incompatible with modernity and civilization. In order for the colonizers to complete their colonizing mission, they were required to make not only themselves believe these ideas, but us as well (360).

Smith (2012) reiterates that colonizers devalued indigenous knowledge and forms of knowing, as certain forms of knowledge and knowing became privileged. In Smith's words, "the validity of specific forms of knowledge" (in this case indigenous knowledge) was discredited in favour of scientific knowledge and progress (119). Similarly, when indigenous knowledge was converted

to text, it was also subject to rationalization to the detriment of meaning. According to Simpson (2004), when transposed into text, indigenous knowledge is:

> ...stripped of its dynamism and its fluidity and confined to a singular context. It is void of the spatial relationships created between Elder and youth. It becomes generalized and depersonalized. It is separated from the land, from the worlds of the spirits, from its source and its meaning, and from the methodologies for transmission that provide the rigor that ensures its proper communication (Simpson 2004, 380).

Smith (2012) takes the analysis of the colonization of indigenous knowledge one step further and notes that knowledge was not simply colonized, it was also subject to scientific appropriation. According to Smith (2012), since colonization, "[k]nowledge was also there to be discovered, extracted, appropriated and distributed... It is through these disciplines that the indigenous world has been *re*presented" (117-8). As Smith puts it, indigenous knowledge and forms of knowing were positioned as "belonging to the cultural archive and body of knowledge of the West" (121).

According to Doxtater (2004), "Western knowledge contains a worldview that sees human development in terms of a master narrative requiring the congruence of other cultures... [and] Western knowledge appointed itself the intellectual fiduciary" (629). In other words, scientific and modern knowledge contributed to the transformation of indigenous forms of knowing, whereby indigenous knowledge that was once "mired in magic, religion, and ritual," came to stand in opposition to progress and science, which acquired privileged knowledge status (2004, 622). It is from this reliance on science and progress that indigenous knowledge and "mythological past becomes an invention," rather than being associated to legitimate forms of knowledge and knowing (Doxtater 2004, 622). Yet Kusch (2010) insists that indigenous knowledge "is not a scientific knowledge of reality... rather it is a knowledge related exclusively to the pure fact of living" that is engrained in ritualistic practices (33). Yet, because indigenous

knowledge does not align with the Western paradigm, "Indigenous people are viewed as emotive, reactive, and unreasoned" (Doxtater 2004, 625). It is from this notion that emerge efforts seeking to decolonize indigenous knowledge (Simpson and Smith 2014, 21). Practically, this has involved the re-discovery of indigenous forms of knowing and methodologies to decolonize knowledge (Simpson and Smith 2014, 207, Goeaman 2014, 235).

Chapter six explores the colonization of indigenous knowledge. Specifically, the stories documented in chapter six deal with the theme of "the supernatural". Social scientists usually define "the supernatural" using equally vague terms such as "'[d]ivine', 'mysterious', 'sacred', 'miraculous', 'unusual', 'transcendent', 'extraordinary', 'surpassing understanding', [and] 'mystical'" (White 2003, 205). In addition, definitions of the supernatural are deeply associated with witchcraft, sorcery and magic (Kapferer 2002, 10). An important characteristic of supernaturalism is its opposition to the natural, to reason and science (Brendbekken 2002, 39-40; Anagnost 1987, 42). To highlight this contrast, Kapferer (2002) refers to the magical (or supernatural) realm as systems of "unreason" (2). As Kapferer (2002) notes that, "magic and sorcery have continued to be engaged in discourses concerning rationality, especially with regard to questions in the philosophy of science" (8).

For this reason, it is important to specify that the "supernatural" has been criticized as a category of social analysis, because of its seeming lack of rigour (White 2003, 205). White (2003) argues that scholars of the supernatural are often imprecise and lack consistency in defining associated terminology and processes (206).

Despite criticisms, the supernatural has been an important site of analysis in social science (Evans-Pritchard 1937). In this respect, Evans-Pritchard provided important tools for analyzing magical practices as lived experiences through his analysis of Zande beliefs and practices in central Africa (64). He notes that among the Zande, witchcraft was such a "commonplace happening... [that] seldom passes a day without mentioning it" (64). He further states that witchcraft is "so intertwined with everyday happenings that it is part of a Zande's ordinary world" (65). Therefore, as a theoretical exercise, Evans-Pritchard demonstrated that supernatural belief and practice "was itself a source of knowledge" and in so doing, he opened up the analysis of the supernatural beyond exoticized understandings of the supernatural (Kapferer 2002, 4).

More recently, even White (2003), who is a critic of the supernatural as a field of study, sees value in studying the social and political implications of supernaturalism. White (2003) is concerned about how beliefs in the supernatural emerge, how they change over time and their instrumentalization; this is what he refers to as "the politics of the supernatural" (207). Likewise, other anthropologists have focused on the role of the supernatural in social and political life, demonstrating its everyday outworkings (Hund 2004, 70; Feldman 2002, 234).

As a result, for chapter six, I was inspired by traditions that see the supernatural realm as knowledge and as an everyday experience. Rather than engaging in a debate about the validity of `indigenous supernatural truth claims, I focus the analysis on evidences of supernatural themes in discussions with my informants, which I illustrate, reflect tendencies towards the colonization of knowledge.

2.5   Visuality and Regimes of Representation

In addition to examining colonization at the level of ideas and knowledge, chapter seven grapples with visual portrayals evoking colonial understandings of indigeneity. According to Hall (2003), images are especially insightful in the study of accumulated meanings as they point towards "*regimes of representation*" (232). In other words, visual representations are an important site of analysis because they reflect broader and diverse social structures and power relations (Coleman 2011, 63; Patton 2015; Hall 2003). By this token, a number of authors have examined images, photography, monuments, iconography and public performance as sites where power is evidenced (Cornejo 2013; Cervone 1999; Gutierrez-Chong 2008; Wedeen 2008).

On the one hand, Lyndon (2005) observes how states have used visuality as a governing tool and finds that in colonial Australia, photography was "drawn into the service of state and empire, in practical ways facilitating the police-work central to the European disciplinary apparatus" (213). Looking at symbolic power as evidenced in visual displays during the 10th anniversary of Yemeni unification, Wedeen contends that images and performances were important tools in how the state exerted its influence (84). In a similar fashion, Anderson (2006) remarks that visual markers are often instrumental to perceptions of state power. Using Burma as an example, he notes that monuments allowed the Burmese state "to appear as the guardian of a generalized, but also local, Tradition" (181). In relation to Britain, Anderson (2006) also observes that maps as images were powerful nation-building tools, stating that maps were "[i]nstantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination" as a result of its reproduction in "posters, official seals, letterheads, magazine and textbook covers, tablecloths, and hotel walls" (175). Likewise, in Turkey, images of maps became key nationalist tools, in that

they were images that conveyed political rhetoric, reifying the "relationship between the territory and the people provoking a sense of 'territorial bonding'", something that was particularly meaningful in an area where territory was contested (Batuman 2010, 223).

At the same time, Gutierrez-Chong (2008) also demonstrates that visuality has been an important nation-building tool outside of the images and performances of states. In contrast to state-sponsored representations, she investigates primarily images produced for popular consumption, published in almanacs and calendars. In this manner, the author points out that gendered and racialized images aided the state in the consolidation of the mestizo Mexican nation (524). These prominent images depicted "very Mexican expressions of daily life, colourful pictures, accessible, popular, attractive, decorating the walls of households and shops throughout the country," which idealized mestizo identity (535). In this case, images reinforced the idealized images of the mestizo nation, as well as establishing the gendered norms of the nation (536).

Also from a gendered stance, Lyndon (2005) contends that in colonial Australia there was an intricate link between the virgin land and indigenous portrayals, which created an "imagined topography" available for conquest (213). Therefore, photography, "rather than being universal and homogeneous, has been complicit with colonialism, implicated in constructing racial, class and gender hierarchies" (Lyndon 2005, 213).

While public images intended for mass consumption are important sites of analysis, Coleman (2011) also makes an important contribution to the study of images, arguing that private collections of photos add another layer to social analysis:

> ...while researchers must continue to examine the images that played the most important roles in fabricating new social realities, there are vast, and often neglected, archives of pictures that circulated in private economies. Such everyday images – epitomized by an ever-deeper ocean of family snapshots – are often banal, barely artistic, and were never widely seen (65).

It is within this context that he envisions "coded visual messages" from images taken in the margins, in this case on Honduran banana plantations. His argument is that such private images "suggest a degree of gender instability and fluidity in even the most unexpected places" (65, 66). The use of private images is especially helpful in his analysis of "subaltern others" and gender identity, given the context where gender fluidity is more difficult to gauge (65, 66). Despite the limited inferences that one can make using photographs, mostly given missing context, it is still possible to "shed light on broader issues," which in his case refers to instances of "gender and sexual nonconformity" (66). Based on Coleman's argument, images can therefore prove to be an essential tool in the interpretation of meanings (65).

2.5.1 Colonial Representations of the Other

An important theme when discussing reproductions is the "fascination" with describing the "other" (Hall 2003, 225, 257). In an extensive historical analysis of visual representations of blackness and whiteness, Hall argues that the reproduction of the other carries meaning insofar as it highlights binary differences and evokes unequal power relations (235, 243). Accordingly, images evoking meaning about whiteness tend to equate it with "refinement, learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed institutions, formal government and

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law, and a 'civilized restraint' in their emotional, sexual and civil life, all of which are associated with 'Culture'" (243). Depictions of blackness, on the other hand, evoke "whatever is instinctual – the open expression of emotion and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of 'civilized refinement' in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual, and the lack of developed civil institutions" (243). Within this scope, Granda Merchán (2003) examines portrayals of indigenous people in Ecuadorian textbooks and finds similar difference binaries in indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian portrayals; indigenous people and Afro Ecuadorians are portrayed in a negative light (backwards, savage and marginal), while whiteness is equated with modernity, civility and citizenship (52). Similarly to Hall, Granda Merchán finds that racialized representations in textbooks are instrumental in the propagation of misconceived and stereotypical constructions of indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian identities. In the same way, Rahier (1999) deals with representations of race and gender in a popular magazine emblematic of Ecuadorian identity and argues that while Afro-Ecuadorian men are generally portrayed in a negative light (with the exception of sporting images where their achievements are accompanied with racialized descriptions), women's portrayals are sexualized (91).

Indeed, in addition to elaborating on the process of othering in representation regimes, Hall (2003) sheds light on the tight link between the representations of race, gender and sexuality (262). Specifically, Hall finds that gendered norms evidenced in images are geared at maintaining a broader social order (245). In the case of racialized and gendered images, they reflect a tendency towards the maintenance of attitudes in support of incongruent binary relations (263). In other words, racialized men and women are portrayed as subordinate and their natural instincts consist of breaches of a social order (263). Using the example of black-white relations in the United States during the slavery period, Hall contends "infantilization" was a common

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theme in portrayals of black men; it was a symbolic gesture aimed at depriving black men of their masculinity. Ideas conveyed through images reinforced attitudes of black inferiority and subordinate power relations; in other words, that "[b]lacks are not proper men, they are just simple children" (263). The effect of images was such that they also promoted a paternalistic dynamic to emerge between the slave and the slave master, in that they helped to naturalize the white slave master's "authority over the black male slave, by depriving him of all the attributes of responsibility, paternal and familial authority, treating him as a child" (262).

On the other hand, he finds that racialized portrayals of women, promote "her reduction to Nature, the signifier of which is her *body*" (262). In other words, he notes that women's primitiveness is associated with her hypersexualization (266). It is in this light that Katzew (2016) studies historical gendered and racialized "othering" practices through images of albinos produced for popular consumption in the 18th century (160). Katzew finds that there is both a racialized and gendered dynamic in representation regimes. Regarding one of the images depicting a black albino woman, the author notes:

> Buffon commissioned the erotically charged print of Geneviève for his widely read treatise (Fig. 5.5), he made sure to emphasize the sitter's alleged inferiority through her facial features, ill-proportioned hands and deformed feet, and nakedness – something unthinkable in portraits of society ladies (163).

A gendered approach to the study of racialized representation regimes has also been described in relation to Mexico's experience with mestizaje (Taylor 2006). Specifically, Taylor finds that in Mexico, ideas of mestizaje have been built upon the relation between la Malinche[22] and the explorer Hernan Cortes (818). Whereas "[t]he image of Malinche [is] an object of pity and rage,

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[22] La Malinche was Hernan Cortes' interpreter, guide and symbolic mother of mestizaje, as bearer of Hernan Cortes' child (818).

la chingada madre [is] the raped Indian mother with downcast eyes and restrained body" and

representations of Cortes are hypermasculinized and patriarchal (818). Taylor describes Cortes'

attributes as a "domineering and scornful European father, *el chingón*" (818). In contrast, Taylor

(2006) observes that portrayals of Zapotects tend to highlight nonconformist ideas about

sexuality, gender and gender roles (817). Exoticized portrayals of Zapotec women evoke the

notion that "Zapotec women compose yet another surreal archive of a woman-centered

spirituality and poetics of daily life" (820). Such portrayals (and to a certain extent experiences)

have challenged representations of the Indian woman, who tends to be modeled against la

Malinche; "the myth of a passive, pliant indigenous femininity" (818). The degree to which such

counternarratives can survive in light of the dominant mestizo culture is certainly part of

Taylor's discussion (819). However, what I wish to highlight here is that racialized images still

promote tropes that essentialize the indigenous experience and demonstrate the link between

gender, race and coloniality.

The gendered dynamic of mestizaje is something that Gould (1998) further observes in

Nicaragua, where nationalist discourses and symbols tended to coincide with the men's

feminization and women's exaltation:

> Within the anti-imperialist resistance, the Indo Hispanic race was painted in virile
> images of pre-Hispanic Indian warriors, Yet simultaneously, the new race eveled out
> of the 'feminization of males... In this vision, indigenous women transmitted the
> heroic pre-Columbian look into the Indo Hispanic race... (161).

Given the importance of gendered and racialized visual symbols in the construction of colonial

mestizo nations, chapter seven provides an overview of "Indian" depictions in Izalco. The aim of

the chapter is to understand the role of visuality in the construction of indigeneity and the

meanings conveyed through multiple representations. As Hall (2003) explains, images "gain in

meaning when they are read in context, against or in connection with one another" or what he refers to as a regime of representation (232). As such, chapter seven analyzes visual representations, including photographs, paintings, statues, sculptures and performances in Izalco. I pay close attention to the regime of representation as it relates to men, women and gendered portrayals as a way of understanding the accumulated meanings about indigeneity that are promoted through visual symbols and images.

2.6   Cultural Tourism and Coloniality

Following from the previous section, the tourism industry is an area where the impact of visuality on sociopolitical processes can be observed, especially in relation to ethnic representations that have come to reflect patterns of coloniality. Specifically, cultural tourism has been an important source of revenue in Latin America; as such, the tourism industry has been highly linked to ethnicity and ethnic relations (Bell 2012; Little 2008). Within this context, Little (2008) and Bell (2012) have observed that tourists often prefer to travel to exotic locales where landscapes are filled with visible representations of ethnicity. Such tendencies among tourists have also led to the transformation of spaces and people in order to project tangible otherness that has the ability to attract the tourist gaze.

For example, Ávila-García and Luna (2012) observe how spaces are changing in coastal Mexico in conjunction with the growth of the tourism industry. The authors refer to this as the "neoliberalization of space", a process through which:

> ...[nature] is offered and acquired by different clients through monetary and financial transactions. Everything has been reduced to business, and this has paved the way for the development of the environmental economy and the assignment of a value and a price both to nature and to the environmental impacts it generates (53).

Such experiences of tourism are reflective of emergent power structures reminiscent of "eco-colonialism", whereby "external agents [in this case transnational tourist companies] establish power relations and control over the area and are the economic beneficiaries of this activity" (55-6).

The authors further contend that spatial neoliberalization has involved the dispossession of lands, whereby local peasants and indigenous people have been prevented from engaging in their traditional subsistence economies (60). For example, the state and developers restricted fishing and farming along coastal lines under the banner of environmental protection for the sake of profiting from tourism (61). In doing so, developers contributed to the transformation of landscapes to cater to tourists in search of exotic experiences (60). In one area, developers even "altered the hydrological functioning of the marshes and coastal lake by building a system of dams with floodgates that controlled the flow of water", as well as introduced new animal species or increased existing native species, which altered the ecosystem and introduced ecological imbalances (60-61). As a result of this process, both ecosystems and local institutions have been displaced to make room for economic growth (53).

Swords and Mize (2008) also examine changing landscapes resulting from the tourism industries of Puerto Rico and Mexico, looking at the "consumption" of labour resulting from tourism industries (beach resorts, urban destinations, cruises in Puerto Rico; and beach resorts, border towns and archeological sites in Mexico) (53). Specifically, the authors find that because international tourism functions within the global capitalist economy, the tourism industries have evolved in a way that caters to the demands of tourists and their ideas of host countries (57). The authors examine the notion of authenticity that is promulgated through tourism and allude to the

desire of tourism actors (private and state) to reproduce authentic experiences for tourists (in the case of colonial San Juan and in the case of Mexico's re-creation of "cities as relics of the past") (64).

Moving away from the spatial implications of tourism, Wilson and Ypeij (2012) contend that the tourism industry is more than a set of economic transactions leading to growth. Tourism for the authors is a social process where power shapes notions of "gender, ethnicity, and sexuality in the form of experiences, encounters, fantasies, images, handicraft products, and, in the case of prostitution or romance tourism, the bodies of local men and women" (for Wilson and Ypeij 2012, 5). Moreover, in terms of cultural tourism, tourism is a site where consumers and producers of culture negotiate what it is to be "ethnic" (8).

As such, Babb (2012) looks at indigenous participation in the tourism economy in Mexico and Peru, arguing that in certain instances, "being indigenous... may provide, to a greater or lesser extent, new cultural capital, understood as qualities of the individual (for example, appearance, dress, language, artistic ability, and everyday practices) that may be converted into economic advantage" (37). Babb further argues that this tendency stems from tourists seeking experiences that approximate "romantic or exoticized images" which the state or indigenous people may leverage as a competitive advantage (37).

Likewise, Little (2008) reveals in relation to Guatemala, that indigenous people have become adept at embodying the ideas of indigeneity that tourists favour. In his words, indigenous people "exploit dominant tourism discourses by manipulating ethnic identity, institutionalizing themselves, and performing stereotypes of themselves for tourists. Away from tourists, they

engage in joking that is critical of tourism development…" (90). Little also argues that handicraft "[v]endors in general recognize that they are part of an international tourism system, something that handicrafts vendors have known for decades" (2005b 89).Simply put, Little (2008) illustrates that Mayans consciously participate in the global tourism industry, rather than simply portraying them as victims of exploitation (89). He portrays indigenous vendors in Guatemala as rational political and economic actors who employ various tactics in order to acquire a piece of the tourism market; this he argues, is actually contributing to the "revitalization of Mayan culture" (2005a, 91). In Little's words, "the intersection of international tourism and Maya has helped to revalorize Maya culture and protect Maya vendors from hostile government authorities" (95). This is consistent with Wilson and Ypeij's observation that in the midst of "staged authenticity", tourism "may also lead to a renovation or revival of ethnic identities, self-representations, and customs" (2012, 7).

Babb (2012) also demonstrates that in certain instances, people who have opted to appear more indigenous are finding new ways of obtaining a share of profits generated through tourism (47). However, Babb also raises questions about the effect that economic openness may have in practical terms, such as competition for authentic representations as well as the promotion of inequalities at the basis of capitalism. As Babb (2012) writes:

> …competition for tourism revenues [in the Amazon] has resulted in local concern to manifest indigenous identity and culture… It remains to be seen to what degree tourism is a benefit, offering new economic resources and validation for indigenous identity, and to what degree it may promote new inequalities as both potential income and ethnic identity become contested sites (47).

As such, these studies reveal that while there are certain immediate material benefits to participation in the tourism industry, there are also implications for the politics of identification, which are at the core of this dissertation.

Internationally, co-optation of indigeneity into the capitalist tourism economy rhetoric is also problematic because tourists then become consumers with the power to reward certain representations of ethnicity, or disregard representations for not being "indigenous" enough or not being "indigenous" at all. Additionally, as service providers of authentic indigenous experiences, people become more likely to construct their self-understandings of indigeneity based on perceptions of economic value.

2.6.1   Economic Integration and Coloniality

The current alignment between indigenous environments and language with the market economy is not without problems, especially as it relates to the reproduction of ideas about indigenous authenticity. From a decolonial perspective, it is clear that there is skepticism about indigenous participation and co-optation in the market economy, calling instead for a rupture with capitalism (Mignolo 2011, 282). After all, the market economy is a facet of modernity deeply entrenched in colonial relations of power and race (Walsh 2011, 53). Within this spectrum, Walsh (2010) describes a recent shift towards *buen vivir* as a guarantor of economic and human development in Latin America. Walsh defines this sort of development as an "interconnectedness of economics with the political, sociocultural, and environmental spheres, as well as in the necessities, capacities, and potentialities of human beings", inherently related to the modern concept of individuality, rights and freedoms (16). In this same article, Walsh also exposes some of the contradictions between indigenous experiences and state-led efforts towards development.

She questions the emancipatory capacity of indigenous people in light of this rapprochement with neoliberal policies, which have tended to universalize the indigenous experience and embed it within the logic of development (20).

As Walsh (2011) further notes, the Western economic system reflects "[p]rojects that have worked at the ontological, existential, epistemic, territorial, and socio-spiritual levels, imposing a notion of a singular world governed by the central binary of humans (read: man) over nature" (Walsh 2011, 53). In addition, Western economic logic further translate to colonial power relations of domination over people, given that people "associated with, or thought to be closer to nature, most especially women, native peoples and blacks, are considered inferior, lacking in reason and intellect, animal-like and tied to the corporal or the body rather than the mind" (Walsh 2011, 54). In this sense, while participation in the global tourism industry seems to be beneficial, there are important elements to consider in terms of the broader ethnopolitical process. In other words, participation and co-optation in the market economy risks propagating a system of dominance over nature and people: one in which the interests of humans are superior rather than complementary to those of nature and where racialized power relations persist.

Much like the authors described above, chapter eight shows how certain spaces are changing in accordance with ideas about indigeneity within the context of tourism. While the physical landscape in Izalco is not changing as drastically as in the examples described above, there are instances reflecting desires to portray indigeneity spatially and linguistically, within the context of the tourism economy. Additionally, the idea of competition over representation has important implications for Izalco an El Salvador, which I also explore in chapter eight. Simply put, competition in the market may reinforce ideas that people have about what is and what is not

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indigenous. I wish to reiterate that, at the local level, indigenous representations are abundant in the town, as I have hoped to show earlier. What raises concern is the type of indigenous representations that are promoted and the hegemonic and universalizing ideas of indigeneity that they convey. Such representations may actually be preventing indigenous expression precisely because of universalizing tendencies. As such, indigenous representations favoured in the market economy may contribute to understandings of indigeneity that are consistent with coloniality. As described in chapter seven, hegemonic representations include gendered images, fixed in time and without political salience. Therefore, what can be observed from current articulations of indigeneity in Izalco both spatially and linguistically, is likely a continuation of the racialized dynamic that is hindering indigenous revitalization.

Conclusion

To conclude, this dissertation deals with the process of identity construction, and more specifically, how colonial structures have acted, and continue to act, as barriers to indigenous expressions. While the literature is extensive in analyzing groups that have a basis for self-identification through ethnic identifiers, such as clothing, language or a given territory that is recognized as being occupied by indigenous peoples, it is rather elusive when it comes to the absence of visually identifiable traits or archetypal practices as is the case in El Salvador. Diverging from methods of analysis that use ethnic markers as a starting point to identify ethnic actors, the chapter that follows establishes instead a methodology to study indigeneity at the level of beliefs, perceptions, values, institutions and social relations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Keeping in mind the problems associated with quantitative analyses of indigenous peoples in El Salvador and considering the problems with quantifications in the Salvadoran context as described in the previous chapter, I approach this research from an ethnographic angle to capture representations, understandings and meanings associated to indigeneity. Such elements reflect how different actors (both self-identified indigenous and non-indigenous) construct and transmit their conceptions of indigeneity. Methodologically, studying self-identification through perceptions therefore involves moving beyond ethnic identifiers that are traditionally associated with possessing an ethnic identity, such as spoken native languages, traditional dress or native territory.

3.1   Interpretivist Political Ethnography

For Flyvbjerg (2001), the role of social science is to develop theories that do not simply seek to emulate or develop models that exist outside of the social context in which they were developed, but that seek to make informed judgements about what is being observed (42). According to Flyvbjerg, *interpretation* of the social environment is what leads social scientists to not simply make observations, but also to engage in a continuous reflexive dialogue that will evaluate the interpretations and have a meaningful impact (131). As Yanow (2006) further notes, rather than seeking to build a universal approach that relies on the production of objective observations, the

goal of interpretivist research is to provide a contextual analysis based on the understanding and

the interpretation of the researcher (10).[23]

To be sure, interpretative method is not a new concept in the social sciences (Geertz 1973;

Rabinow and Sullivan 1979). However, interpretivists argue that stringent research methods

which have dominated in qualitative research have "narrow[ed] the range of questions that

political science can usefully entertain and explore" (Yanow 2003, 12). As Yanow further states,

"interpretive researchers are aware of the extent to which their research formulations, choice of

observational sites and persons interviewed, analytic frame, and writing all constitute the subject

of study, rather than objectively reflecting it" (11). Therefore, instead of relying on rigid research

designs, interpretivists are proponents of flexible research designs that allow the researcher the

ability to "begin their work with what might be called informed 'hunches,' grounded in the

research literature and in some prior knowledge of the study setting" (Yanow 2003, 10).

Although ethnographic approaches are common in political science, particularly among

comparativists, it is not until recently that there has been a push towards interpretivist

ethnographic frameworks, focusing on meanings, symbols and everyday experiences

(Kubik 2005, 26). A "turn from macro- to micro- levels of analysis" in political analysis

(Kubik 2005, 25), which draws from concepts such as socially constructed realities, localized

politics, human behaviour and culture, has led political researchers towards ethnography. In

terms of analysis, this turn has resulted in the study of symbolic actions and meanings, as

embodied in norms, institutions and behaviours, as being highly political (Kubik 2009, 26).

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[23] This is not to say that principles cannot be drawn from observations to inform other cases. Indeed, as Schatz (2009) notes, while Woods adopts an interpretivist approach in relation to El Salvador, her findings are helpful in understanding collective action elsewhere in Latin America.

Thus, Kubik (2009) contends that "[i]nterpretivist ethnography is crucial for exposing the relations between power and meaning in concrete situations" (49).

Schatz (2009) identifies two different (but nonetheless related) understandings of interpretivist political ethnography: a method and a "sensibility" (5). According to Kubik (2009), "as a method, ethnography is used to study culture (meaning systems) or other aspects of the broadly conceived social, such as economy, power (politics), or social structure. Its essence is participant observation, a disciplined immersion in the social life of a given group of people" (30). As a *sensibility*, ethnography "goes beyond face-to-face contact... Close familiarity with and analysis of any collection of human artifacts (texts, cultural products, and so on) can generate an ethnographic study by revealing the meanings people attribute to the world they inhabit" (Schatz 2009, 5-6). Kubik (2009) asserts that although there are multiple ethnographies, which fall within positivistic, interpretive, and postmodern traditions, the different streams, with their different epistemological and ontological implications, can nevertheless be useful for political scientists (49).

Symbols, meanings and symbolic meanings are important to interpretivist research because they demonstrate how power operates in a very practical (albeit complex) fashion. For this reason, interpretivist political ethnographers are concerned with people's everyday life (e.g. what they do or do not do, what they say or do not say, or what they see as important or unimportant) and people's relationship to their surroundings (e.g. space, time, discourse or environment) as a form of investigation. This in turn affects the study of identities, because "[c]ontests within this semantic space are by their nature political, as they often constitute attempts to achieve legitimacy or to establish collective identities (nation, class, gender, race) and endow them with

an aura of naturalness" (Kubik 2009, 37). Interpretivist ethnographers' desire to engage with actors and their environments puts them in a position to understand their practices of meaning-making and understand social relations contextually.

Wedeen (2002 and 2009) has established four important "features" of interpretivist research, which inform the epistemological assumptions of this thesis. First, according to Wedeen, interpretivists "*view knowledge, including scientific knowledge, as historically situated and entangled in power relationships*" (80). As a second feature, interpretivists are "*constructivists in the sense that they see the world as socially-made*" (80). Third, interpretivists "*tend to eschew the individualist assumptions*" of rational-choice and behaviourist approaches (81). Finally, interpretivists are "*particularly interested in language and other symbolic systems*" (81). Yanow further remarks that interpretivist research must seek to understand "meaning-making and knowledge claims" (2006, xii). Schatz and De Volo (2004) also state that it is important to understand "how actors themselves view the myriad of political situations in which they are involved" and "their influence on political outcomes, constrained as it is by structural factors" (268).

In terms of identities and the study of the concept, for interpretivists, "'inter-subjective' meanings… are important in the construction of collective identities" (Gerring 2003, 2) as well as of shared social practices (Herrera, McDermott, Johnston, and Abdelal 2009). This is consistent with Schatz and Bayard De Volo and Schatz's views (2004), as they argue that the study of identity "should not be reduced to group demographics and membership in one or another identity group; it is also about what membership in one or another group is understood to mean and how these meanings influence interests and behaviours" (268). In terms of collective

memory as they relate to identity formation, interpretivists assert that "memories of political events, however well the events are initially remembered, may be later reshaped by social and cultural processes that affect which memories are retained, which emphasized, and which forgotten" (124). As a result, rather than referring to a single history, Wood (2009) refers to the "memories" of the past (127) and Wedeen (2009) refers to the "histories" of the past, reflecting the competing and divergent accounts that emerge following events.

For this research, it is also worth noting that interpretivist ethnographers also pay attention to what is unseen, hidden and unnoticed. For example, Scott (1998; 1990) studies everyday life through "hidden transcripts," a term he uses to examine informal, (un)intended, marginal and off-the-record language, discourses, colloquialisms, silences and practices, through which people express resistance (xii). Scott (1990) asserts that these "hidden transcripts" are subtle practices of meaning-making that are as important as public or visible, formal practices of meaning-making (xii). This preoccupation with the unseen is also a matter that Enloe (2004) pays close attention to and argues the role of silences in the (re)production of power relations, as related to gender and marginality. Enloe (2004) provides an analysis of gendered relations and further demonstrates that power operates at the personal level, in everyday relations (75). In this manner, what is said and done is as important as what is not said and done.

Given that numbers and essentialist traits prove to be inadequate factors to study indigenous identities in El Salvador, this research proposes to examine indigenous identities using a variety of "sites" where people articulate their indigenous identities. As such, I examine everyday practices, discourses, language and images that evoke indigeneity. Such a theoretical angle reveals that indigeneity is not necessarily a function of biological processes, but rather

understandings of ethnic identity and shared meanings about these identities. Rather than attempting to study a set population, this research shows that indigeneity is in constant flux; its boundaries shift from actor to actor and as groups define what it is that makes them indigenous. As such, this research expands the analysis of indigeneity beyond the realm of ethnic people and towards the concept of indigeneity embedded in social relations.

3.2   Decoloniality

From a theoretical stance, while I frame my analysis against the backdrop of postmodern frameworks, I am also conscious of decolonial approaches, particularly since my objective is to demonstrate how struggles for indigenous expressions are reflective of colonial tendencies. Rather than seeing these two perspectives as competitive, I believe them to be complementary in the study of ethnicity. Specifically, Mignolo (2011) positions postmodern thought as a critical project, in line with decolonial approaches. Unlike decolonial approaches, however, he claims that "[m]odernity, postmodernity and altermodernity have their historical grounding in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution" (273). In other words, postmodern approaches emerged from a modern tradition and as such are not as explicit about the modernity/coloniality dynamic, which Mignolo (2007) describes as two concepts that are constitutive of one another (457). Nevertheless, Mignolo (2002) asserts that postmodern approaches "are a critique of modernity from inside modernity itself" (82). To return to a point of discussion from the previous chapter, the study of ethnicity must inevitably deal with coloniality and the uneven relations of power that favour one ethnic group over others (Mignolo 2007, 453).

Another key contribution of decolonial research has also been the portrayal of temporal elements vis-à-vis coloniality. Following decolonial thought, coloniality is relevant across time, which means that it is possible to analyze colonial relations that emerged in 1492 and trace their influence to present social relations. This is particularly meaningful, as it provides the basis from which to grapple with areas unseemingly affected by mestizaje, but which are embedded with colonial relations of power. As Mignolo (2002) describes:

> Coloniality of power should be distinguished from colonialism, which is sometimes termed the colonial period. Colonialism is a concept that inscribes coloniality as a derivative of modernity. In this conception modernity is first, with colonialism following it. On the other hand, the colonial period implies that, in the Americas, colonialism ended toward the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Instead coloniality assumes first that coloniality constitutes modernity. As a consequence we are still living under the same regime (82).

In summary, while an interpretivist ethnographic and postmodern approach allow me to analyze hidden sites where power is exerted, the decolonial influence allows me to examine the power relations that derive from the clash between the European world and the American world, which the postmodern approach is less well-equipped to see, given that it focuses on and originates from the European experience.

3.3   Immersion in Izalco

I travelled to El Salvador twice during the course of this research. The first research trip lasted four months, between March and July 2012; the second trip lasted two weeks in July 2013. While my time in El Salvador only approximated four and a half months, getting acquainted with Izalco and *Izalqueños* is a process that began long before. I first visited Izalco in 1996 to attend the patron saint celebrations in honour of *la Virgen de Asunción.* Since then, I travelled to Izalco in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, sometimes for several months at a time. Of course, I was not

conducting research during these earlier visits, but even through these pre-research years I was becoming acquainted with the cultural practices of Izalco. Familiarity with a site of study is a crucial component of interpretive analysis (Yanow 2014, 131) and earlier visits contributed to my sensitivity and knowledge of Izalco culture and social practices, which sedimented leading up to my research years. It was during the latter years, as I conducted my Master's research dealing with migration and migrant remittances in 2008, that I began to look at the politics in Izalco critically. It is during this time that I also became acquainted with the geography of the town and the meaning that people attribute to different places. As such, I heard stories about *Parque Atecozol*[24] and the significance that it has for people in the town and the different ways in which people related to that space. In addition, I became aware of the important role that Catholic and supernatural beliefs play in the daily lives of *Izalqueños*. Indeed, immersion in Izalco was not an immediate process and although during my research I was more intentional about the people I interviewed, the spaces I frequented and the types of questions I asked, the knowledge that I had acquired prior to my fieldwork was invaluable. As such, immersion in the daily life of Izalco is not something that happened entirely during the fieldwork that I conducted for this dissertation; it has been a process that has been shaped by numerous visits to Izalco and El Salvador.

During this time of research, I also benefited from having been born in El Salvador, having Salvadoran citizenship and speaking (Salvadoran) Spanish fluently. For example, having Salvadoran citizenship allowed me to manoeuvre through the bureaucratic landscape and access documents without much difficulty, as a local researcher would. Speaking Spanish fluently also

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[24] Atecozol Park is simply known as Atecozol among locals.

facilitated the bureaucratic process, in addition to giving me access to the intricacies and subtleties of everyday discourses and practices in all interactions. Finally, having a connection to Salvadoran culture was also essential in gaining access to various social networks, an essential aspect of ethnographic approaches. At the same time, having migrated out of El Salvador at age five also allowed me some degree of outsider perspective; not that it allowed me to assess the landscape objectively, but rather, allowed me to look at discourses, practices and implications critically. It was this dual dynamic that made it possible for me to question ideas regarding the status of indigenous peoples in the country. I recall travelling to the market in Izalco during one of my early visits and being told by locals that I could only find indigenous peoples in the neighbouring town of Nahuizalco, where older women still wear *el refajo* (the traditional dress). I also remember hearing stories about the disappearing Náhuat-Pipil people and language. Yet, theses discourse only provided an initial basis for this research. Therefore, my relationship with the field allowed me to oscillate between a degree of familiarity that comes from being a "native", while at the same time benefitting from the "strangeness" of being a North American, which allowed me to "[call] into question processes that have become naturalized" (Bayard De Volo 2009, 229).

During the time I spent in Izalco for this dissertation (March-July 2012 and July 2013), I conducted over 100 in-depth interactions (both unstructured interviews and informal discussions) in the western part of the country, the area that the Náhuat-Pipils occupied in pre-colonial times and thereafter. These in-depth interactions are at the core of the dissertation. Of these interactions, I consider 58 to be formal unstructured interviews and the rest to be meaningful informal discussions. "Formal" refers to an interaction that was planned because I had been referred by an informant or because I wanted to speak with a person about a specific topic. In

such instances, I presented myself to informants as a student conducting academic research. Whether the interaction was formal or informal, interactions unfolded as informal discussions or conversations, in which I relied on situational cues to obtain information and to frame the discussion.

As is typical in interpretivist research (Yanow 2014, 18), there were countless conversations that informed this dissertation and helped me to navigate through the topic at hand. Indeed, rather than being marginal to this project, these informal conversations are as crucial to this project and have been recognized by political ethnographers as being "evidentiary sources" (Yanow 2014, 2). As Yanow puts it, in relation to her own research conversations, whether long, short, formal, or informal, are all meaningful sources of information (13).

From the moment I stepped foot in El Salvador, I engaged in conversations with people whom I encountered, asking questions based on personal "observational moments" (Yanow 2014, 18). For example, in one of my first interactions, I conversed with a public health nurse who worked in San Pedro Puxtla, who expressed how tired she was because of all walking she had done while conducting home visits in this rural part of the country. She explained that home visits had recently become more complicated, as nurses were tasked with conducting a census. I asked her what the census was about and discovered that one of the questions asked respondents about their ethnicity (Sonzacate, March 2012). As she discussed the questions on ethnicity, she also added other pieces of information that offered insight into her understanding of indigeneity. For instance, she mentioned that part of the reason they had to ask this question was because the town had been identified as "indigenous". She further observed that the times she had administered the survey, no one seemed to have answered the question affirmatively. At this

point, she turned to her husband who is a National Civil Police official originally from Izalco and asked: "Why *is* [San Pedro Puxtla] known as 'indigenous?'". Her husband then replied authoritatively, that they must be descendants of the families who once migrated to Los Izalcos, adding that "some people [in San Pedro Puxtla] have remained entirely indigenous, and others are of mixed origins" (Sonzacate, March 2012). Indeed, while these interactions were informal, they were meaningful because they exposed informants' perceptions and understandings of indigeneity. As seen in this example, some of the most meaningful discussions happened organically, as people went about their everyday lives.

Once key informants and hosts started to see that I was interested in indigenous politics, they also started to point me to additional sources. Initially, key informants introduced me to friends and acquaintances whom they believe would know a lot about Izalco. For example, one of my guides who happened to be employed at a local resort introduced me to a former neighbour whom he believed would know a lot of people in Izalco (whom I could also presumably interview). Speaking with his former neighbour opened up several other opportunities for research because she pointed me to additional people in the town. When I was referred to other informants, I opted for the formal unstructured interview method as a way of establishing trust. In these instances, I introduced myself as a researcher and started the process by asking them to tell me about Izalco.

At times, I was referred to certain informants for something specific, at which point I introduced the topic differently. For instance, in the case of Náhuat teachers at Mario Calvo Marroquin school, my lead statement was: "Tell me about the Náhuat program that is being undertaken at your school". Likewise, with regards to *cofradía* celebrations, the lead statement was "I'd like to

know more about your *cofradía* and your role as *mayordomo*". Indeed, this approach was more useful when I was after specific information about specific programs and institutions.

In both instances, there was no formulaic method for meeting people. I met with people based on referrals, consistent with the snowball method where one informant leads to another (Cohen and Arieli 2011, 423). The sample of informants is not intended to be representative, but I took seriously my interactions with people from across various ages and walks of life. In terms of timing and location of interviews and discussions, my guides took me to referrals' homes while at other times we went to their workplaces, giving people an option about when and where to talk about the topic. For the most part, I was able to speak to informants to whom I had been referred. There were a few times when guides declined to take me to certain areas of the town due to security concerns as they were reluctant to enter certain areas controlled by street gangs.

The length of interactions also varied. While some discussions were short (those that were not planned, over the course of a walk in the park or the market, for example), other interactions lasted several hours. I met some informants several times, while others only once. Again, the approach is very much guided by interpretivist methods that demonstrate the benefits of being flexible once in the field, as Schwartz-Schea and Yanow (2012) assert:

> Rather than a matter of lack of thought or planning, or even simple convenience, flexibility is essential to intelligent manoeuvering in the field, so as to pursue the situated, contextualized meaning-making of those whose lives, interactions, situations, written records and visual images, and so on are being studied (57).

Likewise, the importance of improvisation is something that Pachirat (2009) further emphasizes regarding his experience conducting ethnographic fieldwork as an employee in a U.S. slaughterhouse. From a slightly different angle, Pachirat explains that his ideas about who he

would engage with and how had to be adjusted when he found himself immersed in a pre-existing web of power relations (148-9). In this manner, decisions about who to speak to and time devoted to certain subjects and informants depended on the threads that I was following at the time.

Given my method of interaction with informants, I did not audio or video record any interviews. However, note-taking was a rigorous and ongoing exercise, after each interview or discussion and at the end of each day. I made some exceptions, in cases where I had already established a rapport with informants through multiple interviews. Understandably, this raises the question of reliability of informants' quotes and recounts found in this dissertation. In my annotations, my goal has been to remain as faithful as possible to exchanges with informants. To maintain the integrity of exchanges during interactions, I made sure to record events and conversations right after they occurred.

The reason for not always taking notes on the spot or recording interactions was that I found such interactions to generate formulaic responses about indigeneity. For example, I found that informants attempted to recite the official record of why there are no indigenous people in the country. I found that the concept of indigeneity surfaced in different ways when I took notes in informants' presence. For example, on the record an informant completely denied having knowledge about indigenous people in the town and referred me to *Casa de la Cultura*. Off the record, however, I got different glimpse of her attitudes towards indigeneity, when she stated that the story about 1932 is fabricated and it was the Indians who are to blame for the disorder (former teacher, Izalco, March 2012).

Also related to the notion of reliability is the notion of assessing truth claims, something that has been done elsewhere in relation to interpretivist ethnographic research (Allina-Pisano 2009). My goal, however, was not to ascertain facts. Thus, I was not looking to validate truth-claims made by informants. What I was looking for was their understanding of a reality, their perception. As such, there is no requirement to validate and triangulate elements to establish facts.

Geographically, the main site of analysis for this dissertation is Izalco, in the department of Sonsonate. However, I conducted a multifaceted analysis, for which I relied on in-depth research of one town (Izalco) as well as a broader survey of cities and towns in the western part of the country (Sonsonate, Sonzacate, Salcoatitán, Juayúa, Apaneca, Ataco, Nahuizalco, San Salvador, Santa Tecla and Antiguo Cuscatlán). The objective was to have a picture of perceptions of ethnicity in Izalco and elsewhere in the country, but mainly the western area. I did not travel to the northern or eastern parts of the country because doing so would have required more time and financial resources; I therefore limited my study to Izalco.

3.4 Site of Analysis: Why Izalco?

I selected Izalco as the site of analysis because indigeneity permeates everyday life and it is a central part of the collective memories of the town, particularly as they relate to memories of the 1932 massacre. First, *Izalqueños* continue to portray their civic identity as having indigenous roots, much like their national identity. In other words, the town promotes itself as indigenous and culturally vibrant because of its ancestral traditions, as seen through tourism campaigns that attempt to highlight the indigenous parts of the town (Ruta Náhuat-Pipil and Pueblos Vivos campaigns, for example). Yet, according to the national census, there are only 154 self-identified

indigenous people in the town (out of 70,959), all of whom also self-identified as having

Náhuat-Pipil descent (República de El Salvador, Censo De Población Y Vivienda 2007). While a

majority of people may not identify as indigenous, there is still a perception that indigeneity

forms part of the Salvadoran heritage and should therefore be celebrated.

In addition, there is a historic tendency among people in Izalco and elsewhere in the country, to

perceive Izalco as having strong indigenous roots. According to Browning (1971):

> By the mid-nineteenth century, [indigenous communities in Izalco] ... still
> retained their own language, their customary forms of land tenure, and willingness
> to resist changes introduced by the national government to a much greater extent
> than most other villages in the country at that time. It is not by chance that the
> centre of protest and opposition against the national redistribution of land in the
> late nineteenth century was in the south-west, or that the large peasant uprising of
> 1932 originated in the same area. A recent social survey of El Salvador still spoke
> of the 'Indian Communities of the south-west' in contrast to ladino settlements in
> other areas, and, speaking of Izalco, concluded that the villagers had resisted
> 'ladino-ization' and had not been converted to *colonos* or wage-labourers…(65).

Virtually all my informants still referred to the ethnic dynamics of the town. *Pueblo Arriba*

(upper town) was once the Ladino part of the town and *Pueblo Abajo* (lower town) was the

Indian part of the town (resort worker, Izalco, March 2012). Indeed, these two parts were

separate municipalities at certain periods in time (prior to 1836 and as of May 4, 1853 onwards),

but they were ultimately united as Izalco in 1869 (Lardé y Larin 2011, 214). According to most

people I spoke to in Izalco, in the past, there were ethnic feuds between the rival upper and lower

towns; however, most also claimed that these feuds have disappeared. Nevertheless, these ethnic

feuds still serve as a reference point from which people build their understanding of indigeneity.

For instance, to explain the feuds between the two towns, a self-identified mestizo man (with

indigenous parents) who was originally from lower town, recalls the name-calling that happened

among children of both towns; the Indians from lower town were known as "*garroberos*" (or

iguana catchers), Ladinos from upper town were known as "*chipilineros*"[25] (motorist, Izalco, May 2012). Several informants recalled how this sort of name-calling among people, especially children, reflected the divide between the two towns (e.g. motorist, Izalco, April 2012).

What makes the ethnic dynamic interesting in Izalco is precisely the extreme ambivalence and paradox of indigeneity: local inhabitants as well as outsiders of Izalco still say that the city has strong indigenous roots, which contrasts with the nationwide notion of mestizaje. However, at the very same time, most of my informants do not see themselves as indigenous, and images and discourses about indigeneity are predominantly essentializing, fixed and stereotypical. Indigeneity is both ambivalently present and absent, as well as stereotypical, and nascently dynamic.

In short, Izalco is an important site of analysis because of the ethnic dynamics that continue to be part of everyday life in the town. For example, like Browning noted in 1971, there are people in the country who still consider that Izalco is an indigenous town, but this is problematic given that most informants believed that indigenous people are on the verge of disappearing. The notion that Izalco is an indigenous town certainly diverges from recent narratives within the town that deny the current existence of indigenous people and denote the Indian as an invisible *other* in a neighbouring town (as is the case with people who direct those wishing to speak to an indigenous person to the elderly ladies in Nahuizalco). This is also problematic when confronted with people who self-identify as indigenous and who are leading an indigenous cultural and political revitalization.

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[25] *Chipilin* is an edible plant with leaves; often it grows in the wild.

Added to these ethnic dimensions, is the resurfacing of indigenous groups that are calling for the

vindication of indigenous rights. Presently, indigenous people are leading a process of

indigenous political and cultural revival (or revitalization). This includes indigenous individuals

and activist groups at both the national and local levels, who through organizations such as

CCNIS and the Feliciano Ama Foundation (Fundación Feliciano Ama, FAMA), are making

demands to the state based on their collective indigenous identities. It also includes indigenous

people in Izalco who are asserting their cultural identities despite attitudes that deny the very

existence of indigenous people. While a geographical dimension of ethnic conflicts may no

longer be evidenced, conflicts can still be viewed at the ideational and practical level, where

ethnic boundaries were well sedimented.

3.5   Fieldwork Time Period and Period of Analysis

I conducted the fieldwork for this dissertation between 2012 and 2014. This is an important

detail, as it can help to contextualize certain views that informants might have had during this

time period. For instance, there were legislative representative and mayoral elections in

April 2012, which might help to explain the politicization of indigenous issues. There was also a

presidential election in February 2014 in which *buen vivir* made its way into political discourse

and became central to FMLN candidate Salvador Sánchez Cerén's winning platform. Finally, the

constitution was amended on June 12, 2014, to officially recognize indigenous peoples, as well

as to promote and protect indigenous languages and cosmovision (see articles 62 and 63).[26] The

fact that these events occurred during this time was especially helpful because it provided

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[26] It should be noted that *buen vivir* did not form part of the constitutional amendment; it was simply the base for the FMLN candidate's electoral platform.

grounds from which to see how people grapple with indigeneity in their everyday contexts as broader events unfolded.

While my intention is to analyze contemporary ethnopolitical processes, there is also a historical component to my research, given that I am attempting to examine the pervasiveness of colonial relations. I am therefore also interested in historical literary works, narratives, memories, and practices that help to explain contemporary ethnopolitical relations. I approach these texts using the notion of "ethnographic sensibility" as described in section 3.1. In this sense, the period of analysis is much broader, but the goal is to analyze contemporary ramifications of these evidentiary sources.

3.6 Interviews and Participant Observation

First, I travelled through the western part of the country because I was interested in examining indigeneity in people's everyday lives, through symbols, perceptions of these symbols and the ways in which indigeneity acquires its various meanings. I lived in the city of Sonzacate (approximately 4 km from Izalco) and travelled to Izalco on a daily basis, where I conducted interviews in a participant observation fashion, getting involved in the activities of my informants (for example, as they made their handicrafts, sold bread at an outdoor stand, prepped for celebrations, conducted a music practice), which allowed me to interact with them and observe how they related to other people and their surroundings. I asked questions about their activities, but my interviews extended well beyond the question and answer format, because I paid close attention to the tones employed, things that people omitted from their answers, as well as interruptions and the conversations that ensued.

Initially, I planned to conduct interviews using a standard set of leading questions (see Appendix 1). The objective of these questions was to use them as starting points from which to position follow-up questions about views on indigeneity and indigenous organization. However, after conducting a small sample of informations with these questions, I quickly realized that there was a pattern in how people answered these questions. Namely, people tended to resort to formulaic responses about indigeneity, involving indigenous disappearance especially after 1932. Upon observing this repeated pattern, I adapted my approach to rely predominantly on informal discussions and interactions, which proved more fruitful in terms of references to indigeneity in everyday contexts, as I discussed in section 3.3.

Accordingly, I documented approximately 100 interactions (58 of which were formal unstructured interviews and 45 were informal, unstructured discussions, see Appendix 2) in Izalco and elsewhere in El Salvador. I should also note that two informal discussions happened while travelling to El Salvador—one with a U.S. expatriate in El Salvador and another was with a Salvadoran migrant living in the U.S. Moreover, I conducted numerous other unplanned interviews that occurred organically over the course of the research, a common method among political ethnographers (Yanow, Ybema and Van Hulst 2011-2012, 13). As Yanow et al. remark, political ethnographers often find most useful "short chats in the hallways of the town halls before or after meetings and during breaks, longer conversations during lunches and dinners, and formal, open-ended interviews in offices and at people's homes" (13). In this manner, most of my "interviews" were more like unstructured conversations conducted with people in their everyday contexts (joining them in the activities they were conducting at the time of the interview—such as, participating in celebrations, opening up an office, making or selling handicrafts). While I did not document most informal discussions, they were instrumental in the

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process of framing the subject matter, getting to know the actors and the setting. Indeed, the overall objective of the informal discussion/interview stage involved getting acquainted with the town, people, sites, events, everyday rituals and discourses that have "indigenous" significance.

I conducted this part of the research using the snowball method in which one informant led me to another and so on (Cohen and Arieli 2011). Interviews and discussions were only one aspect of this stage. When conducting such interviews or engaging in conversations, I also considered surroundings (what informants were doing, the spaces in which they carried out their daily activities); their actions (body language, what they do or do not do); the words they employed and the colloquialisms (what they say, how they say it, particular words, phrases, signifiers); their social status based on self-declarations and inferences about their profession, employment satus, and often based on their dwelling; and their perceptions of ethnicity. I planned some interviews, while others were spontaneous. Conversations with host families were also included as part of this research, because they provided candid details into the daily lives of individuals. This was complemented by more personal interviews in which I attempted to trace genealogies of the families in the town and draw linkages with other residents of the town and with historical figures. The objective was to filter out the instances in which utterances, ideas, practices and objects referenced indigeneity, thereby giving meaning to indigeneity. For this exercise, I looked for projections of indigenous identities. Rather than having an exhaustive list of indigenous practices and discourses with which individuals could identify, I relied on overt and subtle cues that make reference to indigeneity.

I also paid attention to insults or compliments geared at someone regarding ethnicity, jokes containing references to indigeneity, allusions to property relations involving land belonging to

indigenous people or taken away based on indigeneity, references to customs held by indigenous

ancestors and references to customs passed on by ancestors, as well as references to political

involvement in indigenous causes. The goal was to find out how people perceive indigenous

symbols, the way in which they have (not) appropriated indigenous symbols, practices or objects,

and the way in which certain elements are deemed as being indigenous.

I was likewise interested in discourses and practices where indigeneity was absent, mainly when

conducting interviews. However, this also included analyzing everyday discourses that do not

contain references to indigenous peoples, school curricula that do not make references to

indigenous identities, historical accounts that omit indigenous peoples, lack of indigenous

monuments, and the absence of indigenous categories in official documents, such as the national

census. Moreover, I paid close attention to institutions, discourses and practices that are

associated to indigeneity and those that are considered not indigenous according to the

perceptions of the individuals at the sites of study.

To be sure, I did not study this town to reify assumptions about ethnicity, but instead to examine

how indigeneity operates in their everyday life. I attempted to set the different narratives on

indigeneity against one another to understand the individual and collective meanings of

indigeneity in everyday contexts and how they impact politics, consistent with ethnographic

interpretivist research as Yanow (2003, 11) and Wedeen (2009, 85) describe.

Periodically, I travelled to sites of local and national significance (outside of Izalco) because of

their "indigenous" nature and took part in events where I conducted informal interviews with

different individuals to understand the meaning attributed to indigenous symbols. The methods

of analysis and data collection were much like the ones described in the previous section, where I focused on Izalco, but I also tried to get a sense of how people perceive Izalco in neighbouring towns.

Finally, I interviewed two indigenous organization leaders (one from CCNIS and one from FAMA). The objective was to conduct several one-on-one interviews to understand the political dimension of indigenous movements in the country and how they relate to the wider indigenous movements occurring in Latin America. I should note that while I intended to interview more indigenous organization leaders, people in Izalco repeatedly pointed me to the only two that I interviewed. Rather than attempting to create a random sample of interviews based on my own perceptions of indigeneity, I chose to focus exclusively on interviewing those whom informants considered indigenous leaders. This methodological choice has benefits and limitations. One of the drawbacks is that it does not provide a holistic analysis of indigenous movements in El Salvador. Granted, CCNIS is a coordinating organization—meaning that several organizations operate under its umbrella. As such, FAMA is one of the organizations affiliated to CCNIS. However, like FAMA, there are other organizations, each with their own niche.[27] There are also organizations unaffiliated with CCNIS that also merit further study, such as ANIS. However, it is worth noting that CCNIS and FAMA are from my experience the more visible organizations in Izalco. In my attempts to find indigenous organizations, I often found myself circling back to CCNIS and FAMA, given my snowball method approach. Speaking to these organizations' leaders was a difficult task as office hours were irregular. It was often a waiting exercise until someone from the organization showed up—even after scheduling appointments. One of my

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[27] See "Quienes Somos" (n. d.)

informants did provide a link to an ANIS leader and shaman who lived in Sonsonate

(approximately 8 km from Izalco). However, efforts in locating this person were unsuccessful.

While there are drawbacks stemming from the lack of voices from these organizations, these

failed attempts at locating indigenous organizations and their leaders are indicative of the

ethnopolitical environment. Tilley (2002) attempts to show how external factors, embodied in the

transnational indigenous peoples' movement, were responsible for the formation of indigenous

organizations in El Salvador (552). In doing so, the author also observes that disorganization and

lack of representativeness has been a reoccurring characteristic of indigenous organizations.

While these may at first seem like drawbacks to the objectives of this research, I consider them

to be beneficial to this research. Tilley's findings appear to be corroborated by this research,

insofar as the indigenous voices seem to be few. However, given the current context and

successes of indigenous actors, the lack of voices raises questions about the weight of prominent

indigenous voices. Perhaps most importantly, it raises questions about the obstacles preventing

indigenous organization, which is at the core of this research.

3.7   Spaces and Indigeneity

In addition to conducting interviews and participant observation, I visited places which

informants considered to be indigenous, or of indigenous significance, across the western part of

the country (where I also conducted informal unstructured interviews). For example, I visited

parks (Balboa, San Andrés, Joya de Cerén, Tazumal, Atecozol) and monuments (Indio Atonal,

Indio Atlacatl in Antiguo Cuscatlán and Indio Atlacatl in San Salvador) that project an idea of

indigeneity. I was equally interested in the meaning that people who also visited these sites

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attributed to the symbols. Additionally, I visited key cities that informants identified as indigenous—most notably Nahuizalco because of the older women who wear *el refajo*, but also Juayúa, Ataco, San Salvador, Chalchuapa, Joya de Cerén, Planes de Rendero and Antiguo Cuscatlán because of certain symbols, objects or monuments that informants pointed out.[28]

I was also interested in those instances in which indigenous symbols form part of the everyday landscape. Rather than having a pre-determined list of sources, I opted for a research design that allowed the flexibility to follow meaningful traces as they came about and the freedom to be responsive to these leads and to take seriously the instances when this occurred. As such, I was open to symbols as they appeared in everyday life. For example, Tilley (2005) notes that indigenous symbols are quite prominent in unexpected places, such as the *Pollo Indio* or "Indian chicken" brand which carries meaning in terms of practices that have come to shape notions of indigeneity. In this case, "Indian" chicken may appeal to the quality of the product, but in my experience it also carries a sense of pride and nostalgia. In this regard, I also looked closely at various forms of literature (commercial, promotional, literary and political, for example), art and music containing indigenous references and symbols. On the whole, I was interested in the types of symbols that give meanings to the idea of indigeneity that may seem arbitrary and inconsequential, but that when pieced together form a broader "regime of representation" (Hall 2003, 232). For this exercise, I was led by informants, who would point me to literature or media during our conversations (for example, Náhuat textbooks, commemorative pamphlets that informants showed me). I also conducted archival research in both Izalco and San Salvador, to access official publications containing references to indigeneity (for example, *Revista Cultural*

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[28]Only after the fact, did I realize that I had covered most of the Náhuat-Pipil tourist route (Ruta Náhuat-Pipil is intended to take visitors through indigenous sites of interest including towns and archaeological sites).

which I often rely on to examine state discourse and make inferences about state position on various issues). To identify "ethnic" representations, I paid close attention to instances where visual representations made reference to *el refajo,* traditional (sometimes feathered) headgear and Indian costumes. Discursively, I paid attention to elements that were overtly (for example, containing the words *Indio, indigena, Indianada,* or making reference to 1932) and covertly making references to Indians (such as storytelling).

3.8   Indigenous Activist Groups

As mentioned earlier, I intended to interview various indigenous organization leaders to understand the indigenous movement in El Salvador, their motivations, struggles and visions. However, I only interviewed one indigenous activist from CCNIS and one from FAMA. Nevertheless, CCNIS represents 23 partner associations (14 at the time of my fieldwork). The second leader I interviewed was the founder of FAMA, an indigenous organization based in Izalco. FAMA is an organization under the CCNIS umbrella, in addition to being based out of Izalco. Its founder is also a prominent figure at the national level who often appears in the news speaking about indigenous cultural and linguistic revitalization. Apart from *cofradías*, these are the only other organization that my informants in Izalco referenced as being indigenous organizations.

I want to reiterate that this is reflective of the environment in Izalco. Many of the people with whom I spoke were quick to point me in the direction of "experts" on indigeneity, predominantly the leader of FAMA. The founder is regarded as a leader in indigenous issues in Izalco and among states-people because of her long quest to salvage indigenous traditions and language. I

take the messages of these activists as authoritative insofar as informants perceived these organization leaders as having knowledge about indigenous affairs. Granted, this does not reflect the multiplicity of indigenous ideas among indigenous organizations. However, part of this dissertation is to demonstrate how indigeneity exists even outside of groups. This is especially meaningful given Tilley's (2002) questioning of the representativeness of indigenous organizations. In this sense, indigenous organization voices are but one aspect of experiences of indigeneity. It should be highlighted that in addition to leaders of official organizations, this thesis also brings in the voices of indigenous teachers, musicians, religious cofradía leaders, artisans, handicraft vendors and Náhuat students, among others.

In summary, this research approach allowed me to interact with different individuals in El Salvador to understand how they perceive indigeneity, as reflected in their discourses and practices, what they say in private and in public, and the objects, events and rituals to which they attribute importance. This was instrumental in determining the boundaries upon which people give meaning to indigeneity. Furthermore, it allowed me to establish the parameters of indigeneity as people construct them and the mechanisms they use to determine what is included as indigenous, what is not included as indigenous, and most importantly, the associated implications. These strategies further helped me to evaluate the impact that indigenous symbols have on the broad population in present-day Izalco. They also helped me to assess the degree to which the meaning attributed to indigeneity is solely projected towards the past, whether there is some degree of self-appropriation and self-identification with indigenous symbols, and whether there is a self-identification that is not dependent on public symbols, but rather symbols that are more subtle and only evidenced in an everyday context.

3.9   Ethical Concerns

El Salvador is among the most violent countries in the world; this is a result of the unprecedented degree of gang violence that has come to disrupt everyday life (Hume 2009; Pedraza-Farina, Miller and Cavallaro 2010). As Hume (2009) describes, violence has been normalized and has come to be accepted as an everyday experience. During the course of this research, it was evident that people feared for their safety and accessing certain locations was not desirable by informants. Opening up to me, a stranger, was not automatic; I therefore relied on pre-established networks in order to gain access to informants and information. Given that I am interested in hidden transcripts, which pay close attention to what is said unofficially, I am careful to protect people's privacy. In order to protect the people with whom I engaged, the names of informants have been changed, except the names of public figures who speak on behalf of the state. I have been deliberate to not endanger the lives of informants or their networks. Even when individuals are informed that discussions are intended for a research project, participant observation research still involves the development of trust, which I intend to respect. As a result, this research required constant re-evaluation of the research and of the risks involved in making certain elements public.

Ethical concerns also relate to the investigation of current and past affairs in El Salvador. The political environment is such that research is not just political, but also partisan. As such, the mere act of requesting access to archives and taking advantage of new policies of access to information are political and partisan issues. For instance, I was granted access to the Izalco municipal archives by the newly elected ARENA mayor, but he later added conditions to the access granted without explanation. At times, my lack of access to documents did not seem to

align with recently established national access to information policies implemented during President Mauricio Funes' presidential term. This does not simply affect protected information, but also information in the public domain (such as the list of mayors and their political affiliation since the town's inception, which I was unable to obtain).

Studying the political context of El Salvador can be particularly challenging because of the overall polarization that has been fostered in the country (Ladutke 2004), the idea that the research deals with sensitive material related to a traumatic past (Binford 1998), and the notion that the research deals with sensitive issues over which there continues to be disagreement (Lauria-Santiago and Binford 2004). The context in which the research was being carried out at times delayed access to relevant documents, to informants and to sources directly tied to the institutions of interest.

Since digging up the histories of El Salvador also carried ethical concerns, a copy of the ethics certificate is therefore included with this dissertation (Appendix 3). There were countless human rights abuses against indigenous people, with which people are still coming to terms (as a nation mostly, rather than as individuals). During the 1932 massacres, indigenous people were victims of state repression. As a result, it is important to understand the sentiments that speaking of ethnic or class conflicts could evoke for victims as well as perpetrators. However, openness has been one of the strategies that Salvadorans have adopted as a way of dealing and coming to terms with the past.[29] In addition, since ethnicity is such a grey area, generally speaking there is a lot of freedom to speak to people (who generally identify as mestizo) about these events. In fact,

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[29] The Museum of the Word and Image (MUPI) has undertaken several campaigns at fostering a collective memory in relation to El Salvador's indigenous past. This involved the launch of an exhibition and dissemination of images from the 1932 massacre, see Enriquez Consalvi) 2008.

this is one of the central principles in this research, that ethnicity is not reducible to "indigenous people"; it is actually widespread throughout society. Therefore, the risk of evoking strong feelings is still very low as Salvadorans collectively deal with their past.

One final ethical concern that I wish to discuss is the notion that some of the indigenous people that I interviewed did not want to be treated as another project. According to them, many international non-governmental organizations have done this, which has only exacerbated division among indigenous peoples. As such, I have attempted to be reflexive along the way to avoid turning people into a project. I accomplished this by committing to make my research available to Salvadorans upon completion by means of a conference and a donation of the manuscript for inclusion in university libraries. As much as possible, I have tried to bring clarity to the social relations involving indigeneity, but also turn my attention to Salvadorans to provide them with another tool to address their social, political, economic, and environmental issues from within the country. Providing my research to Salvadorans is also a way of giving back to the people that hosted me and that gave me access to their various networks. Indeed, I am indebted to the people that hosted me, including guides and informants, and hope that my research can help them in achieving their objectives.

Conclusion

Beyond conducting a qualitative investigation, the chapters that follow draw their influence from interpretive, postmodern and decolonial approaches, with the intention of taking perceptions, attitudes and meanings attributed to indigeneity as central to social inquiry, and exposing sites of

power impeding indigenous expressions. In them, I analyze the meanings attributed to

indigeneity and indigenous symbols, as well as the ways that people experience indigeneity.

Chapter 4: Historical Context

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize indigenous politics in Izalco by giving a short history of the town as well as the country to help situate the research. In addition to shedding light on the importance of land politics in the study of indigeneity, I give an overview of the 1932 massacre and its significance in the politics of indigeneity. In addition, I contextualize Izalco's history within the scope of the Salvadoran civil war in order to explain the pivotal role that Izalco has played in relation to ethnic politics in Izalco.

4.1   The Municipality of Izalco

Izalco is located close to 55 kilometres west of San Salvador, in the department of Sonsonate. Its territory covers 175.90 square km and in 2010, the town had a population of over 70,000 inhabitants (Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal 2010). At the time of my research, Izalco was governed by Roberto Alvarado, the first FMLN mayor. In 2012, however, the FMLN mayor was defeated and ARENA mayor, José Alfonso Guevara, came to power.

In El Salvador, the media often portrays Izalco as one of the most violent municipalities in the department of Sonsonate, affected largely by the gang violence present throughout El Salvador.[30] According to police authorities from Izalco, much of the crime evidenced in the town is a result of rural migration from neighbouring areas (high ranking police officer, April 2015). Conversations with people across various demographics further revealed that one of the major preoccupations for people in Izalco is (in)security.

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[30] See Salguero (March 26, 2016) and Lopez (November 14, 2015)

4.1.1 Historical Antecedents

Izalco was founded in 1543 and emerged from two rival towns: Dolores de Izalco (also known as *Pueblo Arriba* or upper town) and Asunción de Izalco (also known as *Pueblo Abajo* or lower town). According to narratives of the town, *Pueblo Arriba* was predominantly inhabited by ladinos, whereas *Pueblo Abajo* was primarily populated by Indians. Historically, the two towns separated and unified at various instances; the towns were separated in 1836, unified again in 1838 and separated again in 1853 (Lardé y Larin 2011, 210). The towns were successfully unified for one last time in 1869, a process that lasted close to seven years due to resistance from residents (Lardé y Larin 2011, 210).

Pre-colonization, Izalco was an important indigenous territory, founded as *Tecpán Izalco* by Topilzin Acxitl Quetzalcohuatl II in 1054 (C.E.) (Lardé y Larin 2011, 206). Later known as *Provincia de Los Izalcos*, encompassing the current towns of Izalco, Caluco, Nahulingo and Tacuscalco, the town was once one of the most densely populated indigenous settlements on what is now Salvadoran territory (Rodriguez-Herrera 2007, 86; Lardé y Larin 2011, 206; Browning 1971, 54). In Diego Garcia de Palacios'[31] letters to the Spanish Crown, he describes Izalco as an important Indian settlement, with many natural and human resources from which the Spanish Crown could benefit (Alvarado, Garcia de Palacio and Ciudad-Real 2000, 40-41). Browning (1971), also recounts how in the mid-1500s, explorers were well aware of Izalco and the richness of its land (56).

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[31] Spanish explorer, who in 1524, wrote several letters detailing his travels. These narratives have been published in a historical volume, by CONCULTURA, the former branch of the Salvadoran government for culture and arts until the creation of SECULTURA (Asamblea Legislativa, Diario Oficial, vol. 117).

During the colonial period, indigenous communities lost land at the hands of the Spanish elite, whose main goal was agricultural development. Elites therefore appropriated lands (either physically or by coerced labour) for commercial enterprises (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 22; Wolf 2009, 435; Browning 1971, 60). As Browning (171) describes:

> This process of absorption and dispossession affected most parts of the colony… numerous large village communities were replaced by private estates; the pattern of settlement became characterized by dispersed populations of labourers attached to private estates or migrant subsistence cultivators dependent on them (71).

Izalco therefore became a successful economic centre during the colonial period. Its success came from the cocoa and balsam that the Indians grew in the area (Browning 1971, 56). The Indians that inhabited the area were very knowledgeable of local growing conditions; their traditional expertise in growing cocoa and balsam explains in part the economic growth that occurred (Browning 1971, 56). However, while the large indigenous population in Izalco made the area desirable for Spanish colonizers to settle nearby, much of Izalco's fame came from the "deep volcanic soils, spring-fed streams... and a hot and humid lowland climate" that favoured the cultivation of cocoa and eventually coffee as well (Browning 1971, 56). European settlers were therefore very attracted to the area (Browning 1971, 56-57). As Browning (1971) further describes, Izalco became "a town of merchants and traders," given that Indians from neighbouring towns came to Izalco to trade their cocoa and balsam products (56). In 1555, European settlers even built their own settlement in the neighbouring town of Sonsonate in order to benefit from the large amounts of cocoa being produced (about one third of the Audiencia of Guatemala's[32] crop) (1971, 58). The commerce taking place in the town enabled the formation of merchant and labourer classes (Browning 1971, 56, 58).

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[32] Former Spanish colony composed of several Central American states, including El Salvador.

Izalco declined in its commercial status through the 18th century, in part due to a minimal decline in population, but also as a result of international competition and indigenous resistance in economic and political matters, which fostered protectionist measures of Indian communities (Browning 1971, 63-65). According to Browning (1971), the protectionist measures in place were meant to safeguard indigenous interest and economic independence (65). Alternatively, it meant that indigenous people "retained their own language, their customary forms of land tenure, and willingness to resist changes introduced by the national government to a much greater extent than most other villages in the country at that time" (Browning 1971, 65).

4.1.2   Land and Ethnicity in Izalco

This intersection of ethnicity and land politics has been at the core of Izalco's history, given that land has been traditionally central to the self-definition of indigenous people. As Lauria-Santiago (2004) states, "politics of nineteenth-century economic development in the region must be understood in the context of historical patterns of land tenure. Throughout the colonial period, landownership was central to the status and identity of Izalco's Indian communities" (20). Accordingly, many feuds over access to land and land ownership most often occurred along ethnic lines, between Indians, Ladinos and Spaniards (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 18; Browning 1971, 87, 92-94; Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008a, 45).

Among the sources of conflict, Lauria-Santiago (2004) remarks that through the 19th century "ladinization of the population and its effects on land tenure were a source of increasing tensions and conflict" (19). This can be explained, at least in part, by the notion that certain lands were specifically assigned to indigenous communities (*ejidos* or communal lands) and that landed

elites were often seen as imposing a system of land ownership that further contributed to the ethnicization of land politics (Browning 1971, 87). In other words, ladino control of municipalities meant that Indians were unable to control decrees that reduced their access to land (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 20).

The notion that people were increasingly doing away with indigenous traditions and customs, and assimilating to the mestizo population, also had an impact on indigenous access to land (Lauria-Santiago, 18). Furthermore, Dolores and Asunción both had well-established ethnic communities prior to unification, so unification actually weakened the status of indigenous communities and increased ladino control over resources. Communities were left with decreased representation since one body now represented their interests instead of two (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 22).

Structural conditions also led to ethnic tensions. An economy that increasingly favoured commercial mid-scale producers contributed to the expansion of wage labour (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 19).The success of the commercial sector resulting from the growth of coffee and sugar markets meant that peasant and indigenous workers' reliance on seasonal wage labour "reflected the impact of a deepening disparity in access to land and irrigation among both Indian and ladino peasants in Izalco" (Lauria-Santiago 2004, 19). It is therefore unsurprising to Browning that Izalco became one of the sites in the Western part of the country subject to indigenous/peasant[33] uprisings, especially in 1932 as I later describe.

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[33] The Indian/peasant juncture is a result of a number of factors, including the connection between Indians and agricultural labour, through which indigenous people have often been identified (Browning 1971), and land reforms, which allude to the political transformations through which indigenous people became peasants (Yashar 2005, especially p. 61).

It should be noted that at the time of the 1932 massacre, communal lands had been largely

transferred to private landowners, with coffee being one of the main crops (Lindo Fuentes, Ching

and Lara Martinez 2007, 27-8). As such, downward pressures in the price of coffee had much to

do with the economic situation that led to the rebellion (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2007, 28).

Lindo Fuentes et al. (2007) state that "[i]ssues of land, labor, local political control, market

fluctuations, racism, and militarism converged into a highly volatile situation that eventually

exploded in open revolt" (28).

4.1.3   The 1932 Massacre

Perhaps one of the most atrocious outworking of the intersection between land and ethnicity

occurred on January 22 and 23 of 1932, when indigenous and ladino peasants in the western

countryside mobilized to seize a number of municipalities across the western part of the country.

The Izalco rebels, who were presumably led by the Izalco native Feliciano Ama, were armed

mostly with machetes. They targeted "symbols of local power, such as government buildings,

businesses, homes, military garrisons, and local Ladino elites" in the areas of: Tacuba,

Ahuachapán, Juayúa, Salcoatitán, Nahuizalco, Sonzacate, Sonsonate, Izalco, and Colón

(Lindo Fuentes et al. 2007, 28). Generally, the towns that the Indians seized were predominantly

inhabited by indigenous people (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2010, 42). There were some casualties at

the hands of the rebels, in particular Izalco mayor, Miguel Call. Led by General Maximiliano

Hernandez Martinez, the government's heavy response generated many more casualties.

Estimates of killed indigenous peasants range between 10,000 and 30,000. According to

Lindo Fuentes (2007), "[t]he rebels' only advantage were numbers and surprise. Whenever the

army had time to prepare, its speed and overwhelming firepower resulted in victory"

(Lindo Fuentes et al. 2007, 37).

Ethnic tensions were only exacerbated after the massacre. As Lindo Fuentes et al. (2007) report, Ladinos sought retribution from the Indians whom authorities continued to mistreat (42). The event was quelled by January 25, 1932, and by that point, the government had begun a mass killing campaign against enemies of the state. This happened indiscriminately, as evidenced by the bodies that lined towns' streets. It also occurred as more orchestrated repression in instances when men attended the town square under the impression they would receive a safe-conduct pass but instead, would all be shot and buried in common graves (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2007, 38).

One of the ongoing debates is the degree to which the rebellion was a communist attack endorsed by the head communist leaders in Moscow or whether it was an attack largely orchestrated independently. One argument is that the Communist Party of El Salvador (*Partido Comunista de El Salvador*, PCS) acted independently along with other communist organizations (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2007, 43). What is perhaps more significant, however, is that "communist" was a catch-all word during that time, that was used to describe anything "violent, immoral, against the law, contrary to the nation-state, or lacking Christianity" (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2007, 46). In sum, the state associated Indian and peasant dissent with being communist.

1932 is an important date in indigenous politics because to a vast majority of Salvadorans it reflects the cause of indigenous peoples' decline. According to a number of narratives, indigenous populations have sharply declined in El Salvador since the 1932 massacre. It

represents the beginning of a period when many indigenous people opted to become mestizo due to state terror. According to Anderson (1992):

> The 1932 revolt, of course, caused strong measures to be taken against Indian culture. There was a noticeable drop in the number of persons adhering to Indian dress, customs, or language after 1932. This was due in large measure to the great massacre, but as the time went on chief impetus to change appears to have been the desire to slough off the characteristics of a despised group within the population (33).

In general, and according to self-identified indigenous individuals, the fear propagated among indigenous people in 1932 continues to be seen as one of the main contributing factors to the disappearance of indigenous dress and language in the town of Izalco (various interviews, Izalco, April 2012). Accordingly, Carlos, a man who self-identifies as "mestizo" and a native of Izalco, asserts that the repression in 1932 forced Indians to assimilate and to adopt "normal" clothes (Izalco, March 2012). This belief also resonates with Roberto Alvarado's narrative (mayor of Izalco between 2009 and 2012), who claims that indigenous people were forced to assimilate or were otherwise killed by the military (Izalco, February 2012). Náhuat teachers from Izalco also noted that the Náhuat language disappeared because people were fearful of the violence inflicted in 1932 (Santa Tecla, June 2012).

It is worth noting that 1932 became pivotal for the left's organization efforts leading up to the civil war and during the civil war as well (Gellman 2017). Gellman (2017) argues that 1932 became a dogmatic event for the left, which gave meaning to the political left's mobilization efforts leading up to the civil war in the 1980s (137). On the one hand, the organizations that came together under the FMLN banner united under the name of the communist leader of the uprising, Farabundo Martí. On the other hand, Gellman also contends that fear of another event like that of 1932 was instrumental in the left's organization efforts (138). As such, 1932 is

important insofar as the left uses the events to explain class struggles experienced to this day (Patrick 2004, 95). Despite the fact that 1932 was important in the left's rhetoric, it was also clear that the 1932 events were also used to explain the class struggles of the day (Patrick 2004, 95). This is confirmed in Shafik Handal's autobiograhy (2011), in which his treatment of the indigenous questions reflects how the left privileged class over indigenous struggles during the civil war.

Presently, 1932 represents an important year for indigenous peoples in El Salvador because the events have become a tool for the vindication of rights and for the recognition of indigenous peoples. As such, state narratives of indigeneity now feature references to the victims of 1932 (as reflected in Mauricio Funes' attempt at erecting a monument to honour victims). Literary works, public exhibitions, artistic representations, and mandates of emergent indigenous organizations have surfaced that allude to the beginning of a time in which indigenous people increasingly assimilated to the dominant culture, adopting new forms of dress and traditions. This stands in stark contrast to the current discourses of ARENA representatives, who refer to 1932 as a victory against communism, when the state defeated *los rojos* (or the reds). This discourse resurfaces during electoral campaigns, which the ARENA party traditionally begins in Izalco, the site where communists were defeated in 1932.[34] As declares the official ARENA anthem played at gatherings: El Salvador will be the grave where the reds will be terminated or "*El Salvador será la tumba donde los rojos terminarán*".[35]

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[34] See Romero (October 3, 2013); Giralt (January 16, 2003); Cabrera (January 11, 2012); Cabrera (January 9, 2012)

[35] See "Marcha Oficial de ARENA" (n. d.); See also Castaneda, C. (May 2, 2012), a video where ARENA members sing the anthem while celebrating the inauguration of a new ARENA mayor.

4.2   El Salvador's Civil War

El Salvador's history is one marked by poverty and inequality (Wood 2001), violence (Hume 2009; Alvarenga 2006), state repression (Binford 1996), land conflicts (Kowalchuk 2004) and attempts at neoliberalization (Wade 2008; Morley, Nakasone, and Pineiro 2007). What can be described as a bleak history comes from a longstanding tendency of elitist rule to the detriment of the lower socioeconomic strata (Patrick 2004, 93-4).

As such, with the growth of coffee as the main export industry in the 19th century, an oligarchy of 14 families was also established, whose interest was mainly the preservation of their social status (Wolf 2009, 435; Patrick 2004, 94; Wood 2001, 869). Historically, there was a tendency among oligarchs and the military to maintain the conditions that contributed to the establishment of a subservient class in El Salvador, which positioned many of the class conflicts that ensued. According to Wood (869), there came a point when "reformist factions of the military occasionally attempted to modernize land tenure and labor relations (in 1944, 1960, 1972, and 1976), [but] the core alliance of landlords and military hard-liners repeatedly defeated such attempted reforms" (869). This is something that Kowalchuk (2004) reiterates, claiming that upon seeing its power dissipating, the right attempted to preserve their social status by the blocking of measures towards agrarian reform (189). Wolf (2009) adds that the right also resorted to the formation of death squads as a form of retaining their political power, as was orchestrated by ex-Major Roberto D'Aubuisson in conjunction with other powerful actors (437).

One of the major repercussions from social inequality was the eruption of the civil war, which lasted for about a decade and ended in 1992. During the 1970s, the state became increasingly

repressive against dissent. State repression continued as the state tried to dismantle the FMLN's

support base, which at this point had armed itself (Wood 2001, 869-70). The United States (U.S.)

intervened in the conflict in order to quell the insurgents, meaning that El Salvador became

another operation in the U.S.' Cold War politics (Wood 2001, 870).

The civil war claimed the lives of 25 to 100 thousand people (Thompson 1997, 456;

Needler 1991, 586; Stanley 2006, 102). There were also numerous human rights violations that

occurred during the civil war, many of which came to light in the Truth Commission for

El Salvador report (1993). One of the more infamous violations includes what Scott (2001) refers

to as the "mass extra-legal execution" that occurred in El Mozote, El Salvador (80). Binford's

(1996) in-depth analysis of the El Mozote documents the massacre in which individuals of

several villages were rounded up by the Atlacatl Battalion, a division of the armed forces, and

were subsequently tortured, raped, and burned alive (20, 21). His research sheds light on the

structural obstacles faced by those who wished to investigate the human rights violations

committed by the Atlacatl Battalion (Binford, 122, 123). It was not until the government

received significant pressure from the international community (predominantly from Tutela

Legal, a catholic organization who kept track of human rights abuses during the war) that the

government decided to allow investigations to continue (Binford, 122).

The reconstruction of the country's political infrastructure began with the signing of the Peace

Accords on January 6, 1992 between the state, led by Alfredo Cristiani of ARENA, and the

FMLN rebel group. At this point, the FMLN guerilla movement was transformed into a political

party that competed in the 1994 elections. The FMLN has only grown in strength since this time

and in 2009, the former guerilla group won the presidential election with Mauricio Funes as its

leader. El Salvador is therefore experiencing the "transformation of a system based upon violent political conflict between armed groups to one based upon nonviolent political conflict between competing political parties" (Allison 2010, 104).

Nevertheless, El Salvador faces new challenges, some of which are the product of the civil war. Namely, according to one theory, the war resulted in migration en masse as well as deportations, which later created conditions that favour gang formation (Cruz 2010, 384). Street gangs are a major problem for Salvadorans; they have exacerbated social unrest as they threaten locals, and extort and abuse them (Gomez-Johnson 2015, 213; Hume 2007, 741). The situation is such that people are forced to flee neighbourhoods that have been taken hostage by gangs (Kennedy 2013, 50). Gang violence is an extensive issue, deserving more in-depth analysis. For this section, it is sufficient to point out that it forms part of the political and social context of the city and as briefly mentioned in the methodology section, at times feelings of anxiety among some informants prevented me from accessing other informants (because it required going into areas that are controlled by gangs).

4.2.1   Indigenous Politics during the Civil War

Between 1960 and 1983, the National Association of Indigenous Salvadorans (*Asociación Nacional de Indígenas Salvadoreños*, ANIS) appears to be the only officially recognized indigenous organization in El Salvador (Tilley 2005, 38). Despite problems with indigenous organization during the civil conflict years, ANIS claimed to represent 68,000 indigenous Salvadorans (Patrick 2004, 97). During this time, indigenous actors became engulfed in classist politics. Politically, ANIS had ties to the left (Tilley 2005, 38). As organizations broke away

from ANIS through the 1980s due to internal conflicts, ANIS accused indigenous organizations such as CCNIS as having ties with ARENA (Tilley 2005, 236).

Given that indigenous groups' leftist tendencies, vocal indigenous supporters and representatives were subject to intimidation and human rights abuses in the same way as advocates of marginalized peasants (Patrick 2004, 97). During the civil war, ANIS leaders received threats from government departments given their struggle for land redistribution and tourism development (Patrick 2004, 97). The most notable action against ANIS was the 1983 massacre at Las Hojas that paramilitary groups executed with ARENA's backing (Patrick 2004, 97; Tilley 2005, 38). Like other cases of human rights abuses during the civil war, these incidents have been characterized by impunity against perpetrators (Patrick 2004, 97). This changed following the signing of the 1992 Peace Accords, where international demands were placed on ARENA for the valorization of indigenous cultural rights (Patrick 2004, 97).

Conclusion

As a site to study indigenous identities, Izalco presents a significant case study linking ethnicity and politics. Whether it is in reference to the defeat of communism as the political right contends, as the birth of the left as the left might posit, or as the site where indigeneity thrives as indigenous advocates might argue, Izalco has played a pivotal role in the area of ethnic politics. Given these dynamics at play, the chapters that follow shed light on how multiple actors are experiencing indigeneity and therefore constructing individual and collective meanings around indigeneity.

Chapter 5: Experiencing Indigeneity in Izalco through Public Celebrations: Contrasts and Ambivalences

May 3 marks the day of the Holy Cross in Izalco (*Día de la Santa Cruz* or *Día de la Cruz*), a holiday that many *Izalqueños* continue to celebrate despite the fact that it was removed from the liturgical calendar in 1960 (Taylor 2012, 145). A week before *Día de la Cruz*, marketplace stalls in Izalco turn into colourful displays of *papel picado* (tissue paper of various colours cut up in different patterns), garlands reminiscent of flowers, crosses of different sizes made from *jiote* tree (*Bursera simaruba*) and bunches of fruits (such as *mamones*, bananas, *coyoles* and coconuts). People will in turn buy and use these objects to create an altar, erecting a vibrantly decorated cross and surrounding it by the different types of fruits. The marketplace is most active when *Día de la Cruz* finally arrives and people rush in to buy and sell crosses and fruit to place at the altars. According to "*creencias de la gente*" or popular beliefs, when people do not set up a cross on this day, the devil dances in their yard (various interviews, Izalco, May 2012).

Although people generally see the celebration as being a Catholic tradition because of the themes that run through the event, *Día de la Cruz* also has various meanings for people in Izalco, including religious, cultural, indigenous and agricultural. While these categories are not what people in Izalco used to describe how they see *Día de la Cruz*, it is my own attempt at categorizing the words that they use to describe the holiday. For example, a man from Izalco who currently lives in the neighbouring town of Sonsonate noted that Catholics are excited about the processions, but he is most excited about the subsequent rains of May (Izalco, May 2012). A protestant informant, on the other hand, acknowledged that *Día de la Cruz* forms part of Izalco's culture and enjoys watching the processions, but now that he is protestant, engaging in

indigenous celebrations is "not something that we do anymore" (Izalco, May 2012). However, what stands out in the midst of these interpretations are the religious and indigenous aspects of the celebration and the conflicts over meanings that stem therefrom.

For Catholic-indigenous parishioners, *Día de la Cruz* celebrations include processions in the midst of firecrackers, where they parade a silver cross around the streets of the town, as led by the responsible *cofradía*, an organization that is both Catholic and indigenous. The procession starts at the house where the *cofradía* is housed and eventually makes its way to *Iglesia la Asunción*, where parishioners celebrate a mass in its honour. Between processions and masses, parishioners gather at the host *cofradía* house to recite prayers, converse, dance, eat and drink as a form of paying tribute to this Christian symbol. Other *Izalqueños*, both indigenous and non indigenous, also partake in the celebrations. They either make donations in support of the *cofradía* celebrations or decorate a cross. Another set of people act as observers and commemorate the event as a national holiday with deep historical roots.

In addition, another public celebration to commemorate the day was held while I conducted my fieldwork. An altar adorned the municipal government building in the main town square (formerly the indigenous lower town), where newly-elected ARENA mayor, Jose Alfonso Guevara Cisneros (2012-present) and the *mayordomo* in charge of the *cofradía* celebrations addressed constituents on the subject of *Día de la Cruz*. A celebration also took place at *Casa de la Cultura*, a state institution that aims to promote cultural development and preservation in the town. Salvadorans across the country also commemorate the event, as they tuned in to the 12 o'clock and evening news to witness along with newscasters how traditions are still alive in Izalco as well as in other indigenous towns.

In this chapter, I analyze *Día de la Cruz* celebrations in Izalco with the objective of drawing

attention to different ways of experiencing indigeneity. To be sure, the goal in this chapter is not

to provide a comprehensive survey of how *indigenous* people experience indigeneity. Rather,

Día de la Cruz serves as a backdrop to analyze indigeneity as a concept. I examine three

individuals' experiences in relation to *Día de la Cruz*: the *mayordomo* or leader of the *cofradía*

responsible for *Día de la Cruz*, a prominent indigenous activist, and a retired secretary. As such,

in this chapter I substantiate my methodological claim by pointing to a specific site of analysis

(*Día de la Cruz*) through which these individuals' experiences of indigeneity can be assessed. I

demonstrate that while these three individuals share a common ancestry, their experiences reveal

a more nuanced analysis of indigeneity. From this angle, one can visualise a spectrum of

indigenous experiences that exist outside of ethnic markers. My argument is that in exposing the

dynamics of ethnic identification and problematizing identification by ancestry, it is possible to

identify tensions through which people experience and give meaning to indigeneity.

5.1   *La Cofradía:* Historical Context

Before deepening the analysis of *Día de la Cruz*, I would like to give some background with

regards to the system of *cofradías*, to better understand the context of indigenous expressions as

they relate to this holiday. *La cofradía* is an institution that the Spanish adopted in Spain, before

bringing it with them to the American continent and establishing it as an indigenous institution.

In Spain, the brotherhood was sanctioned by the Church and overseen by the local parish priest.

People paid tributes to their *cofradía* and received the services of the brotherhood in return.

While the raison d'être of *cofradías* was primarily to manage the tributes for the worship of its

associated saint, they were also charitable organizations that helped the poor by financing

religious rituals after the passing of a member and at the anniversary of the death (MacLeod 2000, 204; Palomo Infante 2002, 243). MacLeod notes that since it was a Spanish institution, there was an "ambivalent" relationship between the state and *cofradías*. On the one hand, Bastian (2008) notes that the state established *cofradías* to maintain a specific colonial order that privileged *caciques* or indigenous leaders (97). *Cofradías* promoted a sense of morality and charity that was sanctioned by the state and as such made them allies (MacLeod 2000, 204).[36] On the other hand, much wealth was channeled through *cofradías*, much to the dismay of the state, which often attempted to regulate how the money was spent (MacLeod 2000, 204-5). MacLeod further notes that many of the *cofradías* endorsed superstitious beliefs and overindulged during celebrations (205-6). All of these concerns led to state and Church exerting greater control over *cofradías* (206-7).

Cofradías emerged as a colonial institution shortly after Spanish colonization; according to MacLeod they were already well established by 1540 (2000, 207). They were established throughout the continent as religious institutions through which the Spanish exerted ideological and economic control over people (Rojas Lima 1986, 257). In Guatemala (which included contemporary El Salvador) colonial *cofradías* were diverse institutions, which varied in terms of geographical location (urban versus rural), wealth, land and livestock assets, ethnic composition (Spanish, black, mulatto and Indian), independence, and ritualistic practices (MacLeod 2003, 151-2).

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[36] In MacLeod's words: "*En general, [las cofradías] animaban a la gente para dirigir sus esfuerzos hacia actividades morales, aprobadas y caritativas*" (2000, 204).

Nevertheless, there were certain characteristics that *cofradías* shared in common. Namely, the institution provided indigenous people a sense of ethnic and religious identification (Bastian 2008, 96). As an ethnic form of expression and source of identity formation, Carney (1998) notes that "[m]ost Indians who no longer identified with their precontact ethnicities simply attached themselves to the contrived and imposed ethnicity – 'indio.' The cofradia, or lay confraternity that the Spaniards transplanted to the New World became one of the underpinnings of this new ethnicity" (381). From a religious stance, *cofradías* strengthened ethnic ties through its ritualistic system of celebrations (Bastian 2008, 96).

Another observation in various Latin American *cofradía* is related to some of the historical struggles over autonomy. MacLeod (2003) notes that indigenous people in colonial Guatemala *cofradías* often attempted to establish their communities outside of the main village, where they could remain in the margins and have "less supervision by the parish priest, and even other authorities" (154). As Palomo Infante (2002) notes, *cofradías* were therefore sites of indigenous resistance; state officials in Chiapas saw *cofradías* as organizations with the potential for rebellion (Palomo Infante 2002, 243). On a similar note, Diaz Araya (2011) looks at indigenous autonomy in relation to *Virgen del Carmen de La Tirana* festivities in Chile. The author highlights the tension that has existed between the religious (*cofradía*) and indigenous belief (pagan) systems and notes how "dancing devils" have retained their autonomy of expression while at the same time remaining in the shadow of *cofradías*. This is consistent with other observations of *cofradía* practices, in which state and Church officials denounced *cofradías* for promoting religious heterodoxies, superstitions, drunkenness, debauchery and disorder (Palomo Infante 2002, 243; MacLeod 2000, 210).

Another area of struggle is in relation to the multiplication of religious factions emerging in areas where *cofradías* held political and religious monopoly (97). Religious pluralism has coincided with increased ethnic conflicts and questioning of the legitimacy of traditional *cofradía* system hierarchies (98). While in one sense religious plurality has resulted in the breakdown of the *cofradía* system, in some respect it has also strengthened kinship ties along ethnic lines, given that religious factions often form along familial lines (98, 99). Nevertheless, the author notes that despite the breakdown of the legitimacy of the *cofradía* system that is sanctioned by the state, there is a possibility for the revitalization and consolidation of indigenous imaginaries (107).

In El Salvador, *cofradías* played an important role in the direction of indigenous communities. Tilley (2005) notes that while *cofradías*' role often seemed to be reduced to the organization of festivities and management of tributes, historically they were also a political force. For one, the *Alcalde del Común*[37] or leader of the system of *cofradías* (literally the "mayor of the common"), was traditionally elected annually by *mayordomos* and acted as a "spokesperson for the entire indigenous population… [which] allowed for political representation based on genuine internal indigenous hierarchy" (112). In Izalco, "the cofradías allowed the indigenous communities certain kinds of leverage: for example, the *cofradías* of Izalco controlled the famous irrigation system of Izalco even until the 1932 Matanza" (112). Tilley states that, "cofradías also served a

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[37] At the time of this research, *El Alcalde del Común* was Tito Pasin. *El Alcalde del Común* is traditionally a man appointed by a council of *mayordomos*. I never heard of women being elected to the position of *Alcalde del Común*, although I did hear of women who led *cofradías*, as well as families who held on to certain saints cross-generationally. During the colonial period, *El Alcalde del Común* was an advocate for communal lands and indigenous access to these lands. This changed as the state absorbed communal lands and the role of *El Alcalde del Común* was reduced to a leader of the *cofradía* system. Recently, *El Alcalde del Común* has acquired more of a political role, through their involvement in the United Nations for indigenous rights and the participation in fora for indigenous rights. Nevertheless, there are divergent views with regards to the role of *El Alcalde del Común* in indigenous affairs. According to a CCNIS informant, *El Alcalde del Común* does not represent indigenous people because he abides by the Catholic hierarchy. In this informant's words, "he answers to a priest" (San Salvador, July 2013).

political purpose crucial to any colonized people: they were a central participatory mechanism—indeed, the only formally democratic one permitted—for indigenous political life" (112). *Cofradías* still operate in various parts of the country, including in Izalco, Nahuizalco, Panchimalco and Sonsonate (there may be other locations, but this is based on my investigation), but according to informants, their role has been significantly diminished as purely religious organizations.

Yet, with regards to the mayor of the common, Rodriguez Herrera and Lara Martinez (2000) note that this role has both ritualistic and political functions.[38] In terms of ritualistic functions, this is something that was reinforced after 1932, when the institution of the mayor of the common was reduced to a ceremonial and folkloric role (Leiva Masin 2011, 138). Formally, the political functions of the mayor of the common are very limited, despite attempts among *mayordomos* to restore the institution to its original intent (Leiva Masin 2011, 138). In January 2016, however, the General Manager of the Salvadoran Institute for Municipal Development (ISDEM) offered "symbolic" recognition of the institution and made a commitment to treat the mayor of the common with the same level of "respect" as municipal mayors; of course, this recognition was not accompanied with any rights or official status.[39]

Furthermore, the mayor of the common's authority to speak on behalf of indigenous people has been subject to criticism from vocal indigenous advocates unaffiliated with the network of *cofradía* (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013; indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013).

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[38] In the words of Rodriguez Herrera and Lara Martinez (2000): "*Las funciones principales de esta institución consisten en representar a la comunidad indígena frente al Estado y otros organismos de tipo privado, mantener la armonía y la cohesión interna de la comunidad indígena, velar por la defensa de los intereses indios y por la continuidad de la tradición*" (9).

[39] See Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal (2016)

Additionally, attitudes towards the mayor of the common are such that according to an informant, he is "not a legitimate mayor" (retired secretary, Izalco, May 2012). Another informant also noted that the role of the mayor of the common is now largely "symbolic" and he has no real power (public health unit security guard, Izalco, May 2012). Alternatively, according to another account, while the mayor of the common continues to have an active role in speaking on behalf of indigenous people, he "is himself distanced from the people [whom he represents]" (Izalco, April 2012).

In summary, the mayor of the common may be present in the community, but his influence is not the same as it once was, especially since the emergence of multiple indigenous voices. Even if the mayor of the common has some support from *cofradías* and his role serves a symbolic purpose, his ability to speak on behalf of indigenous people is subject to scrutiny. Indeed, discourses about the mayor of the common are a key piece within the broader contestations occurring about indigenous meanings, as described below in relation to *Día de la Cruz*.

5.2   *Día de la Cruz* in Izalco

As the firecrackers resound in the streets of Izalco on May 3, they signal the day that, for some, commemorates the invention of the cross and for others the start of the rainy season (Taylor 2012, 145). Despite having been removed from the Liturgical calendar in 1960, *Cofradía de la Santa Cruz* still celebrates *Día de la Cruz*.[40] Like other *cofradías* in the town, this particular *cofradía* forms part of the network of *cofradías* that *El Alcalde del Común,* an indigenous leader of the town, oversees. As is customary, a piece of communal land has been attributed to the

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[40] Examples of *Día de la Cruz* celebrations in Izalco can be found at: Peralta (May 3, 2011), Tepas (March 7, 2011), and Alcaldía Izalco (December 16, 2013).

mayordomo of the *cofradía* as a home for the purpose of holding the celebrations. This home is also where the object and symbol of that specific *cofradía* is hosted. As mentioned above, while *Día de la Cruz* celebrations are not exclusively celebrated within *cofradías*, *Izalqueños* do point to the *cofradía* as being central to *Día de la Cruz* celebrations. As such, *cofradía de la Santa Cruz* and the assigned *mayordomo* are responsible for organizing the celebrations, which include finding patrons who will sponsor the event monetarily and through various kinds of donations (food and food supplies for the event, chairs, decorations, time, and el *trono* (the throne used to parade the saint they are honouring).

Well before *Día de la Cruz*, retired secretary and descendant of Feliciano Ama, "Renata" has already committed to making a contribution to the *cofradía* responsible for the festivities. While Renata does not consider herself an active member of the *cofradía*, nor does she consider herself indigenous, she is supportive of the town's traditions. With Izalco's recent changing demographics, she claims that she can no longer keep track of who believes what, except *cofradías* and the Church. Despite not identifying as indigenous, Renata is well versed in the *cofradía* traditions of Izalco, including that of *Día de la Cruz*. She is aware of the places of worship of each c*ofradías* and certainly perceives them as being authoritative in their religious realm. She informs me that whenever they request contributions for an upcoming celebration, she donates sugar or whatever they need to run the event. She clarifies that her knowledge of Izalco traditions comes from having lived in Izalco for as long as she can remember. She knows the families and recalls her youth when children ran around freely during *los pedigüeños*, another Izalco tradition.

In addition to being referred to Renata because of her knowledge of Izalco, I was referred to her because she has an indigenous last name (artisan and resort worker, Izalco, March 2012). Indeed, Renata confirms to me that "Ama" is her last name, which is the same name as *cacique* and icon of the 1932 massacre, Feliciano Ama (Izalco, March 2012). According to Renata, her parents never revealed to her that they had married and as such, she never took on her father's last name. Instead, she went by her mother's Ladino last name. Renata further reveals that her father was never one to speak about his family; he was a reserved man. As such, she was never made aware of any indigenous roots. It was a friend of the family who first questioned her name and the notion that her parents had never actually married. Upon seeing her *cédula* (personal identity card), he exclaimed to her that the document had inaccurate information. "Your name is Ama! Go look at your birth certificate and you will see that your parents actually married…" he had said to her (Izalco, March 2012).

During the interview, it was clear that Renata did not want to be viewed through her indigenous roots. As far as she is concerned, her name is simply that, a last name that happens to appear on her birth certificate and *cédula*. She has no knowledge of Náhuat, and according to her there is no precedent to teach Náhuat in schools to justify a change to school curriculum. Instead, she is happy knowing that Izalco is a place where tradition thrives.

5.2.1   Experiencing Indigeneity through *Cofradías*

Similarly to Renata, I was introduced to "Lucas" because of his perceived indigenous ancestry and because he too bears the last name of Feliciano Ama. I first met Lucas, who is the *mayordomo* who led *Día de la Cruz* festivities, on May 3, 2012 when I participated in the

celebrations. Despite being a stranger to me, I had heard about Lucas during conversations with

other people from the town. People who knew him would often encourage me to interview him

because he is "*un Indio puro*" or an Indian of pure blood (police officer, March 2012). Like this

informant who had referred me to the *mayordomo* because of his racial purity, an Izalco

landowner also insisted that I interview him, while pointing out that his parents were "real"

Indians who wore *caites* (traditional sandals) and lived in a *rancho* (straw hut) (Sonzacate,

March 2012). As this informant further recalled, the *mayordomo's* father had asked for his

mother's hand in marriage "*como hacían los indios*" or "the way that Indians did." This same

informant further recounted that the *mayordomo's* parents knew traditional Indian dances and

she fondly recalled that they danced *el baile del sombrero* or "the hat dance" (Sonzacate,

March 2012). She further recalled that his parents "used clay bowls and his mother's bed was

made of wooden sticks with a straw mat" (Sonzacate, March 2012). This demonstrates common

representations of who the Indians are, and it reveals Izalco's mainstream understanding of how

Indians ought to be described.

Lucas confirmed that Feliciano Ama was indeed his grandfather. He also confirmed that, like

many Indians, his grandfather was a victim of the 1932 repression during the presidential term of

Maximilano Hernandez Martinez (July 2012). To him, Feliciano Ama was not only a victim of

the state, but also a victim of the communist movement's leaders who were not looking out for

the interests of the Indian community whom he represented (May 2013).

Speaking about his ethnic heritage, Lucas tells me that he has no recollection of his grandfather,

but that he has certainly heard all the stories about him, most of which people in Izalco are able

to recite by heart. Specifically, the one where his grandfather leads the rebellion that compelled

Hernandez Martinez to stage the massacre against indigenous peasant men who had at the time demanded access and protection of their lands. Lucas' grandfather, like many of the men who took part in the rebellion, was accused of being a communist in addition to being identified as one of the main instigators. As the story goes, his grandfather was tied to a horse and dragged through the streets of Izalco, from the place where he was detained to the town square, where he was publicly hung (various interviews, Izalco, May-July 2012). Lucas, like many of the people in the town, asserts that his grandfather was not an instigator; he was tricked by the Communist Party into being a local representative, when all he wanted was access to land.

Until recently, the only memory that Lucas had of his grandfather was from a photograph that has recently been publicly disseminated as part of the collective memory initiatives of 1932 and the efforts at recognizing the victims of the massacre (Henriquez Consalvi 2008). The picture that Lucas refers to is of his grandfather's public hanging.[41] During one of our conversations, Lucas pointed out that it was the only way that he had known his grandfather until a friend brought him a new picture that he had found in a book. This picture was unlike any other picture that Lucas had seen; it was a picture where his grandfather was not hanging from a tree. Ironically, the picture was taken prior to his execution, but unlike the picture from the public hanging, the new picture shows his facial features, build and clothing. Lucas' friend lent him the book so that Lucas could finally see his grandfather in a different light and encouraged him to make a copy of the picture for himself. Lucas never gave the book back to his friend, but his friend was content knowing that Lucas had now formed a new memory of his grandfather (conversations with Lucas' friend, Sonzacate, July 2012).

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[41] See Figure 4.2.1 c, Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 8, *Cacique* Feliciano Ama.

Lucas self-identifies as an indigenous man, but as he reminds me, he does not solely express his indigeneity through his ancestry. Rather, during our conversations it is clear that he prominently expresses his indigenous identity through his involvement in the *cofradía.* In short, Lucas is proud of his Indian heritage, and he expresses his pride through his "devotion to the cross and the *cofradía*" (July 2012). When it comes to his native heritage he is rather subtle about it, in that he does not dress a particular way or insist on his indigenous roots. Unless, it relates to his passion (*la cofradía*) or he is asked directly about his indigenous ancestry, his indigeneity does not come up in conversation. When it comes to the *cofradía*, Lucas becomes very animated in explaining how it is that it reflects his indigenous heritage and the religious heritage of the people of the town.

5.2.2   Indigenous / Religious Figures

Lucas is recognized as both an indigenous and religious leader, an authority according to people with whom I spoke. First, being a descendant of Feliciano Ama grants him indigenous status among people who would question the existence of indigenous people and minimize ethnic claims (including most people interviewed who identified him as indigenous). This is further reinforced through his involvement in *cofradías,* given that he leads two of the twenty *cofradías* in Izalco under the oversight of indigenous/religious leader *El Alcalde del Común* (Lucas, Izalco, May 2012)*.* He was elected by a council of religious/indigenous leaders (who like himself, also lead *cofradías* in the town).

As *mayordomo* for two *cofradías,* he is responsible for organizing not one, but two annual religious celebrations – one in honour of *El Justo Juez* (Just Judge) and another in honour of the

cross[42]. As *mayordomo,* he is also expected to be well versed in the Bible and has even studied

religion (Izalco, June 2012). In part, this religious requirement is a result of the religious

community's commitment to the saints that represent them, a dynamic that has been observed in

other Latin American settings (various interviews, Izalco, March 2012). In this manner, his roles

within the network of *cofradías* also render Lucas a religious leader in the town. It would

therefore appear as though he is responsible for organizing festivities that are (arguably) for an

indigenous/Catholic community.

Practically, *Izalqueños* offer their support to Lucas and his *cofradías* through the contributions

that they offer during the preparations for the celebrations and during the day of the event. Lucas

issues formal requests in the form of an invitation for participants to help fund the *cofradía* prior

to the event. The community offers anything that will help to run the event: sugar, coffee, cocoa,

maize, or flowers. People also donate labour and in certain occasions, contributors will donate

the "throne" on which will sit the saint during the procession. At the time of the research, the

throne would cost between US$800 and US$1,000. Lucas believes that this year's celebration

cost approximately US$6,000, which serves as proof to him that the celebrations exist entirely on

the basis of the community's support. Indeed, when *cofradía* celebrations come around,

"everyone in the community pulls together and provides material that will be prepared to feed all

those people from the community who join in on the festivities," which include: prayers,

processions, dancing, and simple fellowship: regardless of whom they are (July 2012). This

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[42] It is worth noting that each *cofradía* hosts one event. However, Lucas has two *cofradías* under his responsibility, which means he is responsible for two events. Being at the head of two *cofradías* is not common. For Lucas, this means having to organize an additional yearly celebration for his second *cofradía*: this one in honour of the figure of *El Justo Juez.* According to Lucas, he did not have to agree to this. However, he emphasizes this point to stress the importance attributed to this day by the local inhabitants and the Catholics in the area.

maintains the spirit of the *cofradía* – a fellowship of Catholic believers (many of whom happen to be indigenous) who gather for the common purpose of celebrating their saints, according to Lucas.

In contrast to other donors, Lucas felt that state institutions such as *Casa de la Cultura* and municipal actors should be contributing more to the organization of *cofradía* events because of the importance of the events and because it is such an fundamental part of indigenous culture. Lucas claims that despite having budget allocations for supporting community events, they seldom do. The municipality does provide some support, according to Lucas, which helps minimally (circa US$50-80 per event). The indigenous organization CCNIS, on the other hand, does provide significant support; they purchased chairs and various other equipments that they will continue to use for their celebrations. For this reason, he does not rely much on other indigenous groups for support for *cofradía* events, which to him is an advantage, given that it brings the indigenous community who participates and contributes to the event closer together.

5.2.3   Celebrating *Día de la Cruz*

As mentioned above, although Lucas is the main organizer of the religious celebrations during *Día de la Cruz*, as *mayordomo* of the *cofradía*, he is not alone in organizing the event. He also relies on the support of *Izalqueños*, who attend the prayers, dances or processions, but also contribute supplies during the event. On May 3, as the host, Lucas opens the *cofradía* home for those wishing to take part in the celebration and worship the cross. For the most part, people who attend have a role to play and are themselves contributors and come from the surrounding

cantones or rural villages. However, the event is open to anyone who wishes to attend. The event can be compared to a two-day "open house".

Upon entering the *cofradía* house where Lucas is hosting the celebration, there is a serene atmosphere. A life-size figure of Christ lies in a clear casket with all sorts of flowers as well as candles surrounding it. The experience is reminiscent of a funeral, in the way that the figure is displayed, but also in the way that people pay their respects when they enter the house and then greet the host. Much like funeral wakes in Izalco, chairs are placed along the sides of the room, where prayers take place throughout the day. As prayers end, people linger in the room making small talk (unrelated to the event at hand, discussing the plans for the day and discussing who else has arrived and who has yet to make an appearance). Others slip to the back of the house and gather in an area where women have started making arrangements for the food that will be served to guests throughout the day. Some guests also arrive after the prayers have taken place and Lucas greets them at the entrance to his house in a very warm manner, offering them something to drink and something to eat. He gently asks young men and women who have come to help with the event to serve his guests hot cocoa, *chilate* (a hot maize drink) or *horchata* (a cold and sweet beverage from various grains, including rice, *morro*[43] seeds and cinnamon). The drinks offered depend on the time of day; guests are offered hot cocoa in the morning, *chilate* or *horchata* in the afternoon. The drinks are served in traditional clay mugs and one of the guests assures me that the clay mugs enhance the flavour. If the guests arrive around meal times, they are served *tamales,* which is cooked corn dough wrapped in banana leaves, filled with chicken and peppers; or *sopa de gallina* (chicken soup).

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[43] *Crescentia alata*

Despite the serene atmosphere in the front part of the house, this is a time of celebration for those who have gathered at the *cofradía* and this is certainly evident in the back of the house. There, people have gathered to eat, dance, laugh, and worship the silver cross, which is the symbol of this *cofradía*. At the foot of the cross are different kinds of fruits: *coyoles*, bananas, plantains, mangoes, *jocotes*, and *mamones*, which are representative of the harvest. A jar has also been placed at the foot of the cross for donations. As people enter the back of the house, they approach the silver cross, cross themselves and offer their fruit. Occasionally, people also approach the cross and proceed to cross themselves and take a fruit that has been laid at the cross.

People in the back of the house are already preparing lunch and supper to feed anyone that decides to drop in. Other people dance *cumbia*, in the centre of *el patio* (or terrace) where a space has been cleared precisely to allow people to dance. At the fire pit, ladies cook *la masa* (or maize dough), which they will use to make *tamales* and tortillas. Massive pots full of different *tamales* ingredients bubble away on the fire pit. The men tend the fire and cut the banana leaves that will be used to wrap the *tamales*. A young fellow carries a camera and documents the event; he is also the one in charge of the music, which he plays from his electronic device. It is the older crowd that seems more interested in the music, however, and scold the young man in a joking manner whenever it stops playing. The older crowd is also dancing to the music, both men and women; only occasionally do younger people join them to dance, aside from the babies and young children.

As the celebrations proceed, rumors begin to circulate that a procession will soon take place, in which the *mayordomo* will carry the cross to the main square. As this is happening, a councillor from the newly elected mayor's caucus comes to the house and lets Lucas know that they are

ready for the ceremony to begin at *Palacio Municipal* (the town hall) in the main square. A member of the *cofradía* fetches the cross and in a matter of minutes, a group trails behind the silver cross, with each person carrying fruit to place underneath the altar that has been set up at *Palacio Municipal*. Firecrackers being set off by young men announce to *Izalqueños* the passage of the silver cross. As the cross makes its way to *Palacio Municipal*, people stop to watch the procession.

As the group arrives at *Palacio Municipal*, they place the *cofradía*'s silver cross on a table that is set up for this purpose. There is also a decorated cross that is already set up at the top of the front steps. The newly-elected ARENA mayor, Jose Alfonso Guevara, waits at the top of the steps and directs Lucas to sit next to him. He introduces Lucas to the small crowd that has gathered in front of *Palacio Municipal* as a religious man whom the Catholic Church has endorsed. The mayor emphasizes that *Día de la Cruz* is a religious celebration that the Catholic Church endorses and that Lucas is carrying on with the tradition of Izalco's ancestors. The mayor (like members of his council have done in past interviews) stresses that the *cofradía* was instituted by the Catholic Church and only then did it become a tradition of their Indian ancestors. He further alludes to the notion that the *cofradía* is not reflective of the indigenous traditions of the town; it is reflective of the Catholic traditions of the town that the Indian ancestors made their own.[44]

After delivering his speech, the mayor invites Lucas to speak. In turn, Lucas stresses that the traditions of the *cofradía* is by no means pagan. Lucas defines himself as a religious man who carries on the tradition of his *indigenous* ancestors through the catholic practices of the town. He

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[44] Despite the mayor's attempts to disassociate *Día de la Cruz* as an indigenous holiday, the following videos, which include first-hand accounts, demonstrate the tight link between indigenous experiences and the holiday: Peralta (May 3, 2011), Tepas (March 7, 2011), and Alcaldía Izalco (December 16, 2013).

asserts that his response is in reaction to accusations that the *cofradías* are not part of the Catholic tradition. He further remarks that other rituals being carried out in the town by indigenous groups have been framed as being pagan, which is not the case with *cofradía* rituals. Nevertheless, Lucas expresses with confidence that behind the *cofradía* celebration is a devotion and love for God and for the cross.

The exchange between the mayor and Lucas reflect a historical tension between *cofradías*, the church, and the state. As stated above, while *cofradías* were a way of exerting control over indigenous people, it is also true that *cofradías* were instrumental in generating local heterodoxies of Catholicism (MacLeod 2000, 213). Indeed, there are also unofficial *cofradías* or *guachivales*, which are not sanctioned by the state or the Church, which historically were seen by clerics as breeding disorder (MacLeod 2000, 211). The speeches that the mayor of Izalco and Lucas delivered at *Palacio Municipal* are very significant; in both cases they demonstrate that the state (represented by the ARENA municipal administration) supports the Catholic Church and the role of *la cofradía* insofar as it keeps its distance from "pagan" traditions. In this case the state's support was voiced in a very explicit manner. In other words, there is a certain degree of acceptance of indigenous traditions, when they align with state ideologies.

5.3   Divergent Experiences of Indigeneity: *Casa de la Cultura de Izalco*

While *Día de la Cruz* is an important celebration for *cofradía* members, it is also the case that not all celebrations revolve around the *cofradía.* Some, including staff at Izalco's *Casa de la Cultura* seemed less concerned about the invention of the cross than they are about celebrating the start of the rainy season.

Nansin is a *Casa de la Cultura* employee. Like Lucas, she describes herself as a descendant of

Feliciano Ama. In practical terms, this means that like Lucas, people generally perceive Nansin

as being authentically indigenous. This is significant because most Salvadorans consider

themselves to be descendants of indigenous peoples to a certain degree, but in the cases of

Nansin and Lucas, they represent what many Salvadorans see as "true Indians" (*Indios de verdad*

or *indios puros* or in derogative terms, truly unrefined or *puros indios*, as informants referred to

them) (various interviews, Izalco, June 2012). In seeking out people who know about indigenous

affairs in the town, people generally single out Nansin and they see her as an active promoter of

indigenous language and culture in the town. Nevertheless, Nansin's self-identification as

indigenous also goes beyond her ancestry, as demonstrated in the following section.

5.3.1   Overview of *Casas de la Cultura*

Casas de la Cultura are cultural centres under the state's jurisdiction, located in most

municipalities. This is to foster local cultural development throughout El Salvador. In short,

Casas de la Cultura have been a state project since they came into being. They were instituted in

1973 during Colonel Arturo Armando Molina's presidential term, in various municipalities,

including: Santiago de María, Cojutepeque, Sensuntepeque, Metapán, Ahuachapán, La Libertad,

San Francisco Gotera, Usulután, La Unión and in Zacamil (a San Salvador suburb) (República de

El Salvador, Secretaria de la Cultura). As Tilley (2005), describes, *Casas de la Cultura* came

under the jurisdiction of National Council for Culture and the Arts (*Consejo Nacional para la*

Cultura y el Arte, CONCULTURA) in 1991 and acted as community centres for cultural

education. During this time, they operated under the Education Ministry (República de El

Salvador, Secretaría de la Cultura). In 1991, when CONCULTURA took over the responsibilities

of overseeing *Casas de la Cultura*, their mandate was highly influenced by the nation-building efforts at the state level. As Tilley further explains, *Casas de la Cultura* were responsible for cultural development and cultural education at the community level (33).

Tilley (2005) demonstrates that CONCULTURA supported nationalist ideologies during the time in which *Casas de la Cultura* came into its jurisdiction, rather than bringing about social and political change for indigenous communities. CONCULTURA became the cultural authority in El Salvador as it managed the flow of external donations for cultural development (including indigenous cultural development). External interest in indigenous groups was instrumental in the expansion of CONCULTURA's mandate, which also came to include the safeguarding of indigenous traditions, language, spaces and art, which the state generally saw as being in demise (33).

Presently, each *Casa de la Cultura* operates under the Culture Secretariat (*Secretaría de la Cultura*) of the government. Among the current objectives of cultural centres is rescuing oral traditions through the development of activities led by the population, assisting with the organization of patron saint and national-historical celebrations, and developing activities that aim to rescue the Náhuat language, as well as artistic and traditional expressions of the indigenous that once populated the national territory (República de El Salvador, Secretaría de la Cultura).

5.3.2   *Casa de la Cultura* in Izalco

While *Casa de la Cultura*, Izalco is in a sense a satellite of the state's Culture Secretariat, staff at *Casa de la Cultura* reflect a certain degree of freedom in their operations. In part it may be that

Nansin's leadership in the promotion of indigenous cultures at the local and national levels has given her status and authority in the promotion of cultural development in Izalco. During a visit to *Casa de la Cultura,* I was informed that as a state organization, *Casa de la Cultura* is required to hold a certain number of events during the year, to fulfill the duties established in the state-issued calendar. *Casa de la Cultura*'s funding is contingent on respecting the calendar of events. While *Día de la Cruz* is one of those days in which an event must be held, it is ultimately Nansin who will decide what activities will take place.

As the Náhuat teacher at *Casa de la Cultura,* Nansin is an important indigenous figure in the town and I was referred to her by numerous people in Izalco. Accordingly, people were aware of her involvement in the revitalization of Náhuat-Pipil culture and language, and of her relation to Feliciano Ama. As a former educator at Centro Escolar Mario Calvo, she led the implementation of the Náhuat language program. Moreover, Nansin is actively involved with FAMA, an organization affiliated with CCNIS, which also seeks the recognition of indigenous peoples and their collective rights. She has become an indigenous authority in Izalco through her struggle to make the preservation of indigenous cultures and languages visible and a priority for the state. In addition to being an indigenous activist and promoter of indigenous rights, the Náhuat-Pipil language and culture in Izalco, she is also involved in the revitalization of indigenous languages and cultures elsewhere in El Salvador. Her prominent role as an advocate of indigenous rights, languages and cultures contributed to her actual role in that government officials strongly encouraged her to take a key leadership role at *Casa de la Cultura*.

Indeed, Nansin is one of the faces of the indigenous movement in El Salvador. Interviews with individuals from the town revealed that there are very few people who are considered to be

authorities on the subject of indigeneity in Izalco; Nansin is certainly one of those people. Given

her success in the revitalization of Náhuat-Pipil language and culture (at least from the point of

view of the state), she is a recognized figure at the national level. Since her time at *Centro*

Escolar Mario Calvo Marroquín, the school has been recognized nationally as pioneering the

revitalization of Náhuat. Most recently, a group of children from the school were invited to *Casa*

Presidencial (the president's official residence) to sing the national anthem in Náhuat, and the

former students with whom I spoke credited her for the success of the program. Nansin is often

cited in newspapers as having a key role in the development of an indigenous consciousness

through her involvement in CCNIS and Fundación Feliciano Ama. She has also worked in

conjunction with the United Nations (UN) to provide an official account on the status of

indigenous people in Izalco, as evidenced when she welcomed the special rapporteur to the UN

(Nansin, Izalco, July 2013). She has worked alongside the government to promote the

preservation of indigenous languages and cultures by helping with the establishment of Náhuat

programs in the town of Santo Domingo de Guzman as well. In addition, she has often partnered

with national and international organizations in order to promote Izalco's culture and heritage.

During one of my visits to *la Casa de la Cultura* she was also meeting with officials from

Universidad de El Salvador to discuss the development of academic programs geared towards

promoting indigenous cultural heritage (Izalco, July 2012). Certainly, at the municipal level in

Izalco and at the level of the state, Nansin is recognized as an authority in relation to indigenous

affairs.

Furthermore, Nansin is well known in Izalco for having ancestral knowledge of traditions; in

fact, another indigenous authority and many other individuals in the town often defer to her to

provide an account of indigenous issues. Moreover, when discussing the events of 1932 with a

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number of individuals from the town, their immediate reaction is to direct attention to Nansin as "the one who knows" and "the one who has read all the books" (retired teacher, Izalco, March 2012). Individuals are quick to point out that they might have a skewed view of the events, but that Nansin can provide an accurate statement.

However, what is particularly surprising is that while she is most often identified as being well versed in matters of indigeneity, informal discourses do not allude to the degree to which she truly represents indigenous identities. Instead, in the case of Nansin, most conversations revolve around the way in which she is making a living at the expense of the indigenous identities. Nansin is often criticised for "selling the race," meaning that she uses her identity as a descendant of Feliciano Ama in order to make a profit (resort worker, Izalco, April 2012). She is also criticised for putting on indigenous clothes when donors seek out indigenous groups to offer funding for indigenous projects, given that "she does not wear traditional clothes on a regular basis – it is only to put on a performance that will catch foreigner's attention" (Lucas, June 2012). Moreover, Nansin is often accused of promoting her own agenda, rather than advocating for the people whom she represents. In addition, she is criticised for not redistributing the money that is channelled to *la Casa de la Cultura* to community projects.

The allegations that she is self-serving do not catch Nansin by surprise. As she tells me, fighting for indigenous rights in many ways "has been a struggle" or "*ha sido una lucha*" (Izalco, July 2013). She has often felt excluded from cultural events and from decisions concerning indigenous issues. One of the reasons is that she is a woman and most of the decision makers are men. According to Nansin, the fact that she speaks up as a woman and as an indigenous person is not seen favourably by the men who lead the *cofradías*, who are also seen by most as indigenous

authorities in Izalco. As such, she feels as though the men see her as interfering in the affairs of the town. As she tells me, there is a lot of tension between her and *El Alcalde del Común,* because of *machista* (or male chauvinist) attitudes among the *mayordomos* who lead the *cofradías*. According to Nansin, the *Alcalde del Común* in the town believes that she should go to him should she have any concerns that touch on indigenous affairs. In Nansin's words: "Why would I go to them? I am capable of bringing things up myself and fight for my people" (Izalco, July 2013). Nevertheless, she does attend certain *cofradía* events. She admits that these are colonial institutions, but she also states that certain elements of the celebrations are indigenous. She emphasizes that they make *chilate* as part of the celebrations and that is very much an indigenous tradition.

Aside from participating, despite her reluctance, in some local celebrations, Nansin is active in promoting her language and culture while at the same time feeling excluded. Recently, she collaborated in the design of education programs to promote indigenous culture and language preservation (the program is called *Bachillerato en Patrimonio Cultural*). Although she advocated for interculturality to be at the centre of the program so students would be exposed to Náhuat and indigenous cosmovisions from the start, the program was changed at the last minute without consulting her. When the programs were launched, she discovered that they had been changed and although she brought her concern to the vice-president of the El Salvador (who was actively involved in the development of the program), he was dismissive. Náhuat was now of secondary importance and indigenous cosmovisions were only marginally covered. Furthermore the *Bachillerato* became a tourism degree that focused on indigenous archaeological sites, such as Tazumal, which was far from the initial objective (Nansin, July 2013).

5.3.3 *Día de la Cruz* at *Casa de la Cultura*

On the morning of *Día de la Cruz*, rumors circulate at *Casa de la Cultura* about the popular beliefs regarding those who do not set up a cross in their house. Never having set up a cross in her house, the director of *Casa de la Cultura* reassures me that the devil has never danced in her backyard. While there are only two staff members at the office in the morning, they rush about preparing for the event: cleaning the establishment, taking donations to buy a cross along with decorations, making calls to see what else is taking place in the town, and determining whether it would be worth collaborating with other groups celebrating the day. Nevertheless, staff at *Casa de la Cultura*, including the director, defer decisions to Nansin about how they will mark *Día de la Cruz*.

Despite asserting the importance of this day for the indigenous community, those at *Casa de la Cultura have* little knowledge about the schedule of the celebrations, what will be happening and how *Casa de la Cultura* will be celebrating the event. Conversations between staff members suggest that *Casa de la Cultura* will surely hold a public event, but according to the staff members at the establishment, they are relying on Nansin to decide how they will celebrate the event. Even the director does not really know how they will commemorate *Día de la Cruz*, but she reassures me that it will involve "some sort of indigenous ritual" (Izalco, May 2012). In the past, they have held events at "El Llanito," a sacred indigenous site that also became the burial site of many indigenous people after the 1932 massacre (*Casa de la Cultura* director, Izalco, May2012),[45] but this year it will likely involve an in-house ceremony. Nevertheless, the staff

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[45] According to a number of informants, body remains were found on this site as a result of torrential downpours that supposedly allowed them to resurface. On August 9, 2011, President Mauricio Funes dedicated a monument to the victims of 1932 and he also issued an official apology on behalf of the state.

members plan to set up a traditional *jiote* cross with fruit and decorations, which demonstrates their wish to continue the tradition of their *tatas* and *nanas* (grandfathers and grandmothers). The staff's excitement is evident as they try to raise donations to buy a *jiote* cross as well as all the items that will go under the cross.

As far as collaboration goes, there is no anticipated contact between *Casa de la Cultura* and the *cofradía.* They are not particularly concerned that the *cofradía* has already gone on the first procession of the day and that they will be holding a celebration throughout the day. Certainly staff at *Casa de la Cultura* are aware of the celebrations, but there is no intention on their part to participate in the event.

Staff members are also aware of the assembly that will be taking place at *Palacio Municipal*, which the mayor will attend. After a telephone conversation with one of the city councillors, the director confirms to the staff at *Casa de la Cultura* that an official event is indeed taking place at *Palacio Municipal*, which they are welcome to attend. Staff members are not impressed with the news and one of them urges the director to insist that the event be held at *Casa de la Cultura* instead. As demonstrated in the previous section, the event at *Palacio Municipal* happened without *Casa de la Cultura*'s participation. *Casa de la Cultura* went on to celebrate their own event, which generated very little reaction from *Izalqueños*.[46]

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[46] Most people I met were participating in the religious events with *la cofradía.*

5.4   Rethinking Indigenous Identities

If indigeneity was studied from the perspective of ancestry, it would follow that the three individuals featured in this chapter would be considered indigenous. After all, they are descendants of Feliciano Ama. On the other hand, if these three individuals were surveyed on self-perception, two would consider themselves indigenous and one would consider herself mestiza. When looking at life stories, however, it is possible to examine dynamics of ethnic struggles and tensions that happen over time that help to define how people give meaning to indigeneity. This is at the core of this analysis, which aims to demonstrate both the utility of analyzing ethnicity as a concept and what we can learn from such analysis. As such, there are three areas where there are struggles over meaning that I wish to highlight, using the experiences outlined in this chapter: the politics identification and definition of what it means to be indigenous, the tension between pagan and Catholic beliefs, and the gendered dynamic of interactions.

5.4.1   The Politics of Indigenous Identification

In establishing how people experience indigeneity in Izalco, I was not referred to people on the basis of "ethnic" markers associated with indigenous people (language, dress, appearance, territory). Instead, identification practices revolved around ancestry and in all three cases, people identified Renata, Lucas and Nansin because they were related to Feliciano Ama. However, these three individuals' performative practices were also indicative of the ways of experiencing

indigeneity. By this, I mean that ancestry is important, but insofar as giving meaning to indigeneity, practices associated to celebrating *Día de la Cruz* are therefore also meaningful in the study of indigeneity.

In the case of Renata, the silence and secrecy about the truth concerning her indigenous name, her parents' marriage and about her father's family is significant in that it reinforces broader ideas about indigenous silencing following the 1932 massacre and the silences that have until recently characterized indigenous revitalization (Lindo Fuentes et al. 2010, 80). Renata's experience of indigeneity, which is characterized by silence and secrecy, is reminiscent of hidden transcripts, which reveal more profound patterns of power relations and social structures in the area of indigenous politics in Izalco (Scott 1990, 51). Another element worth highlighting in light of Renata's story is Scott's (1998) argument about names as "key navigational aids" which "convey important social knowledge" to help us understand social relations and power (64). With this in mind, Scott (1990) demonstrates that people in subordinate power relations have used names and naming practices to circumvent authority (34). Simply put, naming is an area that "the dominant find difficult or impossible to penetrate" (32). Silencing in Renata's case refers to people hiding elements that would identify them as indigenous as a result of the fear that followed the massacre. As Lindo Fuentes (2010) notes, one theory is that after 1932, people made conscious efforts at hiding their ethnic identity and adopt ladino ways of being (80). Having been born in 1940, it is likely that Renata's experience is very much associated to the political environment of the time.

For Renata, indigeneity is marginal to her everyday life and experiences. While she does have indigenous roots, having an indigenous last name is not enough for her to feel connected to her

indigenous past. Even engaging in *cofradías* is not enough for her to feel as though she is indigenous. Indigeneity, much like her indigenous last name, is marginal to her identity. Instead, there has been a rupture with her indigenous past, which is reflected in her decision to use her ladino name. The rupture is further evidenced in her ideas about cultural revitalization, which to her is not worth pursuing.

As such, Renata's experience also reflects the attitudes that Náhuat teachers and activists are trying to overcome with respect to the rediscovery of indigenous identities. Namely, they are encouraging people, especially youth, through education programs, to rediscover meaning in language. As reflected in Nansin's experience through her role at *Casa de la Cultura*, indigenous identity does not come from the desire to represent indigenous culture in its purest form by returning to a pre-colonial past, but to move forward in spite of the colonial past/present. Specifically, she promotes native language in order to build pride among indigenous individuals today, through the re-discovery and re-valorization of their individual and collective identities. With the same purpose, through various workshops she allows younger generations to explore ancestral instruments, dances, oral history and cosmovision (Nansin, July 2013). Once again, the objective as she describes is to take indigenous people out of the margins and help them to understand their roots (Nansin, July 2013). Rather than opting for silence and rupture with the past, Nansin advocates visibility and pride.

Casa de la Cultura and *cofradías* have emerged as "authorities" of indigenous identities. While there are other groups that operate within the town that are generally recognized by the population as having a role in the dissemination and preservation of indigenous language and

culture (as is the case with citizen-based ADESCO groups[47]), none seem as influential in defining the parameters of indigeneity, based on interviews with Izalco residents. Informants generally saw Lucas and Nansin as embodying authentic representations of "the" indigenous identity in part because of their ancestry. Nevertheless, their experiences reveal that they often engaged in different performative practices through which they give meaning to their indigenous identities. How Lucas and Nansin experience their indigenous identities differs, while still remaining authentically indigenous from their own perspective. On the one hand, Lucas experiences indigeneity through a religious institution that the Spanish established to exert their power over the colony. In terms of *cofradías*, identification politics are such that the tight relationship with the state and the Church means that there is seldom room for divergent indigenous self-expression. As a leader in a state-endorsed religious institution, Lucas must find a balance between the promotion of indigenous beliefs, state ideology, and Church doctrine. The exchange between him and the mayor on *Día de la Cruz* tangibly described the issues it poses for indigenous expression. Namely, indigenous experiences are weighed against what the state and the Church consider to be pagan and what they endorse.

When looking at the dynamic between *cofradías*, the state and the Church from this perspective, it is evident that it is a continuation of *cofradía* politics that authors have observed in the past. In other words, at hand is a colonial relationship, whereby the state and Church continue to exert their power over how people experience indigeneity. This subtle and symbolic form of power

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[47] Asociación de Desarrollo Economico y Social Comunitario (ADESCO) groups are community and economic development organizations that promote economic and social development. They are recognized by the state (they often partner with the state to carry out projects in Izalco, as was the case with community policing initiatives introduced in June 2012). ADESCOs are not simply ethnically or culturally-based. There are also sector-based, in which case they are seen as promoting development in their particular sectors (ADESCOHUIS, represents the sector of Huiscoyolate versus ADESCOMIZ, which represents indigenous women of Izalco).

operates at the level of ideas, discourses and practices. In the mayor's public appreciation of *Día de la Cruz*, he denounces indigenous experiences and repositions the event as a Catholic and state-endorsed tradition. He also repositions *cofradías* as state and Church institutions, not indigenous institutions in and of themselves. It should be noted here that studies have found that for many self-identified indigenous people, and as demonstrated in the case of Lucas, *cofradías* are central to indigenous experiences (Patrick 2004, 95; Tilley 2005, 112). It should also be highlighted that historically, *cofradías* are known for their propagation of heterodoxies. The simple fact that they are celebrating a holiday that was removed from the liturgical calendar demonstrates this. Again, I turn to Scott's (1990) concept of hidden transcripts to explain this dynamic; he argues that "[i]n extreme cases, certain facts, though widely known, may never be mentioned in public contexts… What may develop under such circumstances is virtually a dual culture: the official culture filled with bright euphemisms, silences, and platitudes and an unofficial culture that has its own history… that may, once again, be widely known but that may not be introduced into public discourse" (51). In essence, by positioning *cofradías* in this manner, the mayor is denouncing indigenous experiences that diverge from the state and from Church doctrines. The mayor is also setting the expectation about what constitutes a tolerated indigenous experience, as much of the focus on his speech is on indigenous ancestors, rather than on the living.

On a related note, the tendency to homogenize indigenous experience and relegate it to the past is precisely an area where *Casa de la Cultura* has played an important role. Nansin is contributing to the openness of indigenous self-expressions, whether deliberately or not. As a result, this creates the possibility for forms of indigenous expressions that are not confined to the archetype that the state and the Church promote. The paradigm shift that Nansin is spearheading

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in Izalco is certainly a source of tension for town officials and for people in Izalco who have

engrained ideas about what indigeneity should be. As mentioned above and as Renata also

demonstrated, historically *cofradías* largely became one of the only legitimate sources for

indigenous expression. However, with Nansin's and *Casa de la Cultura*'s work, there is now the

possibility for a plurality of voices.

An area in which a plurality of voices is coming into conflict with archetypal and accepted views

of indigeneity pertains to gender. To be sure, the purpose of this section is not to offer a complete

analysis of the gendered dynamic of indigeneity. Simply, I wish to demonstrate a different site

where conflicts exist about what it means to be indigenous. As mentioned above in relation to

Nansin, the fact that she is a woman is often a source of contention between her and *cofradía*

leaders. As a woman, there is no tradition of leading indigenous communities and as a female

leader her integrity is often at the source of discussions about her work. In regards to the people

who often frequent *Casa de la Cultura* and who are supporting Nansin in her efforts, my guides,

on several occasions, criticised them and dismissed their credibility on the basis of their

sexuality. These womens' narratives on indigenous relations in the town suddenly became void

of authority to the informants who accompanied me through different parts of Izalco, simply

because they were perceived as being outside the gendered norm. This also happened with

another informant, who questioned one of my interviewee's trustworthiness on the basis of his

sexual orientation, in addition to mocking the interviewee's performances in traditional dances.

On a final note, plurality of voices is also revealing struggles over definitions and ideas of

indigeneity; in other words it reflects conflicts over categorizations of ethnicity as Brubaker

(2002) and Tilley (2005) describe. As Brubaker (2002) puts it, "[e]thnicity, race and nationhood

exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world" (174-5). Specifically, Nansin's militant role at *Casa de la Cultura* stands in opposition to the passive, folkloric and symbolic role of Lucas and *cofradías*. Accordingly, people who are critical of Nansin's active role in promoting indigenous language, culture and rights, whether it is Lucas or other people referenced in this chapter, are expressing dissatisfaction with the type of indigeneity that Nansin projects. Likewise, those who are critical of the religious dynamic of *cofradías*, namely Nansin, are also engaging in struggles about ideas of what indigeneity should entail. In both instances, what can be observed is the struggle at the level of perception of what indigeneity *ought* to be.

Conclusion

Indigenous identities cannot simply be studied using ethnic markers as a starting point. This chapter has demonstrated by looking at a particular event, that we can start to gather information about social norms and tensions that give meaning to indigeneity. Using *Día de la Cruz* as a starting point, I began to explore how three different people who share a common ancestry experience the celebration and drew observations about indigeneity therefrom. This allowed me to start identifying issues that stand in the way of indigenous expressions, consistent with decolonial approaches (Wilson 2004). One of the major issues preventing effective indigenous expressions comes from silence and marginality with respect to indigeneity, a product of colonial history, now articulated as attitudes towards indigeneity. Another factor affecting indigenous expression is the external authority granted to *cofradías*, which promotes indigenous identifications based on state and Church doctrines. In the chapter that follows, I expand the sites

of analysis to visuality, allowing for further examination of the areas where indigenous expressions face additional obstacles.

Chapter 6: Old Wives' Tales? Storytelling and Discursive Mestizaje in Izalco

> Genaro: I am going to tell you a story that has never been written. It is a story that my grandmother used to tell me. She learned it from *los abuelos*. Not all of our stories have been written down, you know. The one I'm about to tell you, I have only told to my kids. It's the story of *la...* [incomprehensible words that sounds like Náhuat].
>
> Me: Can you say it again, but very slowly this time; I'm trying to write it down.
>
> Genaro: Alright, but it was not meant to be written down, so just listen to it again and then write it however you want.

I conversed with Genaro during a warm summer morning in Izalco, as I browsed through the Izalco archives, trying to locate records of the magical and supernatural stories that often circulate in the town. Genaro was surprised that I was interested in the stories that circulate around the town and he offered to help me to peruse through publications of *Revista Cultural*, a magazine that the mayor's office in Izalco publishes twice a year to coincide with patron saint celebrations in August and December. To him, stories are quite commonplace and one logical place to look was in these popular publications that celebrate Izalco culture. While eventually we did come across records of supernatural myths, I found most informative the story that he shared and the narrative that preceded it. Genaro's story involved human's interactions with personified celestial bodies, the themes of which were consistent with indigenous narratives documented elsewhere (Schultze-Jena 2010, 63). In addition to reminding me of the importance of orality in the transmission of Náhuat-Pipil belief systems, his stories also highlighted the distinction that exists between stories that have been textualized and stories that continue to exist as oral recounts (Palomo 2000, 9).

In the chapter that follows, I examine storytelling practices in Izalco. According to Huff (2006),

"[p]opular stories grant insight into culturally specific behavior, they can help to explain

religious, social, political, and economic institutions, and they reflect the present environmental

setting of a culture" (86). Huff further notes that as a form of social inquiry, stories "serve as the

foundation for shared identity and hold the ability to elucidate sense of place and to transmit

cultural understandings, both within and across cultural boundaries" (79). Given the importance

of stories as a form of social inquiry, in this chapter I examine stories and storytelling in Izalco,

which consist of expressions of indigeneity that are caught up in colonial relations, as reflected in

the tendencies towards discursive mestizaje.

As such, the first part of this chapter provides an overview of indigenous cosmovisions to assist

in understanding how, historically, realities have been transmitted through storytelling. Secondly,

I demonstrate how influential nationalist authors and poets appropriated indigenous

cosmovisions and made them national myths and fiction, thereby trivializing indigenous realities.

Specifically, I engage with the work of Alberto Masferrer, Miguel Angel Espino and Salarrué, as

they are considered by some to be among the most influential writers instrumental in the

consolidation of the Salvadoran nation (Lopez Bernal 2002, Velasquez 2002). In addition, their

works continue to shape Salvadoran society, given that they continue to be taught as part of

primary through secondary education.[48] Lastly, I turn to the story of four informants, Pablo,

Melida, Juana and Fernanda, to illustrate how people continue to replace ideas consistent with

indigenous cosmovisions with discourses that are more consistent with colonial belief systems.

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[48] In addition to these authors, I would have liked to analyze Maria de Baratta's work on Salvadoran folklore within
the context of the colonization of indigenous knowledge. However, her work is not widely available. In contrast, the
work of these three authors is widely available, in libraries, bookstores and even in peoples' homes, given that they
are still taught in schools. Their works are also widely available online.

6.1   Discursive Mestizaje

Like knowledge, discourse has been subject to colonization and mestizaje. Round (1997) notes that discursive mestizaje takes the form of revisionist tendencies, in which indigenous consciousness and knowledge expressed as discourses are edited (in a literal and figurative sense) to make them consistent with, in this case, Anglo-Americans beliefs (184). In analyzing the autobiographical account of Delfina Cuero, an American Indian who lived in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands, Round "exposes a fundamental discursive struggle" in the way that Delfina Cuero recounts and interprets her experiences (181).

> I never made baskets or ollas. I never cared to do that. My grandmother could make beautiful ollas and things, also my mother, but I think I'm lazy. When I was young, I was different, I always believed in looking for plants, food and herbs, and different things. I never took time for ollas and baskets, I've always worked like a man. I've had to cut wood.... I guess I'm just too lazy to sit in one place… (Delfina Cuero, quoted in Round 1997, 181-182).

In this case, her narrative reflects an ironic juxtaposition, with seemingly opposed ideas in her self-characterization, oscillating between laziness and hard work. As seen in the previous quotation, Round argues that Delfina Cuero's discursive patterns reproduce the colonial experience, given that "her language reflects an appropriation of Anglo-American cultural stereotypes" which posit that American Indians and Mexican Americans are lazy (182). This seemingly conflictive discursive practice is one that Schatzberg (2009) has also observed. He argues that people across different contexts tend to interpret life events through "alternative causalities", oscillating between rational and supernatural terms (188). He describes situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as in the United States, where people will invoke rationality, divine intervention or sorcery for very similar events (187).

Looking at Nicaragua, Gould (1998) contends that discursive practices were essential to the mestizaje project. Discourses therefore contributed to rendering Indians invisible and delegitimizing indigenous identities and claims (122). The discursive shift promoted the idea of a homogenous mestizo nation with its "character and valor derived from its Indian blood" (256). Furthermore, pervasive ideas about "Indian 'barbarism'" and "ladino 'civilization'" resonate in the daily lives of Indian Comunidades (6, 13). Finally, the author alludes to the shame associated with speaking an indigenous language and the decline of indigenous language, which has coincided with the loss of indigenous consciousness (7). This is something that according to Gould is consistent with other countries' experience with discursive mestizaje. With this in mind, the following section analyzes how indigenous consciousness or knowledge in El Salvador, which was influenced by supernatural beliefs, was also subject to colonization and devaluation. In this particular case, colonization and devaluation was not a one-time event. Rather, it is a cumulative process that contributes to meanings attributed to indigeneity.

6.2   Colonization and devaluation of indigenous beliefs in El Salvador

A major contributor to the devaluation of indigenous knowledge in El Salvador was evidently colonization. One of the main roles of the Spanish conquerors was to convert "idolatrous" peoples to Catholicism (Behar 1987, 34). According to Behar, people were forced to adopt new beliefs in colonial Latin America (34). It was only after many struggles and an inability to curb the beliefs of the people that Spain instructed colonizers that only mestizo individuals could be held accountable for their religious beliefs. Indeed, while inquisitors made many efforts to contain superstitious beliefs, these "tales" were still able to make their way into future societies. Behar notes that, in Mexico, some elements of witchcraft were allowed to coexist alongside the

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Spanish systems of beliefs in part because they did not appear to interfere with the functioning of Mexican society. This applies to women in colonial Mexico who resorted to "subtle violence" using forms of witchcraft to cope with the violence committed by men (42). In this sense, belief systems that delve into the supernatural are reflective of relationships of power in colonial Mexico, where "women were left with few domains in which to assert themselves, [so] they developed, in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, a rich symbolic language of beliefs and acts for resisting, punishing, and even controlling the men who dominated them" (42). Nevertheless, these were private acts and the impact did not generate much concern to colonial authorities.

Like the case above, the replacement of belief systems played a key role in the conquest of El Salvador, as illustrated in the letters that Pedro de Alvarado and Diego Garcia de Palacio wrote in the 1500s.[49] In 1524, Pedro de Alvarado, who led the conquest of the Izalco area, was confronted with peoples whose beliefs systems, ritualistic practices and oral traditions did not fit within his own religious frame of reference (*Carta de Relación I, Carta de Relación II*). Specifically, Spanish expeditions had two motives: making subjects of the Spanish crown and indoctrinating *los naturales* (the Indians). In one of his letters, Alvarado writes about his message to the Indians of the region: "I sent my messengers… to tell them not to be evil [or bad]... assuring them that I would not war against them or take anything that belongs to them, but instead, bring them to the service of God, our Lord, and your majesty" (*Carta de Relación I,* 30).

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[49]Geographic area inhabited by the Pipiles at the time of conquest, now referred to as El Salvador.

In 1576, Diego Garcia de Palacio, another Spanish explorer, also wrote: "It pleases God that with our diligence, little by little they would forget their ancient and doomed ways..." (*Carta de Relación del Oidor,* 39*).*

In his documentation of indigenous rituals, Garcia characterized indigenous practices as evil and linked to witchcraft (*Carta de Relación del Oidor,* 49). For example, Garcia writes about mushrooms that the Indians used to engage in "dirty and lustful acts," that they continued to perform "other dirty ceremonies" (*Carta de Relación del Oidor,* 37-40). Garcia also described the sacrifices taking place, with references to practices involving "witchcraft" and "the demon" (*Carta de Relación del Oidor,* 49, 50*).* There are also numerous detailed descriptions of the sacrifices that took place in the ancient world, which the authors associated with evil. For example, Garcia documented the way in which blood and the hearts of individuals were used as part of ancient self-sacrificing and sacrifice practices, which involved innocent people, vulnerable people, and animals (48-53).

In another key passage, Garcia demonstrates that he misunderstood indigenous practices and saw them as being foolish. Garcia described local beliefs as *torpeza*, which points to foolishness, nonsense or stupidity:

> Nearby there is a hamlet called Coatán and there is a lagoon at the foot of the volcano that I mentioned, which is very deep, [the lagoon] is made up of bad/evil water and is full of alligators. There are two islands in the middle of it. The Pipil Indians believed this to be an oracle of great authority, and believed that no human could see what lay beneath it, and whomever drank from it would become paralyzed/cripple and die, something that was derived from their devotion to ancient hoaxes. Upon realizing the mistake of the Indians of the region, I commanded them to build some rafts to enter the island, to rid them of such stupidity... those who were more Christian understood what mockery the sanctuary represented..." (*Carta de Relación del Oidor,* Garcia, 44).

This passage reveals that certain colonizers perceived the Náhuat-Pipils, their ideas and belief systems as not only barbaric, evil and demonic, but also stupid.

The purpose of the above discussion is certainly not to say that the beliefs that explorers and colonizers propagated during this time period, about the absurdity of indigenous beliefs, have remained unchanged. However, conversations with various informants indicate that more subtle forms of these associations are still present today. Indeed, one of the criticisms towards indigenous people in Izalco is that they continue to dabble in "witchcraft", a concept that I expand on in section 6.3. Furthermore, while the process of discursive mestizaje began with the conquest of Los Izalcos, tensions between indigenous knowledge and modernity through the development of the Salvadoran state can be seen in the writings of prominent Salvadoran intellectuals.

6.2.1 Devaluation of indigenous beliefs as a literary and political process

Indeed, during the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries, there was a rise in nationalism, which coincided with the rise in coffee prices and the development of a civic identity and culture that was distinct from other Central American states (Lopez Bernal 2002). In this manner, there is an emergence of nationalist authors whose primary concern was national progress in El Salvador, as seen below (Lopez Bernal 2002, 35). Among them are Alberto Masferrer (1868-1932), Miguel Angel Espino (1902-1967), Salvador Arrué or Salarrué (1899-1975). In the section that follows, I attempt to demonstrate that like colonization, the production of nationalist literature has contributed to the colonization of knowledge.

I selected these three authors because of their historical significance in the textualization of indigenous oral traditions, a process through which indigenous thought was subsumed into the nation-building project (Velasquez 2002, 51).[50] Additionally, their works continue to be disseminated by the state as nationalist literature. For instance, a number of their works were republished in 1996 as part of CONCULTURA's *Biblioteca Básica de Literatura Salvadoreña* (Basic Library of Salvadoran Literature) project, which aimed at disseminating Salvadoran literature nationally and internationally (Velasquez 2002, 47). It is important to note that this CONCULTURA project was led by the Ministry of Education. Presently, students at elementary, middle and secondary levels in Izalco are required to study these authors' works as part of their education (Ministerio de Educación, Programa de estudio: Lenguaje y Literatura – Educación Media; Programa de estudio: Lenguaje y Literatura – Tercer Ciclo de Educación Basica; Programa de estudio: Cuarto Grado – Educación Basica; Programa de estudio: Quinto Grado – Educación Basica; Programa de estudio: Sexto Grado – Educación Basica). As such, the authors examined here are important not just because they appropriated and disseminated indigenous stories, but because of their continued influence. Therefore, one can hypothesize that they are still instrumental in the ongoing nation-building project, given how states promote their nation-building agenda through schooling (Sahlins 1989, 263).

Alberto Masferrer, Miguel Angel Espino, Salarrué all dealt with the Indian question in El Salvador. Their work is not only important insofar as they inform Palomo's hypothesis which states that indigenous beliefs resonate more with folk tales than with belief systems, but also it is

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[50] While Velazques does not argue this point, he contends that one of the defining characteristics of Salvadoran literature is its nationalist character. In this particular piece, the author is attempting to analyze why very few literary works have achieved international acclaim. However, this supports this chapter's main argument that storytellers adopted and adapted indigenous cosmovisions as a way of promoting the Salvadoran nation.

meaningful because it embodies the literary tradition in Latin America in which there is an "ironic partnership between history and literature" (Piedra 2000, 362). Said otherwise, the authors' works are as much literary works as they are attempts at drawing attention to ideas about the Indian, a figure who historically stood in opposition to the modern state (Espino, M. A.1996, 19; Masferrer 1996, 37).

In this sense, these authors' works were consistent with *indigenismo*, a trend evidenced across Latin American countries (Favre 2009). To be sure, *indigenismo* refers to a widespread nation-building project in Latin America that emphasized first and foremost the Indian's inferiority and need to be integrated into the nation (Favre 2009, 32). The concept refers to a "range of intellectual, cultural and political discourses surrounding the 'problem of the Indian,' which moved across the Americas and became institutionalized in the early 1940s" (Minks 2014, 198).

Within this context, the Indian question became central to the nation-building projects that were underway in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a way of achieving progress (Kuenzli 2013, 122). Nation-building projects were centered on fostering a homogenous body politic and to be an Indian was inherently opposed to the idea of the nation (Favre 2009, 32-3).[51] During this period, Indians were subsumed into the ideology of mestizaje (Favre 2009, 33).[52]

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[51] In Favre's words: "[La nation] *cesse d'être cette association contractuelle dont génération de l'Indépendance s'était efforcée d'établir les statuts, pour devenir un corps, une communauté d'esprit, une collectivité solidaire et homogène, irréductible à la somme de ses membres qui se projette dans l'histoire pour accomplir un destin. Pareille conception de la nation trace entre indianité et nationalité un rapport d'incompatibilité qui rend ces deux termes mutuellement exclusifs*" (32).

[52] In Favre's words: "*Bien que ses aptitudes culturelles soient pleinement admises, l'Indien n'en est pas moins condamné à disparaître en tant qu'être racial. Le sort que les indigénistes lui assignent est de fusionner avec le créole…*" (29).

According to Becker (2008), "[i]ndigenismo reached its highest level of expression in literature," which is characterized by its "social realism and critique of indigenous misery" (Becker 2008, 45). Becker also states that indigenist literature "portrayed Indians as primitive and ignorant people who were unable to improve their socioeconomic position without outside assistance" (45). Indigenist scholars drew attention to Indians' plight, while maintaining that given the right conditions and education, Indians could assimilate (Favre 2009, 33; Becker 2008, 46). Coupled with this depreciation of Indians, Kuenzli (2013) also proposes that "[i]ndigenista authors embellished this discourse with an appreciation of a glorified (and often invented) Indian past" (122-3).

Alberto Masferrer

Alberto Masferrer (1996, originally published in 1915) fervently wrote about the social conditions in El Salvador and the preconditions for national progress. He played an important role in the political life of El Salvador as an intellectual and as a key strategist (Racine 1997, 216). In addition to being appointed to various diplomatic posts (Racine 219), he collaborated in Arturo Araujo's successful presidential campaign in 1930 (Masferrer 1996, 8). In the 1960s, his work was also important in the ideological consolidation of the Christian Democratic movement in the country (Racine 1997, 211).

As an intellectual and political influencer, Masferrer's proposed method of achieving progress was through civilization and education, including scientific education (12, 19, 21). In his work, Masferrer is critical of illiteracy and ignorance (19-20), which he saw as obstacles to progress during a time of rapid economic expansion as a result of coffee markets in conjunction with the further establishment of the mestizo nation (Racine 1997, 222). His criticisms of Salvadoran

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society in its then current stage extended to the idiocy, stupidity, superstition of current and emergent generations (20, 21). Likewise, he argued that until education and science had reached the vast majority of Salvadorans, the country would be unable to achieve progress (19).

Masferrer does not usually single out Indians in his work. However, in one of his essays, *Leer y Escribir* (To Read and to Write)*,* he explicitly grapples with the Indian question. According to his estimates, three quarters of the population is indigenous and also living in detrimental conditions (39). This statement is significant because it puts a face to the people whom he perceives as being a hindrance to progress. Given his perception of the prevalence of Indians, it is clear that those needing the most intervention according to Masferrer are Indians. Masferrer's quest for national progress has the Indian condition as the main rationale:

> ...Eleven thousand Indians live in such filth and abandonment... men and women live like animals, delivered to such rude promiscuity, as if there were no traces of civilization within two hundred leagues of its surroundings... in all the villages, valleys and hamlets, and even in third order populations there is nothing but a tissue of gross superstitions: people learn healing prayers, *el duende*[53] seduces girls, *la Siguanaba* frightens wanderers, men pick magic herbs and take a stone out of snakes to defeat their enemies; reciting creeds backwards has an undisputable effectiveness; ghosts are used to inspire terror in children; Spanish flies, *pocuyo* bones, black cat hairs, bat wings, an *amate* flower cut at midnight are the favourite arsenals of healers and sorcerers… (40).[54]

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[53] A mythical creature

[54] In Masferrer's words: "*…once mil indios, viven estos en tal suciedad y abandono… hombres y mujeres viven como animales, entregados a una promiscuidad tan grosera, como si en doscientas leguas en contorno no hubiera trazas de civilización… en todas las aldeas, valles y caseríos, y hasta en poblaciones de tercer orden la religión no es más que un tejido de supersticiones groseras: las gentes aprenden oraciones para curarse, el duende seduce a las muchachas, la siguanaba espanta a los caminantes, los hombres cortan hierbas mágicas y les sacan la piedra a las culebras, para vencer a sus enemigos; el credo, recitado al revés, es de una eficacia indiscutible; a los niños se les inspira el terror con los fantasmas; la cantárida, los huesos de pocuyo, los pelos de gato negro, las alas de murciélago, la flor del amate, cortada a medioanoche, son el arsenal favorito de los curanderos y hechiceros…*" (40).

Within this context, Masferrer urges the privileged class (the other quarter of the population) to

accept responsibility and fix the Indian condition to achieve the progress that ruling elites so

desire:

> The day will come when we will understand that the indifference and the hostility
> with which we see the Indian who works the field, is the cause of the evils that
> burden us, and the pitfall to all of our efforts for civilizing our country (39).[55]

In addition to such remarks about the need for education and civilization, Masferrer was

also an advocate of acculturation as a method of nation-building:

> We *can*, *must* do what other people in northern Europe have done, what Chile does,
> what the United States has done, what they have started doing in Italy and Spain: to
> build a people with a homogenous culture, with common aspirations; to forge a
> nation not only linked to memories, race, climate, but to a spiritual life… (37).[56]

Masferrer's remarks can be summarized in two statements. First, he portrays Indians as

helpless beings who cannot by themselves escape their dehumanized existence. Secondly,

he makes reference to indigenous beliefs and criticizes them for being the reason the nation

is unable to progress. Given such explicit attitudes about Indians and their culture, it is

likely that Masferrer's rhetoric portrays some of the prominent attitudes of the time.

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[55] In Masferrer's words: "*Día vendrá en que comprendamos que esa indiferiencia, esa hostilidad con que vemos al idio, al trabajador del campo, es la causa de muchos de los males que nos agobian, y el escollo… por la civilización de nuestro país*" (39).

[56] In Masferrer's words: *Nosotros podemos, debemos hacer lo que han hecho los pueblos del norte de Europa, lo que hace Chile, lo que ha hecho Estados Unidos: formar un pueblo de cultura homogénea, con aspiraciones comunes, forjar una nación en que los vínculos únicos no sean los recuerdos, la raza, el clima, sino la vida espiritual, el designio de elevarse por el esfuerzo de todos para todos* (37).

Miguel Angel Espino

Unlike Masferrer who denigrates indigenous belief systems, Miguel Angel Espino is not overtly

critical of indigenous belief systems as long as they strengthen ideas of the nation. Instead,

Espino urges for an appropriation of indigenous mythology as a way of strengthening the nation.

Maria de Baratta, among other renowned Salvadoran authors, once praised Espino for his

contribution to the canon of national (and nationalist) literature. In his work, *Mitología de*

Cuscatlán (1996, originally published in 1919) Espino narrated various stories rooted in

indigenous beliefs, as a way of re-envisioning Salvadoran national identity (16). In this manner,

his introductory remarks begin to paint the image of an Indian who is relevant to the definition of

the national identity (16). He then urges Salvadorans to return to their American roots and to

re-discover their autochthonous identity through myths and legends (15). He refers to this

process as the "Americanization of education," which is in essence a nationalist and

nationalizing project (19), as Lopez Bernal (2002) has also remarked.

Miguel Angel Espino describes the supremacy of indigenous people who once inhabited the

continent and contends that the improvement of the nation is contingent on the Americanization

of education (*americanización de la enseñanza*) (19). He does not see Indians of his time as

being reflective of the greatness of the Indians who once inhabited the land; he sees those who

survived years of warfare as being inferior in a Darwinian sense, given that all the warriors died

fighting according to him (22). For Miguel Angel Espino, it is mestizos who inherited the

greatness of Indian warriors. Furthermore, he contends that great Indians of the past did not die

during the conquest battles because their greatness survived in autochthonous myths and legends

(28).[57] In Espino's words:

> The error has been to judge the American race on the basis of the Indians from the colonial or post-colonial era; a degenerate race, which stem from the scum of the ethnic group; which persisted due to the survival of the useless; the mentally and physically superior America died when the banner of Castile was implanted... In its long and tiring fight for freedom, America spent all of the vitality of the continent. All of its virility, all of its capability for greatness died in that fight for freedom. The elderly, children and women, relatively small in number, are the ones who survived the bloodshed. And the race could not be transmitted by such invalid means of reproduction. Children born during the conquest or after it would have been qualitatively and quantitatively inferior to those born before... (21).[58]

Both the act of minimizing indigenous agency and the act of narrating stories under the label of

"myth" and fiction remove the sense of continuity between stories, storytelling and reality that

characterizes indigenous narratives. In Miguel Angel Espino's words:

> [When there is an Americanization of teaching] Then will literature be our own, a historical literature. Literature that fills the soul with autochthonism, with flavour of American things and fermented indigenous honeycombs. That is the future of literature, logical and educational, with nationalist tendencies and the future of American verses. This mythology of Cuzcatlán forms part of the national pedagogy (16).[59]

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[57] Miguel Angel Espino also distances himself from the Spanish, whom he also sees as an ethnic group with many flaws and vices. In doing so, he is asserting the distinctiveness of the Salvadoran nation.

[58] In Espino's words: "*El error ha sido juzgar la raza americana por los indios de la época colonial o post-colonial; raza degenerada, procedente de las escorias étnicas, perpetuadas por la supervivencia de los inútiles; la alta América, mental y físicamente murió cuando el estandarte de Castilla... Todos los elementos viriles, todo lo capaz de ser grande, murió en aquella sublime lucha libertaria. Los ancianos, los niños y las mujeres, en poco número relativo, sobrevivieron a aquella hecatombe de sangre. Y la raza, no se pudo transmitir íntegra por aquellos inválidos medios de perpetuación. Los niños nacidos en la conquista o después de ella, debieron ser inferiores, cualitativa y cuantitativamente, a los nacidos antes*" (21).

[59] In Espino's words: *"Entonces será la literatura propia, una literatura histórica. Literatura que llene el alma de autoctonismo, con un sabor a cosas americanas y un fermento de los viejos panales indígenas. Ese es el porvenir de la literatura, lógica y educadora, de tendencias nacionalistas, y el futuro del verso americano. Esta mitología de Cuscatlán forma parte de una pedagogía nacional."* (16).

While Miguel Angel Espino explores indigenous myths, his reasoning is not for the re-discovery of indigenous cosmovisions. Instead, his primary concern is nation-building through education. His attitudes towards indigeneity are consistent with indigenist thought, which took the greatness of Indians and turned it to the service of the nation. His disdain towards Indians in their current state is evident despite his exaltation of the Indian past. As such, the exploration of indigenous myth falls short of a rediscovery of indigenous belief systems; instead, this is a literary exercise, which is consistent with Smith's (2012) theory of indigenous knowledge appropriation and textualization of knowledge, which is likely to dilute indigenous meanings (380).

Salvador Salazar Arrué (Salarrué)

Like Masferrer, Salarrué's narrative evokes a sense of Indian inferiority, but like Espino, indigenist tendencies are covert and evidenced in the quaint portrayals of Indian thought, innocence, emotionality and backwardness.

Salvadorans consider Salarrué one of the most important and influential individuals for his portrayal of the Salvadoran national identity as evidenced in a recent Salarrué exposé at Museum of the Word and Image (*Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen*, MUPI) in San Salvador (Salarrué exhibition, March 2012). In addition to being one of El Salvador's most influential authors, he was also an ambassador and cultural attaché to the United States. He also taught mythology and indigenous decorative art at *Escuela de las Bellas Artes* (Erquicia Cruz 2012, 72). In addition, he is a renowned painter; like his stories, his artwork is celebrated as an emblem of Salvadoran national identity (Salarrué exhibition, March 2012). Originally from Sonsonate, a neighbouring town of Izalco, Salarrué expresses a desire for a connection with the land and with the people who originally inhabited it.

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Cuentos de Barro (1933) is a collection of stories through which the author establishes the mysticism of the land and the identity of the Indian. His stories are of the *costumbrista* genre, which turns various traditions found in the countryside (often among peasant Indians) into national folklore (Favre 2009, 54; Losada Goya 1998). The unrefined language and themes of his work attempt to recapture the reality of Indians and their land and beliefs (López Rojas 2011, 13).[60] However, as Favre (2009) notes, the effect culminates in a superficial portrayal of indigenous belief systems (55).

Nevertheless, Salarrué's narrations involving Indians tend to expose the foolishness of indigenous thought, as he sees it. In one story, the Indians of a village believe an abandoned house to be haunted. A priest comes along, orders some Indians to clean it and make it aesthetically pleasing and in doing so, tries to convince the Indians of their foolishness. Through this story, the author contrasts the priest's rationality with Indians' foolishness (14). Similarly, in another story, Salarrué introduces Jose Pashaca, *el Indio soñador* (the Indian dreamer), a man is portrayed as foolish and dull as the buried *botija* (pot, jar) for which he searches. Once a lazy man who refused to work, after hearing the story of another man who found a treasure buried in the ground as he plowed the land, Jose Pashaca began a quest to find his own hidden treasure. His work was often in vain, given that he attributes no meaning to work aside from finding a treasure in the ground. Nevertheless, Jose Pashaca was so determined to find a treasure that he

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[60] Salarrué's prose is full of melodious colloquialisms that make the translation of his work almost to impossible to translate. López Rojas (2011) undertook a project of this magnitude. For the purpose of this study it is simply important to understand that Salarrué brings to the national literary scene a new kind of prose, which is arguably in line with indigenist tendencies of the time. I offer some examples, but in general, I paraphrase and explore the meaning of certain stories.

ends up burying it himself in order to convince himself of the reality of his myth (*La Botija, Cuentos de Barro*). The story ends with Jose Pashaca murmuring to himself:[61]

¡Vaya: pa que no se diga que ya nuai botijas en las aradas!...	*There: now they can't say that there are no botijas in the fields!*

(*La Botija, Cuentos de Barro, 9*)

Similarly, in *Semos Malos, Salarrué* tells the story of four thieves who have murdered someone simply for a phonograph:

Los cuatro bandidos entraron por la palizada y se sentaron luego en la plazoleta del rancho... Pusieron la caja en medio y probaron a conectar la bocina. La luna llena hacía saltar chingastes de plata sobre el artefacto...	*The four bandits entered from the palisade and then sat in the square of the ranch... They put the box in the middle and tried to connect the speaker. The full moon shone on the artefact, which reflected silver glimmers...*
—Te digo ques fológrafo.	*— I'm telling you it's a 'pholograph' [phonograph].*
—¿Vos bis visto cómo lo tocan?	*— You seen how they play it?*
—¡Ajú!... En los bananales los ei visto...	*— ¡Ajú!... I seen them in the banana plantations...*
—¡Yastuvo!...	*— It's done!*

(Semos malos, Cuentos de Barro, 13)

An analysis of Salarrué's prose is imminent in the study of myth because of his treatment of the Indian. Salarrué's portrayals of the Indian and Indian life are condescending to say the least because of the contrast between the language of the Indian interlocutors and the narrator. His prose is full of indigenous colloquialisms, which are assimilated to the Spanish language;

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[61] Given that a central point I am highlighting is the author's transposition of oral Indigenous colloquialisms into text, I have included both English and Spanish versions in the main text.

however closely the language assimilates, it fails to attain the refined prose of the author. This dynamic certainly points to the inability of Indians to assimilate to the dominant culture. At the same time, Salarrué's themes point to Indians' unrefined, uneducated and ignorant nature not just at the linguistic level, but also in relation to their beliefs. Their beliefs are portrayed as antiquated and enchanted, which are inconsistent with progress due to the sense of ignorance that characterizes the Indian.

To return to the concept of discursive mestizaje, the literary works analyzed in this chapter are important because they illustrate how indigenous concepts were repurposed for the national cause, and in doing so, became complicit in the colonization of knowledge. Despite engaging with themes and concepts that resonated with indigenous cosmovisions, the works by Masferrer, Espino and Salarrué are more indicative of ways in which intellectual and political elites promoted the nation and national unity. Certainly, they explored indigenous themes, but their treatment of indigenous stories shows a lack of understanding of indigenous meanings. What stands out from their writings is the devaluation of indigenous knowledge and inherently subordinate status of the Indian in relation to the nation.

What we can observe is a twofold process, reflective of the colonization of knowledge. On the one hand, these authors appropriated different indigenous beliefs and textualized them, by transcribing oral myths in Spanish. They took indigenous beliefs out of the realm of oral mytho-magical thought, including their everyday meanings, transforming them into literature. It is important to remember that these authors were writing in a time of widespread illiteracy. As such, their primary audience was not the rural peasant and Indian classes. Instead, their audience would likely have been the educated political elite. In this manner, indigenist authors portrayed

indigeneity as being incompatible with progress, while at the same time adapting the image of the Indian to assist their nationalist claims. On the other hand, by appropriating and disseminating "indigenous" knowledge, they also took away indigenous agency in the shaping of what came to be widely seen as the recovery of autochthonous knowledge (Lopez Bernal 2002). In summary, during this process of rapprochement of indigenous cosmovisions and nationalist literature, stories became less about transmitting indigenous knowledge in the form of oral traditions grounded in everyday experience and more about ideas regarding the nation, transmitted as print literature.

6.3   Indigenous Narratives in Izalco

In order to have a better grasp of the process of discursive mestizaje as reflected in the stories above, it is important to situate storytelling in Izalco. As German anthropologist Leonhard Schultze-Jena documented in his book published in 1935, storytelling in Izalco is not a new phenomenon; it is a historical tradition that existed prior to colonization and that has continued since. An edited version (*Mitos en la lengua materna de los Pipiles de Izalco en El Salvador*) was published in 2010, in which activist and scholar Rafael Lara-Martinez further explored indigenous thought using Schultze-Jena's work as a starting point. This extensive publication composed of three volumes has been a watershed in the revitalization of the

Náhuat-Pipil culture and language. According to Lara Martinez, Schultze-Jena's collection is unequivocally one of the most important and comprehensive contributions for the study of Náhuat-Pipil culture and language (21).[62]

Based on the collection of narratives, Schultze-Jena found that Náhuat-Pipils' language was inherently structured around their lived experiences, which revolved around their relationship to their natural environment, their production and consumption patterns, their beliefs about reality, and their relations to one another (Lara-Martinez in Schultze-Jena 2010, 62, 63). The fact that his informants narrate stories in the present regardless of when an event has occurred demonstrates the importance of experience as it is lived, which constitutes a very different understanding of time and of the significance of narratives (Lara-Martinez in Schultze-Jena 2010, 62).

In addition to being a function of everyday experiences, storytelling among Náhuat-Pipils also reflected a preoccupation with elements that "surpass" everyday reality (what Schultze-Jena denotes as having to do with fantasy) (61). In other words, Náhuat-Pipil stories deal with travels to the underworld, mystical creatures, and explanations of the natural phenomena that stand in contrast to scientific understandings (159). In this sense, the concept of the supernatural vaguely refers to a distinction in language between "reality" and "fantasy" or "spirituality" (Schultze-Jena 2010, 61, 63). In the section that follows, I provide a brief overview of different themes and motifs that Schultze-Jena encountered in indigenous narratives to better understand how storytelling was historically a function of the everyday in Izalco.

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[62] "Presentan libro: Mitos en la lengua materna de los Pipiles de Izalco" (September 2, 2014).

6.3.1   Agricultural Production, Vegetation and Nature

Indigenous cosmovisions, as Schultze-Jena (2010) describes, revolves around four key principles: wild fruit, the earth, water and the stars (63). The relationship between these four elements is such that fruit becomes human flesh when eaten, the earth produces fruit, vegetation draws water to grow, and the stars (including the sun) govern growth and production (63). For this reason, indigenous narratives demonstrated a profound relationship with nature.

The interrelationship between these four principles is such that it also reflects supernatural (or fantastical) elements (63). Going beyond simply explaining the process of planting and harvesting, a particular story delves into supernatural elements of vegetation and the beginnings of agriculture. Specifically, a woman dies and is reincarnated as a tree; the tree bears fruit and in one of the fruit, the tree bears children. These children go looking for food and create a cloud and lightning that leads to the production of corn and to the start of agriculture (101, 102). Similarly, another tale recounts the creation of the Izalco volcano in which a man lights a tree, which then became the Izalco volcano (159). Another story tells about a man's travels to the underworld and his encounters with the flying beings and the Lord of the Mountain (*El Senor de la Montaña*) (154, 312). Another narration explains that when people die, their bones become other animals, which leads Náhuat-Pipils to respect all living creatures as themselves (with the exception of those that may harm them) (160). Yet another story retells how thieves try to steal a man's yucca crop at night and the sun and moon are personified as guards of the man's crop (60); the personification of the sun and moon is also evident in various other stories (262, 274). Simply put, stories about nature—a supernatural element—reveal a fluidity between the natural and the

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supernatural in everyday life, as well as a social dynamic that flows out of nature and its

supernatural characteristic.

6.3.2 Contemporary Storytellers in Izalco

The2 themes of the stories that circulated in Izalco at the time of my research were consistent

with indigenous traditions, deal with mythical characters, zoomorphism, healings, supernatural

happenings, and are deeply entrenched in indigenous thought, religion and custom (Palomo

2000, 42). Palomo has documented numerous testimonials in which people relate encounters

with *la Cihuanaba*[63] (47) and *el Cadejo*[64] (75); convey a person's ability to transform themselves

into certain animals such as a monkey or a pig (62); and assert the occurrence of seemingly

inexplicable events where people re-appear after having died and been buried (118). Palomo

refers to this wide range of oral traditions in El Salvador as *pensamiento mito-mágico* or

mytho-magical thought (19).

However, Palomo also remarks that Salvadorans increasingly view Náhuat-Pipil myths and

legends as simply stories void of any "real" and everyday meaning (15). As such, one of

Palomo's objectives has been to situate oral traditions within the frame of indigenous

cosmovisions, rather than folkloric or literary practices without any deeper meaning (12). He

notes that generally, when dealing with oral traditions, most people associate them with

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[63] Spellings of this mythical creature vary from source to source. Palomo (2000) claims that while Siguanaba is the widely used term in El Salvador, the spelling points to a corruption of the original meaning of the Náhuat term, which stood for *cigua* (woman) and *nahual* (spirit or "double") (31). In Náhuat, the term *mujer-nahual* (or spirit-woman) alludes to a spirit that transcends time (33, 34). La Siguanaba is a character that is present in other Latin American cultures including Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico. Depending on the area, she is known as segua, cegua, siguanagua, or cochina (Edelman 1994, 86).

[64] A dog-like creature that roams in the woods, of which there is a white and a black version, which is representative of good and evil.

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creativity and collective expression of imagination, while discounting the truths about the

Mother Earth-humanity dynamic transmitted through indigenous legend and myth (22). He

argues that people in El Salvador tend to see indigenous myths as "*historietas*

fantásticas-folklórico-literarias" or fantastical and literary folk tales, to the detriment of their

original intent (31). According to Palomo, this has been the equivalent to "*la desvaloración*

y folklorización de la leyenda" or the devaluation and folklorization of legends which draw from

indigenous religious traditions (21).[65]

Recently, a number of storytellers have emerged in Izalco with the intention of preserving an

indigenous past and promoting the revival of indigenous identities (Cea, 1998; del Valle, 2011

and Leiva Masin, 2011). These authors often attempt to recapture oral traditions while portraying

the "magic and mysterious atmosphere" of everyday life in Izalco (del Valle 2009, 19).

Presenting indigenous stories as cosmovisions, these authors have begun to further highlight

tensions between dominant national narratives and indigenous cosmovisions.

Notably, Carmen del Valle (2011) explored indigenous belief systems in Izalco. Her

autobiographical testimony discusses what it was like to grow up in Izalco, a town where beliefs

about witches, sorcery and spiritual cleansings are quite prevalent, as the title of her book

suggests (*Hechizos y Limpias en Tierra de Brujos* or Spells and Cleansings in the Land of

Witches). As a non-indigenous outsider who gains the trust of different people of the town as a

result of her youthful curiosity, del Valle provides insider glimpses of the practices of indigenous

people, which included casting spells, transformations into animals, bilocation (being in two

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[65] In Palomo's words: "*Sin embargo, en nuestra cultura, se sigue manteniendo la idea que los mitos y leyendas tradicionales vigentes hasta nuestros días, sólo son cosas pasadas, cuenteretes inventados por los viejos que ya ni tienen razón de ser; para muchos sólo son piezas des folklore literario ubicadas en el museo del olvido*" (12).

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places at the same time), cleansings, clairvoyance, and reincarnations, among other practices (82, 117). In this manner, del Valle describes the prevalence of supernatural beliefs and practices in Izalco, while at the same time describing the efforts of her family at sheltering her from indigenous belief systems and preventing her from ever speaking about the "incredible" or "unusual" practices she has witnessed (84).[66] Overall, del Valle helps to re-think indigenous beliefs by showing indigenous practices from the perspective of indigenous people.

Del Valle finds that supernatural elements and stories tend to permeate everyday practices – while playing with her brother (77), at the marketplace (115), during births (146) and in encounters people from her neighbourhood (93, 148). With the help of Nana Cande, a woman whom del Valle came to see as a grandmother figure in her life, del Valle began in her youth to understand the supernatural realm, the intricacies and materializations of magic and "witchcraft" (89). In this manner, she constructs meaning around certain practices beyond hegemonic understandings that portray indigenous belief systems as simply evil (83). Nana Cande further explains to her that it is only "*criollos*" (or Salvadoran born Spanish) who wish to profit from magic, who use it for evil, and further claims that *naturales* or indigenous people use it for good and only use it for evil when they have been mistreated by someone (89-90). After del Valle's early experiences of indigeneity, she embraces indigenous cosmovisions and rituals (90, 91).

While it is important to analyze literary advancements in more detail, for now I wish to focus on discursive practices because of the central role of orality in the expression of indigenous cosmovisions. In Genaro's words, some things were not meant to be written down. Therefore,

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[66] In del Valle's words: *Entre los naturales ofrecen sacrificios de animales a Dios para conseguir una gracia; pero a nosotros no han enseñado otra cosa para conseguir su favor […] Solo viste algo inusual. No lo debes de comentar*" (84).

my intention is to draw out the instances in which discursive practices are challenging

hegemonic homogenizing tendencies (or mestizaje). As such, the objective of this section is to

contextualize storytelling practices in Izalco. Firstly, what I wish to highlight in this overview is

the profound relationship that exists between storytelling and everyday experiences. Secondly, I

wish to demonstrate the fluidity between the supernatural and the natural ("real" or seen).

With this in mind, the section that follows aims to expose another layer in the colonization of

knowledge. I illustrate that stories are both part of everyday life and continue to evoke themes

consistent with indigenous belief systems, which I refer to as contemporary expressions of

indigeneity. However, in addition to evoking themes that are consistent with indigenous belief

systems, informants also demonstrated revisionist and seemingly contradictory tendencies, in a

similar pattern as reflected in the story of Delfina Cuero (section 6.2.1).

6.4   Izalco: *Ciudad Mágica*[67]

On the surface, Izalco seems like any other town in the western part of El Salvador, especially

like Sonsonate: at the centre of the town is a park surrounded by the municipal government

headquarters (*Palacio Municipal*), a colonial church (*la Asunción*), a number of residential and

commercial establishments, and the public elementary school. However, after engaging with

several people at the town square, it becomes clearer how belief in supernatural occurences is a

common characterization of how people perceive the town. As the billboard at the exit from the

highway leading to Izalco indicates, Izalco is a "magical city".

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[67] The slogan printed on the sign that stands at the entrance of Izalco identifies the place as a "magical city."

In other words, supernatural beliefs and stories about supernatural experiences are commonplace in Izalco. Stories about people with supernatural abilities and experiences with the magical, occult and supernatural realms are so widespread among the residents, that this is an element that the informants whose contributions are reflected in this chapter see as being intrinsic to *Izalqueños'* identity, as well as to the town's *patrimonio* or heritage. In addition, *Izalqueños* are also well acquainted with *cuentos* or tales that evoke Izalco's storytelling and mystical heritage—stories about *la Cuyancúat* (a half-pig, half-snake creature that appears before torrential rain) or *el Cadejo* (a dog-like creature). As described below, such beliefs in the supernatural, occult or magical have deeply-rooted connections with indigenous belief systems.

Outside of Izalco, people with whom I conversed about Izalco alluded to its uniqueness in light of the supernatural stories, beliefs and experiences in the town. In Santa Tecla/San Salvador, a taxi driver once referred to Izalco as "*la ciudad de los brujos*" or the city of witches (Santa Tecla, June 2012). Similarly, a person I met from the neighbouring town of Sonzacate, associated Izalco with having a supernatural aura, where witches and witchcraft are common (homemaker, May 2012). *Izalqueños* and *Izalqueñas* are well acquainted with this characterization, often admitting that there may be a hint of reality to rumors about witchcraft that circulate around the country.

Nevertheless, according to Palomo there is an ambivalent dynamic at play in El Salvador in which people generally believe and do not believe in myth at the same time (15).[68] The following section explores this ambivalence in relation to Izalco, based on discussions conducted with several informants. In conversing about Izalco's culture, people tended to resort to sharing

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[68] In Palomo's words "*Se cree que el mito existe, pero no existe*" (15).

experiences of the supernatural as lived experiences. In the same token, people tended to downplay supernatural elements and attempted to reformulate their perceptions and beliefs in more plausible terms.

6.4.1   Pablo and Melida

As I converse with Pablo and Melida, I sense that they are both proud *Izalqueños* who are involved in the cultural and religious life of the town. They become very animated as they describe the calendar of events of the different *cofradías* of the town and the rituals of these *cofradías*. They are well acquainted with the traditions that they believe distinguish Izalco from any other place in the country and go on to describe the processions of saints that often pass in front of their house: *el encuentro de los Cristos* (the encounter of the Christs, celebrated at Easter); *las chilateadas* (literally, an event where *chilate,* a warm, almost flavourless maize drink, is served and consumed from house to house); and the tradition of *los tronos* (literally, thrones, where the saints are paraded around the town during processions and then destroyed in a ritualistic manner that sometimes involves letting it roll down a hill and crashing). Indeed, Pablo and Melida have numerous stories about these "traditions that people in the town [including them] still hold on to" (Pablo, Izalco, April 2012).[69]

Pablo's pride in the town is also evident in the way that he speaks about the recent celebrations that were organized to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Izalco, in which both him and Melida participated. He recalls the symbolic act whereby Izalco became the capital city for one day to mark the day that Izalco officially became a city (Asamblea Legislativa, Diario Oficial,

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[69] All quotes from this section stem from a conversation with Pablo and Melida held in Izalco in April 2012.

vol. 394). Melida pulls out some pamphlets and booklets that the municipality produced in light

of the anniversary. One booklet contains images that complement the stories about the town that

the couple has been narrating during our encounter. This includes a story about *el campanario*

(bell tower) at *la Asunción* (church in the town), which holds the bell that Emperor Carlos I of

Spain and V of Germany gifted to the town. He also recites the inscription on the bell that

virtually every resident of Izalco can recite, but that nobody I spoke to has ever seen: *María*

Asunción me llamo, cien quintales peso, y el que no lo creyere, que me levante en peso.[70]

According to his story, officials from the Sonsonate Department (Izalco is under the jurisdiction

of this Department) tried to take the bell to Sonsonate City, until the "Indians" in Izalco

categorically opposed, with machetes, the officials who were charged with taking it from Izalco.

As the couple discuss the town's traditions, Pablo mentions that there are also "indigenous"

myths that form part of the culture in Izalco and jokes about the tradition of *brujos* (witches) that

according to the rest of the country are rampant in Izalco. He states that according to the rest of

the country "Izalco is a town of *brujos*". Pablo seems ambivalent about the fact that there are still

brujos in the town. He asserts that in the past there were people in the town known as *brujos*, but

that this is also a dying tradition. Pablo states that "the tradition and belief in *brujos is* also

disappearing, with indigenous clothing*"*. He describes the belief in witchcraft as "*creencias*" or

beliefs (implying that they are simply unfounded popular beliefs).

During the same conversation, Pablo and Melida do admit that there is a "real" tradition of

witchcraft in the town, but they are also somewhat skeptical about the truth claims behind

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[70] Translation: My name is *Maria Asuncion*. I weigh one hundred quintals. Those who do not believe me, can try
lifting me.

witchcraft. Despite seeing witchcraft as a tradition and a cultural component of the town, the

topic of witchcraft still makes them fearful and they concede by admitting that "*al fin, quien*

sabe" or "in the end, who knows". Coupled with their ambivalence about tales of *brujos*, Pablo

and Melida recall a man they knew who could turn himself into a monkey. Melida interjects the

conversation to ask her husband:

> Remember Chepe? He used to turn himself into a monkey. I get scared just talking
> about it. I've heard of people seeing them [*brujos* turned into monkeys], but I
> haven't seen one. Didn't you see one in the backyard, Pablo? (Melida speaking to
> Pablo, Izalco, April 2012)

Pablo replies:

> That's right. Chepe was able to turn himself into a *mico* [a monkey]. I don't even
> like to think about it either. But nobody believes that stuff anymore. I remember
> going to the yard and seeing a small figure with glowing red eyes in a tree. I knew
> right away it was a *brujo* turned *mico* and it was signaling me to come closer with
> its hand. I told him I wasn't afraid. Eventually it ran away. I think there is one or
> two [*brujos*] left in Izalco. We use to hear them running on the rooftop. You just
> knew it was a *mico*. The only ones who can do that are old now. They're too old to
> run. Younger generations have other things on their mind.

As Pablo recalls the events, his wife asks him to stop. Both individuals appear to display genuine

fear, and after retelling the story, they also proceed to state that these beliefs are disappearing.

They tell me that there are very few *brujos* in Izalco (if any). Yet, as evidenced from the

conversation these "traditional" beliefs have lingered in the imaginaries of people in the town

and their discourses.

Worth noting is the juxtaposition of beliefs in the statements that Pablo makes during our

conversation. On the one hand, Pablo appears convinced that tales *brujos* and *brujería* (or

witchcraft) are precisely that: unfounded tales. Yet, he also asserts that he had supernatural

experiences in the past. In other words, after having assured me that he does not believe in *brujos*

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and *brujería* anymore and pointing out that this is a tradition that is being lost among younger generations, he expresses fear when discussing the topic. Almost simultaneously after providing stories of personal experiences, he seems unconvinced about his own narrative of the supernatural realm, which draws out fear and causes him to re-articulate his beliefs in rational terms by pointing to the demise of the supernatural and the decline of the *brujo* population.

6.4.2   Juana

Juana is a retired nurse, whose grandfather settled in Izalco in the early 1900s after buying a portion of land from some Indians (Sonsonate, May 2012).[71] Juana's father was of Spanish descent. Her mestiza mother was from Apaneca, a neighbouring town also in the Department of Sonsonate. Juana was raised in Izalco and went to school in Sonsonate, and eventually moved to the capital city. She owns land in Izalco, which was once a small coffee enterprise that her father operated. Juana believes to be well acquainted with the history of the town. Like Pablo and Melida, she can recite popular stories about Izalco, including that of the inscriptions found on the church bell at *la Asunción* church that Carlos I of Spain and V of Germany donated to the town.

Juana is a firm believer that witchcraft is only a myth in Izalco and jokes that her family members were jokingly referred to as *brujos*. She remembers that her mother was very superstitious and laughs in disbelief at the traditions that they used to have, such as not being able to bathe on certain days or refraining from eating certain things in reverence to their Catholic beliefs. In terms of supernatural indigenous beliefs, however, she is incredulous at the

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[71] All quotes from this section stem from a conversation with Juana held in Sonsonate in May 2012.

notion of *brujos* casting spells or having any "real" power. Shortly after making this statement, however, she goes on to describe some of her family's stories involving the supernatural.

"*La Siguanaba* appeared to my uncle," she tells me. She recalls that her uncle once came running into her family's house after herding cattle in the early hours of the evening. According to her uncle, the silhouette of a beautiful woman whom he had never seen before surprised him on his way back from the fields. As he passed her in his ox cart, the woman jumped in the back of the cart. The woman then began to seduce him and proceeded to laugh uncontrollably. Back at the house, Juana's father was beginning to worry because his brother had not returned from the fields and it was getting late. When Juana's uncle finally came in, he confirmed to them that he had actually been face-to-face with *la Siguanaba*, a woman who appears to men who are in love or who have been unfaithful, and then proceeds to torment them. In Juana's words:

> My uncle had been tricked by the beautiful woman who had jumped in his ox cart and was now laughing uncontrollably. He ran away terrified after having realized it was *la Siguanaba*.

As we converse about this supernatural experience, her husband interjects and reminds her about her cousin who was able to turn himself into a monkey and sometimes a maize stalk. According to her husband, Juana's cousin used to do this when he was getting picked on and chased by other children. Juana acknowledges her husband's remark in a dismissive manner; "*¡Vas a creer!*" she adds, evoking disbelief. After a moment, however, she concedes that her cousin was someone neglected as a child and later on he was never considered fully part of the family because he was her uncle's illegitimate son. Juana claims that her cousin was always in the margins and she believes that this was in part why he was able to turn himself into different

objects when he was being bullied.[72] At the end of the conversation, Juana reminded her audience (myself, her husband and another one of my informants) that this is what the people of Izalco use to believe and that these are just stories and tradition.

6.4.3   Fernanda

Fernanda describes herself as an indigenous woman. She is originally from Nahuizalco and moved to Izalco many years ago with her husband who is from Izalco. Fernanda is very well informed about Izalco traditions, including its witchcraft tradition. While she states that she is skeptical about the effects of supernatural phenomena at first, she mentions that witchcraft is extremely common in Izalco and that it is "very" real (Izalco, May 2013).[73]

She recalls that she was once invited to take part in a séance and although she was scared to attend, she decided to go anyway. While she does not specify in great detail why she decided to go, she does insist that it was partly because one of the important witches in the town that was due to perform it:

> I was so scared to go, but my friend convinced me to go because it's not every day that you get invited to an event with such an important *brujo*. In the end, it got cancelled because the old *brujo* got ill and could not attend and I'm sad about that.

On another occasion, Fernanda tells me that her friend, who happens to be a nurse, had an elderly lady under her care. According to Fernanda, the elderly lady was also an important *bruja* in the town. During the elderly lady's hospitalization, the nurse had to draw blood from the lady's arm.

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[72] According to Kapferer (2002) practices of sorcery are predominant among the marginalized. As Kapferer states, "[s]killed sorcerers and magical practitioners often come from low status or outcast communities" (5).

[73] All quotes from this section stem from a conversation with Fernanda held in Izalco in May 2012.

However, the nurse had to prick the elderly lady's arm several times as she was unable to locate the lady's vein. Being pricked several times without success angered the elderly lady. In Fernanda's words:

> And the old lady said to my friend: 'If you dare prick me one more time and you don't find my vein, the needle will appear inside your stomach.' I think it would have happened, but who knows.

Like in the two previous cases, Fernanda does not seem to fully believe all the stories that she recounts. During several instances throughout our conversation, she stated that she was not sure whether what she was telling us was "real" or not, iterating the expression "*Saber verdad,*" which is equivalent to "who knows, right?" In this manner, Fernanda's stories reveal ambivalence about supernatural phenomena. While it is not fully clear whether her uncertainty comes from herself or whether she simply seeks validation from her audience, both of these possibilities reflect the invalidation of ideas. Whether through her interactions with others who might perceiver her stories as false or through her discourse in which she questions her own accounts, stories about her experiences are coupled with iterations evoking skepticism.

6.4.4   Andres and Ramona

Andres was born and raised in Izalco. He is an active member in the town, who participates in and organizes many of Izalco's events. Whether taking part in the processions for Easter as a *mayordomo* or being a contestant in the local *pupusa* eating contest, Andres is well known among various people in the town because of his involvement.

Ramona, one of my guides and informants, once said of Andres: "*¡Este es brujo!*" or "This guy is a witch!" (Izalco, April 2012). According to her, Andres always shows up when you speak of

him, wherever you might be. This was reinforced by the fact that on several occasions while we spoke about Andres' stories, we would spot him walking in our direction. This happened while on an excursion to a beach that is about 32 km from Izalco, as we walked towards the burial site of a prominent *brujo* whom people assert still performs miracles even from the grave (Erquicia Cruz and Herrera Reina 2010, 5).We also saw Andres two other times while we were walking around in the streets of Izalco after mentioning his name. These instances reinforced Ramona's belief that Andres was really a *brujo.*

The notion that Andres is a *brujo* is not how only my informant perceived him. On one occasion, Andres explained to me that he is indeed able to perform his own *brujería* or spells. Accordingly, Andres validates the claim that Izalco is a town of witches (Izalco, April 2012). He further explained to me that indigenous *tatas* and *nanas* are well acquainted with witchcraft. He also informed me that until recently he was not able to perform his own witchcraft and that in order to become a *tata,* he himself had to be able to perform his own spells. As a *tata,* he is now able to transcend his body and transform himself (Izalco, April 2012).

After hearing these stories, Ramona who was with me at the time, expressed disbelief and invalidated Andres' experiences. According to her, Andres' stories were nonsensical: "*¡Este es pajero!*" meaning "This guy is a liar!"

To sum up this section, my focus is on describing everyday orality as it pertains to the supernatural. In the previous sections, I attempted to describe some of the narrations of personal experiences involving supernatural events that are commonplace in Izalco. According to individuals with whom I spoke, these sorts of beliefs are not simply common, but rather are a

characteristic of the town and the experiences of people in the town. Far from being a marginal experience, statements much like the ones described above are reflective of beliefs consistent with the themes of indigenous myths and legends. On the other hand, the individuals I have interviewed also displayed a kind of disbelief, as if one should not claim to believe these stories when in the presence of a foreigner (a researcher). There is thus some kind of ambiguity in my informants' relationship with the supernatural world.

To be sure, what I propose in this chapter is not a linear cause-effect relation between colonization and the loss of indigenous meaning in stories; nor do I propose that literature or the conquest are alone what led to the trivialization of indigenous beliefs. What I have attempted to demonstrate is that colonization and the production of nationalist literature initiated or contributed to the mestizaje of ideas, which translated into the mestizaje of discourses. What I also wish to highlight is that indigenous ideas, beliefs and discourses have in this manner been subject to struggles about meaning, in the face of the colonizing and nationalizing project, which became hegemonic.

Recently, a number of storytellers have emerged in Izalco with the intention of preserving an indigenous past and promoting the revival of indigenous identities (Cea, 1998; del Valle, 2011 and Leiva Masin, 2011). These authors often attempt to recapture oral traditions while portraying the "magic and mysterious atmosphere" of everyday life in Izalco (del Valle 2009, 19). Presenting indigenous stories as cosmovisions, these authors have begun to further highlight tensions between dominant national narratives and these indigenous cosmovisions. While it is important to analyze literary advancements in more detail, for now I wish to focus on discursive practices because of the central role of orality in the expression of indigenous cosmovisions. In

Genaro's words, some things were not meant to be written down. Therefore, my intention has been to draw out the struggles that occur at the discursive level which reflect tendencies towards homogenization (or mestizaje).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the devaluation of indigenous beliefs as evidenced in everyday discourses. I also examined colonization and nationalism as factors that have contributed to the mestizaje of knowledge, ideas and discourses. My goal has been to demonstrate how these elements relate to the colonization of knowledge, which is something that has been studied at length in recent decolonial scholarship, as discussed in chapter two (Wilson 2004, Doxtater 2004). Related to this, I showed that the case of El Salvador illustrates tendencies towards the distancing from indigenous belief systems and towards more accepted ones. I argued that as a process, discursive mestizaje began with colonization and continued as a nation building process, and that its ramifications are still evidenced today as "revisionist" discourses, as Round (1997) also describes.

Historically, storytelling has been an important tradition in Izalco. For indigenous people, it was once a means of transmitting knowledge about everyday life. Themes contained in their oral traditions continue to circulate among people in Izalco, which illustrates one way in which people experience indigeneity. In this sense, the people referenced in this chapter express their experiences through stories that defy reason. In this manner, storytelling as a social practice not only reveals how people continue to experience indigeneity, but also is indicative of a site where mestizaje is still taking place. However, in his critique of popular perceptions of indigenous myth

and legends, Palomo (2000) also makes the argument that indigenous beliefs have been devalued

and turned into fantastical literary folk tales.

Chapter 7: Picturing Indians: Visual Representations in the Construction of Indigeneity in Izalco

The statue of *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción* (Our Lady of the Assumption), housed in the parish that bears its name (*Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción*), in lower town was recently the site of a struggle over visual meanings and interpretations. According to an independent researcher and indigenous advocate, until recently, the state promoted the idea that the Virgin was dressed in red and golden-yellow as a tribute to Spain's national colours. Since it is the Spanish who brought the Catholic religion to Izalco, it may have been a way of asserting dominance over the colony (May 2012).

However, indigenous actors and advocates have challenged this narrative, contending that the Virgin's red cloak and golden-yellow dress symbolize "*los colores del sol y la aurora*" or the colours of the sun and dawn (independent researcher, Izalco, July 2012). For others, the fact that the Virgin is dressed in colours that have important indigenous meaning reflects the influence that indigenous people continued to exert over town affairs (including religious affairs) even after colonization (independent researcher, Izalco, April 2013). In this example, what stands out is the struggle over meaning that occurred in the area of visual symbols. In a similar vein, another local writer asserts that for some, the Virgin's cloak has come to represent the Indian blood that was shed during the conquest battles and the golden-yellow dress represents the dawn of a new day and re-birth of indigenous peoples (Gonzalez, 2011, n. p.). What stands out in this example is, first, the extent to which hegemonic representations have permeated the social landscape in Izalco, and secondly, how hegemonic representations might be coming under scrutiny as a result of the nascent indigenous consciousness.

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In the chapter that follows, I take a closer look at the role of visuality in the construction of indigeneity through photographs, performances, visual art, sculptures, billboards and other print sources. As reflected in this chapter, visual representations of "Indians" tend to reinforce images that are feminine, exoticized, fixed in time, passive and nationalist. In other words, these are gendered and racialized portrayals that, in other contexts, authors with decolonial tendencies have associated with colonial regimes of representation previously discussed in chapter two (Rahier 1999, 76; Blackwell 2005, 176; Baker 2005, 64; Cornejo 2013, 24; Martineau and Ritskes 2014, i). Alluding to the notions of accumulated meanings that point towards regimes of representation, this chapter analyzes visual representations (images, photography, monuments, iconography and public performance) where coloniality is evidenced (Cornejo 2013; Cervone 1999; Gutierrez-Chong 2008; Wedeen 2008). In the final section, I suggest how certain actors might be challenging the dominant regime of representation of indigeneity; although these instances are isolated, they nonetheless point to changes in discourses about indigeneity.

7.1   Dressing like an "Indian"

> No, you won't be able to find indigenous people here. You might be able to in Nahuizalco. There are still old women who wear a *refajo* there, but not here in Izalco. Even in Izalco, there are very few *indígenas* these days and you rarely see them (baker, March 2012).

Before proceeding, it is pertinent to make an important discursive observation which has implications on visual representations of indigeneity. In Izalco, people tend to make an implicit and sometimes explicit link between "Indian" clothing and gender. Specifically, people tend to see clothing as a symbol of indigeneity and "Indian" clothing is something to which women are most often associated. Conversation after conversation, the topic of clothing kept permeating the stories of *Izalqueños* who described themselves as indigenous and non-indigenous, as they

shared their views on indigeneity in Izalco and in El Salvador. According to informants, there are few (if any) indigenous women who wear *el refajo*, but people point to Nahuizalco, a town approximately 15 km northwest of Izalco, as a place where one might still be able to catch a glimpse of an older woman who still wears traditional clothing (e.g. baker, Izalco, March 2012). They used the concept of clothing and the absence of women wearing such pieces of clothing to explain the reason for which there are no longer indigenous people in the town and why certain people choose to dress in traditional clothes. This dynamic is something that Tilley (2005) observed in other parts of the country (5).

One of the major themes running through beliefs about indigeneity is the perceived lack of dress as a major contributor to the perception that there were no longer any indigenous people in the country. According to Pedro, a shop owner who was a young boy living near Izalco at the time of the 1932 uprising, indigenous people were forced to replace their traditional dress and customs as a result of the repressive Hernandez Martinez dictatorship in 1932 (Santa Tecla, June 2012). Since then, he claims that indigenous people have dropped their native dress and adopted "normal clothing."

On another occasion I conversed with Jose, a man who self-identifies as a mestizo. He admitted that although he is a native of Izalco, he does not know much about the indigenous affairs of the town. Jose follows much of the same script that people in Izalco recite when describing indigeneity and indigenous relations in the town: Indians once lived in the lower part of the town, while Ladinos lived in the upper part of the town. Nevertheless, he admits that his wife "is a real Indian" or "*Indígena de verdad*" (Izalco, June 2012). He also asserts that his wife's parents are real Indians as well and that they once dressed in traditional clothes until they did away with

traditional clothing. As he explains, her parents "*se plegaron*" or they changed their clothing for the clothing of Ladinos. During our conversation, he contends that his wife is indigenous based on the claim that she once wore Indian clothing. In fact, despite revealing his links to the indigenous community, he speaks about his wife in a way that associates her as *undoubtedly,* if not *more,* indigenous because she once wore "Indian" clothes.

As I left Jose's house after this conversation, I notice a calendar on his wall, depicting women in flowing dresses, performing an indigenous dance. The women in this calendar wear make-up and head scarves, and smiles adorn their faces, like in the calendars seen in other households. The calendar, which prominently displays the words "El Salvador" on it, is a promotional token for Salvadoran culture, and like many other "Indian" objects and displays, focuses on the country's national culture. This sighting further reinforces a prominent link between clothing, femininity and indigeneity. Visual representations as reflected in clothing appear to be an important way through which people perceive indigeneity. In this case, femininity, indigeneity and clothing seem to go hand-in-hand.

7.2   Representations of "Indian" Women

Despite the discourses indicating that clothing is absent from the social sphere, there are still instances in which people opt to wear traditional clothing, as well as numerous portrayals of women wearing traditional clothing. Instead of having disappeared from the social realm, clothing still has a role in the construction of meaning of indigeneity, but rather than being a stand-alone element, I argue that it relates more to portrayals of indigeneity as feminine.

7.2.1   Public Representations of "Indian" Women

As a way of strengthening diplomatic relations between Mexico and El Salvador, president

Oscar Osorio (1950-1956) produced a yearbook entitled "Mexico—El Salvador" (Alianza

America Hispana). This book reflects some of the state discourses and prevalent attitudes

towards indigenous people and indigeneity during the 1950s. In particular, it contains

photographs and descriptions about "the Indian" in El Salvador. The photographs used to convey

the image of the "Indian" are predominantly of indigenous women wearing traditional attire

(Figures 7.3.1 a; and 7.3.1 b). It is worth pointing out the caption for one of the images

(Figure 7.3.1 a), which reads: "The vendors in the Salvadoran market offer a note of color and

typical characteristics. The Indian woman, the pride of America, still wears clothes in the old

fashioned way" (Alianza America Hispana, n. p.).

(Figure 7.3.1 a, Alianza America Hispana, n. p., Portrayals of indigenous women)

(Figure 7.3.1 b, Alianza America Hispana, n. p., Portrayals of indigenous women)

While these observations were written in the 1950s and were part of a nationalist and modernizing project, portrayals of the Indian continue to draw on feminine representations. Despite the time that has elapsed since the images above were taken, there is still a tendency to represent indigeneity through this gendered lens, as feminine and an exotic object of tradition. In addition to conversations revolving around women in traditional attires when discussing indigeneity, the Indian woman tends to be perceived as an exotic object that is rarely seen in present-day El Salvador, which I discuss below and in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, representations of the archetypal "Indian" woman scattered throughout the town depicted a woman who wears traditional colourful clothing and who is significant insofar as she contributes to Salvadoran heritage. This gendered dynamic is certainly present in Izalco, where municipal communication products and advertisements often portray young and old women wearing traditional clothes as a sign of the town's indigenous heritage and to denote the town's cultural uniqueness. When the FMLN party was elected to municipal office in the town, the

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Mayor raised a billboard along the highway, next to one of the Izalco exits, invoking the "magical" attributes of Izalco (a direct allusion to mystical indigenous beliefs) and it features the mythical *indio Atonal* as well as an older women wearing indigenous clothing and headgear (bottom right corner, Figure 7.3.1 c).

(Figure 7.3.1 c, Billboard off the highway into Izalco)

Similarly, a recent study on the status of women in Izalco featured a number of women wearing traditional colourful clothes on the cover, much like the portrayals mentioned above (Matus and Ponce 2010). The fact that the women are wearing traditional clothing, however, reinforces ideas of indigenous peoples that are common in the discourses and visual representations in Izalco: that gender, clothing and indigeneity are tightly linked.

In addition, indigenous women are also depicted in several paintings in the main town centre. In a painting that hangs in the main lobby at *Palacio Municipal*, a woman walks at a distance at the

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foot of the Izalco volcano which prominently serves as the painting's backdrop. Yet another

painting, this time a mural on the outside walls of Mario Calvo Marroquín School, an indigenous

woman walks towards the Izalco volcano in the distance. Both of these women wear *el refajo,*

the name for the woven skirts that indigenous women traditionally wore.

In the same manner, looking through pages of *Revista Cultural*, which as previously mentioned

is a publication that municipal governments publish twice a year, there are many portraits that

show girls, young women and older women wearing colourful textiles, flowing dresses, and

traditional head garments alluding to the indigenous heritage of the town (Alcaldía Municipal de

Izalco 2009; Peralta 2010; Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2006, see also 7.3.1 d, Figure 7.3.1 e,

Figure 7.3.1 f). The December 2010 edition of *Revista Cultural* contains various indigenous

portrayals of young women dressed in Indian clothes (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2010). One

of the images is accompanied by an article, in which a young woman expresses her pride in

learning the indigenous language and culture, despite criticism from people in the town and her

peers. In another image published in *Revista Cultural,* three young women are juxtaposed to an

old man, as they all promote the idea that indigenous people are still alive (Alcaldía Municipal

de Izalco 2011). The women are displaying indigenous objects and stand in front of a national

tourism campaign known as *Pueblos Vivos* or Living Peoples (Figure 7.3.1 g). Likewise, older

indigenous women from Izalco prominently appear in publications (national newspapers and

brochures) wearing traditional attire.

By contrast, men are rarely portrayed wearing traditional clothing, in comparison to women.

Especially when it comes to photographs, men are usually backdrops if they are present. In

addition, seldom do people discuss traditional clothing in relation to men; most often it is in

relation to children and women.[74] After conducting a survey of the images that make allusion to

indigenous identities, it is clear that this is part of the gendered dynamic at play.

(Figure 7.3.1 d, Indigenous woman portrayal, "Alcaldía del Común" 2009)

(Figure 7.3.1 e, Children dressed as Indians, (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2000)

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[74] While men are also featured in the images, what is important to note is the way in which indigenous women are portrayed, wearing traditional clothing. For examples, see: Salcedo (July 27, 1999); Rivas (May 2, 2004); Chavez (July 24, 2010); "SIS recibe CD musical" (September 3, 2012)

(Figure 7.3.1 f, Indigenous portrayal, Peralta 2010)

(Figure 7.3.1 g, *Pueblos Vivos* Display, Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2011)

7.2.2   Private Representations of "Indian" Women

In addition to the images available for public viewing, representations of "Indian" women also circulate in private collections. In the section that follows, I provide an overview of two cases to demonstrate how people relate to "Indian" portrayals by discussing "Indian" portraits found in their homes.

Ricardo

Ricardo was born in Izalco and in his words, he self-identifies as an "Indian from here [Izalco]" or "*Indio, de aqui*" (Sonsonate, March 2012). He now lives in a nearby neighbourhood or *colonia*, about 6 km west of Izalco's city centre. He identifies with the indigenous revitalization to the extent that he longs for the state to value indigenous culture, which he sees as being an intrinsic aspect of the "national" culture (Sonsonate, March 2012). He asserts that indigenous Izalco culture is "*lo nuestr*o" (meaning that indigenous culture is something that is "ours" and must therefore be promoted. He becomes very animated when discussing culture in Izalco, particularly in recalling his youth, when he took part in many of the traditions that he links to being native to Izalco, such as *los Pedigüeños*[75] . He is enthusiastic about preserving certain Izalco traditions and instilling a sense of cultural pride in youth for the local traditions, which he feels are being lost. He takes pride in the fact that he works with an indigenous leader and shaman of the National Association of Indigenous Salvadorans (*Asociación Nacional de*

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[75] *Los Pedigüeños* is a celebration that coincides with All Saints Day (November 1), when groups of children go from door to door in the different *barrios*, asking for different treats, such as sugar cane, tamales, money, etc. The term *Pedigüeño(s)* literally means "beggar" because of what the celebration entails. The children shout different phrases that alert the various home dwellers that they are there to do penance (usually involves reciting different prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer or another prayer that the children would have memorized). When they have completed their task, the children will receive treats in exchange. While it is not fully clear whether this is an "indigenous" celebration, Ricardo often uses "Izalco tradition" and "indigenous tradition" interchangeably.

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Indígenas Salvadoreños, ANIS) and introduced me to some of his family members who are learning Náhuat and are actively participating in the town's indigenous revitalization. In addition, as an artisan, Ricardo expresses the importance of culture in the life of Izalco, despite not being able to make a living from the handicrafts that he has been trained to make (Sonsonate, March 2012).[76]

As I converse with Ricardo and he describes many of the performances that reflect indigenous culture in Izalco and the traditional crafts that he makes (*mimbre* or wicker hats, baskets and decorations) through which he experiences his indigenous identity, I am drawn to the 5"x7" photograph of a smiling young girl dressed as an Indian that sits in a frame on his television stand. The photograph garners little attention during our conversation, despite containing many of the signifiers that are often associated with indigenous identities or representations of indigenous identities, namely clothing (as I describe later in this chapter). The girl in the photograph is wearing a flowing, colourful dress with red and yellow stripes; she wears make-up on her face and colourful earrings. Given the prominent location of the photograph, probe him about it.

As it turns out, I learn that the girl is Ricardo's niece. She is also from Izalco and attended Mario Calvo Marroquín School, one of the schools that piloted the Náhuat program in El Salvador (see Lemus 2008). Ricardo explains to me that his niece is dressed up as an Indian

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[76] Ricardo is a seasonal worker at a nearby resort. Making and selling handicrafts is not profitable and according to him, people are rarely willing to pay for the cost of labour and materials.

for a school function, which was her way of participating in *semana cívica* or civic week, which schools celebrate the week on which Independence Day falls (September 15).[77]

Ricardo further explains that dressing up as an "Indian" is part of a wider trend in the Independence Day celebrations, which is something that I have witnessed elsewhere in El Salvador.[78] Specifically, for the Independence Day celebrations on September 15, schools hold parades in which they feature young women and children dressed in traditional clothes, as "Indians" or *vestidos de Indios*. Most often, young women wear colourful flowing dresses, make-up and jewellery, and dance to the music that the marching band plays. Ricardo recalls that much like his niece, his own daughter has dressed "like an Indian" for civic celebrations in the past, as did his younger sister and his granddaughter.

I seldom noticed photographs of young boys dressed as Indians, except for twice where they were dressed in white cotton shirt and pants, sandals and a straw hat, with drawn-in Indian whiskers; the general tendency is that this is something women do. In fact, Ricardo has two sons, none of whom came up during the conversation as having dressed as "Indians" and there were no pictures displayed of his sons wearing traditional attire similar to the women. Considering the prominence of "Indian" costumes and themes during civic celebrations, I did not encounter pictures of men or boys dressed as Indians to the same degree as pictures of young girls.

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[77] I had the chance to speak to with Ricardo's niece, who confirmed that during civic week, students prepare different dances and performances; some of them put on Indian dances in which they dress "as Indians" (April 2012). Teachers, encourage them to include Indian dances, but it is not a requirement.

[78] As part of Independence Day school parades, there are often women and girls who dress as Indians.

Carmela

Carmela is a self-identified mestiza and Izalco resident who lives in *Pueblo Abajo*. Like Ricardo,

she also displays a photograph of her daughter dressed as "an Indian" in her living room. Her

daughter smiles in her colourful Indian dress. As Carmela explains, her daughter was a

participant in a pageant, as part of the *Virgen de Asunción* patron saint celebrations

(Izalco, April 2012). As Carmela tells me, one of the events during the competition involves the

contestants dressing as Indians and parading in "Indian" dresses. Aside from the clarification

about the context in which the photograph was taken, Carmela is indifferent about indigenous

culture. As she tells me, the detrimental situation of the economy in El Salvador indicates to her

that there are more pressing things affecting the country than indigenous issues. She is more

concerned about her employment security at a nearby resort, which paid her less than US$10 per

day.[79] For Carmela, indigeneity is simply a display of femininity, in the sense that dressing as an

Indian is what many girls do.

I also had the opportunity to speak with Carmela's daughter, who is a nursing student at a nearby

university. Carmela's daughter, Inez, is not very acquainted with the indigenous revitalization in

Izalco and does not understand why people would chose to identify as indigenous (San Salvador,

July 2013). She is certainly aware that people in the town are interested in teaching Náhuat and

does not know why people would want to learn the language. Her interest in indigenous culture

goes as far as asserting that it would be "nice" to learn Náhuat. She does, however, note that

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[79] According to Carmela, if management perceives any sign of dissatisfaction from employees, they risk being called in for fewer shifts and eventually they could lose their employment.

Izalco is a place where culture thrives and that *cofradías* are a good indication of how culture is being preserved.

In terms of dressing as an Indian, Carmela sees it more like a rite of passage for children, especially girls. Like Ricardo, there is no mention of her son ever dressing like an Indian for any given function. It is also fair to say that Carmela and her daughter are not associated with indigenous cause, despite their role in representing indigeneity through photographs. However, for them, by participating in a pageant in which women wear traditional clothing, they are displaying not their indigeneity, but rather their femininity. Inez participating in the civic celebration was simply about a pageant, without any reference to the indigenous cause or identity (San Salvador, July 2013).

As discussed above, representation regimes as evidenced in accumulated meanings are important as they shed light on social dynamics and structures that often serve to reinforce subordinate relations (Hall 2003, 235). The images covered in the previous section show representations of indigeneity both in public and private spheres. What should be emphasized here is that my intention was not to conduct a full survey of representations in Izalco. Instead, I have focused on images that prominently feature in Izalco's landscape, as well as images that are more marginal to people's experience but nonetheless exist as a backdrop to people's experiences. Rather than perusing through extensive private collections of images, the expectation is that select private images in conjunction with prominent ones will begin to paint a portrait of how indigeneity is conceived in Izalco.

As far as a representation regime goes, and based on the images presented in this section, the indigeneity is portrayed as feminine, passive, inauthentic, and subject to the nation. First, images of indigeneity are racialized through external visual cues including exotic clothing and they are gendered, given that they depict young girls and older women. Secondly, the context in which certain images were taken reveals that in certain instances indigeneity is worn as a disguise, many times for a performance. This is especially true for young girls who dress up for civic holidays, but it is also true for women displaying indigeneity at tourism fairs. This brings me to my third point, that images generally depict women in passive poses, which means that women are simply standing subject to the observer's gaze. These particular points are especially meaningful, as they reveal another layer of gendered portrayals of indigeneity. As the interviews above stipulate, the act of wearing indigeneity is a rite of passage in terms of displaying femininity and there is also an important link to be made to the onlooker's gaze. Finally, it should be highlighted that many of the images encountered in Izalco were endorsed by the state. They were located in state-sanctioned publications, billboards and murals.

7.3   Representations of "Indian" Men

7.3.1   Atonal, the Conquest Hero

Unlike images depicting "Indian" women, images of men who are identifiable as "Indians" are scarce in Izalco. Nevertheless, an important representation of the "Indian" man is the statue of Atonal – the conquest Indian – at Atecozol Park (see Figure 7.4.1 a). According to one of my informants, Atonal was an Indian warrior who stood up to the Spanish and died for *la patria* or the fatherland (resort worker, Izalco, May 2014). According to this informant, Atonal was responsible for wounding explorer Pedro de Alvarado in the thigh; during their heated battle. Pedro de Alvarado left his foot imprint at *la piedra de la conquista* or the conquest boulder and it is said to be still visible (resort employee, Izalco, April 2012). According to him, Atonal is an important "Indian" symbol that reflects the town's indigenous heritage and is a symbol of the Salvadoran nation.

Tilley (2005) has conducted an in-depth analysis of El Salvador's "nationalist Conquest Indian" (91). According to Tilley, every Central American state has a conquest Indian, which they have used in service of the nation; Lempira in Honduras, Tecún-Umán in Guatemala, and Nicaragua in the country that bears his name (91). In El Salvador, while there was indeed "a princely leader who led the warriors into battle... we know nothing specific about the one who faced Alvarado except that his name was apparently Atonal," though nationalist narratives tend to mystify the figure of Atlacatl instead (see Figure 7.4.1 b). Nevertheless, both Atonal and Atlacatl are conquest Indian figures. Because of their paralleled roles in nationalist myths as Tilley demonstrates, one can make certain inferences about the role of Atonal as a conquest Indian

based on information about Atlacatl. For instance, one of the defining characteristics of conquest

Indians is their idealized masculinity, which Espino (1996) illustrates in one of his poems:

Aquel Indio Atlacatl con su figura
de recios biceps y de pecho erguido,

y que en una leyenda hubiera sido
de un hercules de bronce escultura...

Murio de pie, al igual que arbol herido
por la hacha de un rayo en la llanura...

(*Atlacatl, Jícaras Tristes,* 97)

That Indian, Atlacatl, with his figure
of strong biceps and upright chest,

which in a legend would have been that of
Hercules, with a bronze build...

He died standing, like a tree struck by
lightning as with an axe on a plain...

In addition to the gendered representation of masculinity, conquest Indians also contain racial

stereotypes, as evidenced in how they are clothed: they wear an "Indian" head gear and a cloth

around their waist. It is worth mentioning that in the case of Atlacatl, Tilley notes that his

headdress is more consistent with North American customs than it is with Náhuat-Pipil tradition

and was pulled from an advertisement (91). In all of these representations, the Indian is a symbol

of national sovereignty, "useful to nation building because of their very indigeneity" (91). In

contrast with women's depictions of indigeneity described above, conquest Indians are not

simply posing for a lens, they are in active poses. Both Atonal and Atlacatl are holding a bow

and arrow and their stances suggest that they are in the midst of, or going into, battle. In the case

of Atlacatl, he also has a conch in hand, further alluding to a battle. Within this context, the

conquest Indian reflects vitality and strength.

Figure 7.4.1 a, Statue of Atonal, Izalco

Figure 7.4.1 b, Statue of Atlacatl, San Salvador

7.3.2   Indigeneity through the 1932 Massacre

Another important site of "Indian" representations of men is in relation to 1932. Within the

spectrum of visuality, the events of 1932 represent a key moment in the area of visuality, as it

represents the year in which the Indian "disappeared" or went into "hiding", according to

prominent discourses in Izalco (Tilley 1998, 122). It is within this context that images pertaining

to 1932 reflect an important site of analysis. To be sure, in analyzing images from 1932 the

objective is not to explain the role of the photos when they were taken in 1932. Instead, I wish to

highlight the role of the images at the time of my research. At that particular time, there was

significant awareness about 1932 among most of the people I spoke with, both in Izalco and in

other parts of El Salvador. Videos about 1932 were being sold at the marketplace and

documentaries played on national television stations, Museum of the Word and Image (MUPI)

had recently conducted an awareness campaign about 1932 (in 2008). In addition, informants

sometimes referred to my research as being "about 1932" due to the theme of indigeneity.

Knowledge about 1932 seems to be reinforced as well by ARENA and FMLN political

discourses, which strategically position 1932 to serve their political needs. [80] As such, the themes

and images discussed in this section form part of the broad awareness there seemed to be about

1932.

With this in mind, images of 1932 portray the "Indian" man either as a faceless corpse or on the

verge of death – or at best, as a population in decline, as demonstrated below. As such, there are

images that document the mass graves, some of which are located at *El Llanito* in Izalco, which

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[80] See Romero (October 23, 2013) and Lima (January 22, 2012)

also happens to be a sacred indigenous site. Other photographs depict corpses left on the streets or being transported.

(Figure 7.4.2 a; Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 15, Common graves during the 1932 massacre)

(Figure 7.4.2 b, Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 28, Indian prisoners prior to facing firing squad)
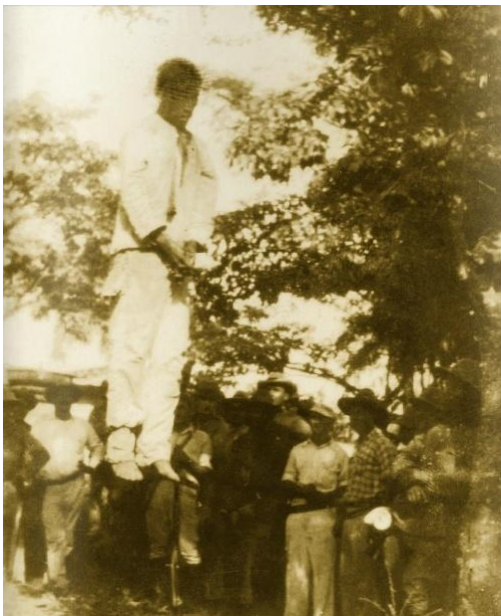
(Figure 7.4.2 c, Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 16, Corpses being transported)

Another prominent image of an "Indian" man is that of Feliciano Ama, who was sentenced to death by hanging for being the leader of the 1932 uprising. Informants led me to two images of Feliciano Ama: one was taken prior to his execution and the other one was taken after his execution (former teacher, Izalco, March 2012; *cofradía* leader, Izalco, May 2012; police officer, Sonsonate, May 2012). In the former, Feliciano Ama has been captured by the military; he is handcuffed and awaits his execution (Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 8). In the latter, he is hanging from a *ceiba* tree and a number of out-of-focus onlookers gaze at the hanging corpse (Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 8).

(Figure 7.4.2 c, Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 8, Feliciano Ama prior to execution)

(Figure 7.4.2 d, Henriquez Consalvi 2008, 9, Feliciano Ama after execution)

As discussed earlier, images must be read in the context of multiple images and discourses, which convey accumulated meanings. To put it differently, photographs of 1932 must be read in conjunction with discourses about the disappearance of indigenous people. In this context, images of 1932 portray the Indian man's defeat, through corpses and the juxtaposition of Ladino onlookers. In this sense, images evoke uneven power relations between the 'Indian' and the mestizo onlookers and state officials. Altogether, images reinforce the ideas about the conquest and death of the Indian man. The images further reflect the notion that in 1932 indigeneity or Indianness came to a standstill. Similar to the statues of Atlacatl and Atonal, the images reflect fixity in time of the Indian experience. In this manner, the Indian man is reduced to a passive representation that is consistent with appeasement.

As gendered representations, the portrayals of Indian men through photographs of 1932 represent a stark contrast to the conquest Indian. Whereas the conquest Indian evokes strength, the nation, and masculinity, the 1932 Indian evokes weakness, rebellion and loss of masculine attributes. The opposite is true of Ladino onlookers, whose images evoke notions of power, the nation (especially military portrayals) and masculinity in comparison to the Indian. In this sense, the vitality, strength and virility (ability to reproduce) that can be attributed to indigenous men is only evidenced in the myth of the inanimate and mythical representations of conquest Indians.

7.4   Visuality and Definitions of Indigeneity

7.4.1   Promoting Indigenous Visibility through Visuality

Cornejo (2013) studies indigenous art and iconography to illustrate how indigenous people in Guatemala have used visual representations as a form of colonial resistance (25). According to Cornejo, the use of visuality as a sign of resistance is something that was evidenced even in colonial times. Cornejo states that "[i]ndigenous artists trained in Western styles of art during the colonial period inconspicuously incorporated symbols and imagery of indigenous significance unknown to the Spanish colonizers and priests who supervised the works" (30). More recently, while dominant Spanish discourses would refer to indigenous visual expressions as "art", among indigenous people visual representations are being positioned as "*the sacred*", which resonates more with indigenous cosmovisions (29).

Achieving visibility has been one of the major objectives of the indigenous movement in Izalco and in El Salvador (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013). As I explain below, visibility would then allow indigenous activists to demand rights as stipulated in the ILO Convention No. 169, in the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and until recently, the Salvadoran Constitution (CCNIS activist, San Salvador, July 2013).

As a CCNIS activist explains, in recent years most of the organization's efforts have been directed towards promoting self-identification and visibility for indigenous cultures and indigenous peoples themselves (San Salvador, July 2013). As part of this process, affiliated organizations are promoting their distinct cultural identities by re-capturing visual representations that were once said to be outlawed or to have disappeared (indigenous activist,

Izalco, July 2013). Within this context, organizations have started building pride among indigenous peoples using visual symbols in order to rid Salvadoran society of prejudices that prevent people from self-identifying as indigenous (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013).

Indeed, visuality has started to play a key role in the way that indigenous activists with whom I spoke are pursuing the revitalization of indigenous cultures and recognition of indigenous identities. For example, when I visited the CCNIS office in July 2013, it was filled with objects, murals and configurations used to convey indigeneity. The office's floor, which was originally covered in ceramic tile was recovered in wood, to symbolize connectedness with the Earth. Similarly, another symbol, *el refajo,* which informants generally perceive as something lost (Tilley 1998, 122), is one of the ways in which indigenous people are re-discovering their indigenous identities through visual means.[81] As part of indigenous marches, indigenous women tend to wear *refajos* that identify themselves as indigenous.[82] Additionally, both men and women in these marches often wear tops embroidered with indigenous designs, traditional headgear and shawls, which indicates a moving away from the feminized clothing and hypermasculine representations towards a different understanding of gender signifiers and roles.[83]

However, as Nansin (introduced in an earlier chapter) puts it, "there is more to being indigenous than wearing clothing, it is about self-definition/self-determination" or "*auto-determinación"* (Izalco, July 2013). It is, however, a way of letting others know, once the process of self-determination has taken place, that there are indigenous people in the country and that there

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[81]See Nochez and Guzman (January 10, 2016) and Lemus (October 27, 2015)

[82] Encuentro de Organizaciones Sociales, San Salvador, 2012

[83] See Beltran and Castro (October 12, 2008)

is no shame in being indigenous (indigenous activist, Izalco, July 2013). In this manner, while indigenous symbols are not considered to be a necessary element of indigenous representations, it is often instrumental in indigenous self-representations. In other words, indigenous clothing is a visual symbol through which individuals bring attention to the indigenous cause. In this sense, what matters here is the difference between representation and self-representation. Rather than being subject to others' gaze and essentialized depictions, self-representation allows indigenous people to discover and promote their own indigeneity.

By the same token, depictions of age, which can convey a sense of passivity, have also been turned into empowering elements. Unlike certain depictions which portray the elderly as reflective of a culture that has passed, indigenous actors give power to *abuelos* and *abuelas* as the bearers of language and culture. In a booklet on indigenous rights that MUPI has published ("Manual de derechos de los pueblos indígenas"), the pages are filled with photograph after photograph of elderly men and women wearing traditional clothing (with the exception of one image, which features children). These are the images of *tatas* and *nanas* that are transmitting oral histories and the Náhuat language as part of the cultural revitalization; indeed, their role is being exalted as per understandings of Náhuat-Pipil culture. Likewise, in "Voces," an alternative newspaper with the objective of giving a voice to marginal social sectors, a special issue on indigenous affairs (February 2012, no. 2) features older women, wearing the traditional clothing, who have come to be recognized as a symbol of indigenous revitalization and who are being empowered by the re-conception of what it is to be an indigenous woman.

As the few indigenous activists who actively promote the rediscovery of indigenous visual symbols, however, they are also met with resistance. For instance, the fact that female activists

wear traditional clothing at events draws criticisms from many people, even from self-identified indigenous people; they are accused of profiting from the indigenous identity and "selling out the fatherland" or "*vendiendo la patria*" (Ricardo, Izalco, May 2012). This is something that Tilley (2002) has also observed claiming that the small active base "remains largely invisible to most observers of the country's politics, related ethnic discourse has seemed artificial and unconvincingly opportunistic" (533).

The rationale is that in wearing "Indian" clothes, they are engaging in a self-interested performance. Lucas (introduced in an earlier chapter) stated that wearing indigenous clothing is not what makes him indigenous, he does not need to wear traditional clothing to assert his indigenous identity, he "just *is* [an Indian] and that's the end of it" and does not need to wear certain garments to prove it (Izalco, June 2012). The *cofradía* leader claims that he does not need to prove to anyone that he is indigenous by wearing *caites* (traditional sandals) and traditional clothes and he is instead happy wearing "normal" clothes.

Criticisms, however, only highlight how images propagated as part of the process of indigenous revitalization are challenging many of the portrayals that have been promulgated in national Salvadoran society and as part of nationalist paradigms. This suggests that visual symbols that feed into the re-invention of what it is to be indigenous might be emerging. Recovering indigenous symbols and cultural expression is significant for indigenous people, according to a Náhuat teacher and activist, as it involves recovering those elements of Náhuat-Pipil culture that were lost in 1932 (Náhuat teacher, Izalco, March 2012).

To return to 1932, portrayals of the massacre have been instrumental in achieving visibility for indigenous people. Firstly, for a long time there was silence related to 1932 (indigenous activist, July 2013). However, monuments such as the one erected at El Llanito in 2011 serve as a visual reminder at this prominent site in Izalco of how indigenous people are becoming more visible.

Indigenous actors and advocates are also promoting visibility by creating openness in relation to the 1932 massacre, using photographs and visual representations of the events as empowering symbols of their ongoing struggle. In 2008 the Museum of Image and Word (MUPI) published an issue of their *Trasmallo* publication, which documented and disseminated images of the 1932 massacre (in 2008). Additionally, a life-size print of Feliciano Ama's photograph prior to his execution is displayed in Nansin's house. It can also be found on the cover of *Los Izalcos: Testimonio de un Indígena*, a book that narrates various aspects of past and present life in Izalco, by Julio Leiva Masin, in which the author places indigeneity as a *present* identity. This photograph is also one that Lucas, one of my informants, holds on to, as it represented the only picture that he has seen of his grandfather prior to being executed. In these acts of appropriating certain symbols, indigenous actors are identifying with indigenous symbols and through this process they situate the identity within present-day Izalco, not simply an identity that is obsolete. To be sure, expressions of indigeneity through visuality happen largely as isolated events rather than as a counterhegemonic social movement as seen elsewhere in Latin America. Nevertheless, the experiences discussed in this chapter are indicative of areas where resistance might be occurring.

Conclusion

To conclude, the purpose of this chapter has been to investigate visual meanings consistent with Hall's concept of representation (2003). As proposed in the theoretical section of the dissertation in chapter two, I have attempted to demonstrate instances in which visual representations (images, photography, monuments, iconography and public performance) point to pervasive colonial systems of representations (Coleman 2011, 63; Patton 2015).

Visual representations depicting "Indians" including photographs, paintings, statues, sculptures and performances symbols are prominent in Izalco. Additionally, people in Izalco readily acknowledge that the town has strong indigenous roots as *visible* in its Indian icons (various interviews, Izalco, April 2012). As such, when I engaged with local residents they pointed me to different statues and sculptures that they considered as "Indian" representations. A survey of the landscape also reveals that many images depicting indigeneity are indeed scattered throughout the town; such depictions of indigeneity are more subtle in nature but prominent nonetheless, as they speak to the regime of indigenous representation.

Accordingly, the objective of this chapter has been to examine the regime of representation as it pertains to indigeneity in Izalco. I argue that representations of indigeneity are for the most part gendered and that they convey the idea that indigeneity is in decline, passive, feminine, fixed in time, inauthentic and part of the national identity. Decline and passivity are reflected in the association between indigeneity and images depicting a dying population or a people who live as myth reflected through indigenist sculptures. By femininity, I am alluding to the manner in which indigenous images prominently depict women, and when men are portrayed, especially in

relation to 1932, I am referring to their portrayal as less masculine in contrast to their Ladino counterparts. Finally, the idea that performance is a key element through which people experience indigeneity evokes notions of inauthentic representations of indigeneity.

Regardless of all of this, there are individuals who are starting to embrace the indigenous movement and breaking with these hegemonic representations that reduce the indigenous experience to such characteristics. Instead, their experiences appear to be giving indigeneity new meanings, despite the fact that the experiences are few and occurring in isolation. As demonstrated in this chapter, in some instances indigenous clothing, femininity and age have been instrumental in exploring new indigenous meanings.

In the following chapter, I continue to focus on the portrayal of indigenous people, while focusing on tourism as an area that has benefited from representations of indigeneity. More broadly, however, I focus on how (self-)representations are inscribed within the broader politics of ethnicity.

Chapter 8: The Price of Indigeneity: Marketing Indigeneity through Space and Linguistic Revitalization in Izalco

At approximately three kilometres from Izalco stands *Caluco*, a town known for a park where a thermal river was turned into a system of swimming pools. The park or tourism centre (*turicentro*) was inaugurated in the 1970s, but the rivers in the area historically sustained indigenous and Ladino settlements, both directly and indirectly in recent years through commerce (Lardé y Larin 2000, 86; Cardona Cardona and Landaverde Orellana 2005, 2). The attraction caters to residents of the town and its surrounding areas, including Izalco (Cardona Cardona and Landaverde Orellana 2005, 89). Outside of the park, the street fills up early in the morning with all sorts of vendors, both young and old. With their feet covered in dirt, they walk about trying to sell anything from-to-go to pool floating devices for children. Garbage piles up in the margins of the dirt road leading to the park, where a fence demarcates the area reserved for swimming and sojourning. Recently, Caluco has been the site of significant development and at the time of this research, it was being renovated and re-branded to attract more tourists.[84] The re-branding involved a re-naming of the park using the name *Shutecath*,[85] which is the Náhuat name of the river that feeds the system of swimming pools.

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[84] See Salazar (January 8, 2005)

[85] The park is being rebranded with the name that the indigenous inhabitants once used for the river that feeds the park. In an article published in *El Diario de Hoy* (Pacheco, May 7 2011), a national newspaper, the park is called by its Náhuat name: *Shutecath* and the article focuses on how a recent investment of US$16,229 will help to attract more tourists, see Pacheco (May 7, 2011). *Shutecath* is the name of the river that feeds the water park, but residents refer to the park as *Caluco*. I only encountered the traditional name of the park in the newspaper, the people I spoke with on location referred to the park as Caluco.

Almost next to Shutecath, a billboard stands tall advertising another coming attraction to the area: *Mundo Maya*.[86] While it was not explicit what kind of attraction would be hosted on the premise, the billboard design, the wooden cabins along with the exotic Mayan branding certainly suggested that the park would offer visitors an "indigenous" experience.

In this manner, both Mundo Maya and Shutecath are part of a trend that is taking place throughout El Salvador, where "ethnic" tourism and sites evoking a sense of ethnicity are contributing to changes in social and physical landscapes. As the example of Caluco might suggest, the development and branding of "indigenous" sites, in this case "Mayan" attractions, highlights the way in which developers conceive of indigeneity as having marketable value (Tilley 2002).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the concept of indigeneity has acquired meaning spatially and linguistically, around ideas of the market economy and the tourism industry. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I explore the "indianization" of space to show how tourism contributes to the transformation of physical landscapes. In the second section, I examine the politics of linguistic revitalization as a process that encourages people to learn Náhuat with the prospect of economic integration as the main incentive. I argue that both of these instances reveal attempts at recapturing a sense of indigeneity. However, both instances also reveal an alignment with the market economy that despite appearing to have benefits for the

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[86] It should be noted that while *Mundo Maya* in Caluco is an independent initiative, the way that it is being branded resonates with the *Mundo Maya* campaign in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. As part of this campaign, *Mundo Maya* offers tourists the opportunity *to witness* "a fascinating excavation [that] allows us to look through a window into the past" and provides an "amazing journey back in time to observe the life of the ancient Mayans, petrified under the volcano." See "Mundo Maya" (n. d.).

revitalization of indigenous consciousness also contributes to the essentialization of indigenous identities.

Specifically, decolonial approaches tend to see the capitalist political economy as perpetuating colonial relations and representations of otherness as well as structural inequalities (Mignolo 2010, 2; Walsh 2011, 53). Therefore, in associating indigenous experiences with the market economy, it is likely that power relations contributing to the effacement of indigenous identities will be reproduced as a result. While places like Guatemala have seen indigenous movements strengthened as a result of indigenous marketization, the effects might have a different turn in Izalco, given the ethnopolitical context of identification and the tendencies towards hegemonic representations contributing to the effacement of indigeneity. With this in mind, this chapter raises important questions about the incidence of coloniality in space and language, as evidenced in discourses linking indigeneity with economic participation and tourism.

8.1   Tourism Trends in El Salvador

In order to understand the current relationship between indigeneity, the market and tourism, it is important to look at the historical context in which the current stage of tourism is taking place in El Salvador. To be clear, tourism is not a new phenomenon in El Salvador and it has been considered as an important tool for development for a long time. Between 1950 and 1956, for instance, President Oscar Osorio made many attempts to modernize the country (Alianza America Hispana, n. p.). In part, his efforts were intended to showcase El Salvador to the world and in his attempts, he reconceived the landscape by modernizing buildings in San Salvador, marketplaces, schools, national parks, and beaches (Alianza America Hispana, n. p.).

Osorio prioritized the rebranding of El Salvador as a tourist destination, claiming that former administrations had not engaged in serious efforts to attract tourists. He classified their lack of attention as missed opportunities (Alianza America Hispana, n. p.). During the 1960s and 1970s, campaigns were also undertaken to grow the tourism industry and put natural resources and destinations to productive use, but the focus seems to have declined (Asamblea Legislativa, Diario Oficial, vol. 257; Diario Oficial, vol 229).

Efforts at increasing tourism were significantly diminished as a result of the civil war during the 1980s. Nevertheless, in that same decade, the state appeared concerned about the lack of "integral exploitation of sites with the potential for tourism," calling for an "aggressive" approach to attract foreign tourists (Asamblea Legislativa, Diario Oficial, vol. 277). Particular emphasis is put on "natural" environments as a site of tourism. There is also mention of assisting in local celebrations (artisanal crafts and patron saint celebrations), which would be of interest to tourists as well.

Following the civil war, however, there was a resurgence of the tourism question. As the focus shifted to national reconstruction and as the country became more integrated into the global economy, private enterprises and the state emphasized the importance of the revitalization of tourism as a tool for economic development (Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada 2006; Ministerio de Turismo 2011). Still under the auspice of modernization, academics posited that natural resources must also be sustainable in order for them to be an ongoing source of economic growth (Martir Noguera, Melendez Salgado, Ramirez Carato, Zuniga, and Alegria Molina 1996, 5). In this manner, tourism has been an important aspect of economic development discourses in El Salvador.

According to a report by the National Association of Private Enterprise (*Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada*, ANEP), one of the key goals should be the promotion of ecotourism. Within this scope, the organization has highlighted natural environments in Izalco as sites with the potential for exploitation. This includes Cerro Verde[87], the Izalco volcano and Atecozol. The organization outlines the importance of "conveying credibility" within each of the sites with tourism potential in Izalco (2007, 12). According to the organization, Cerro Verde and the Izalco volcano have an inherent comparative advantage in that they have the intrinsic potential for "ecological development" (2007, 12).

As seen in this section, much of the emphasis on tourism was placed on natural environments. In the post-civil war reconstruction years, however, indigeneity and indigenous people have become important areas of focus for the tourism industry (Tilley 2005, 97). Tilley (2005) argues that the social landscape in El Salvador was transformed to project a "'destination image' for international tourism" (96). Specifically, Tilley notes the way that tourism in the area has been a growing enterprise, propelled by tourists who seek Mayan experiences as well as "indigenous landscapes (charming villages, colorful markets, women in traje [or refajo]) and spend their currency on indigenous weavings, carvings, and other crafts" (97). It should be highlighted that while biologically Náhuat-Pipils are not Mayan descendants, conveying a Mayan identity has been profitable. Tilley notes that Náhuat-Pipils are rather closely related to the Toltecs and Olmecs (98). However, promoting Salvadoran ethnicity as Mayan sells in the global tourism

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[87] Cerro Verde in itself provides an example of how environments are being exploited through the tourism industry. However, rather than analyzing it within the scope of this paper, it is more useful to show an important contrast that I have already alluded to and the change in the focus for tourism from locales to identities and indigenous signifiers. Namely, natural environments have traditionally been the main source of exploitation for tourism purposes.

industry and marketing campaigns can be conducted alongside ethnic destinations in neighbouring countries (98).

Increasingly, tourism campaigns have highlighted the indigenous aspects of the country (Salguero, November 30, 2012). For instance, one of the most recent campaigns, *Ruta Náhuat-Pipil* focuses on indigenous sites and towns as destinations where tourists can experience Náhuat-Pipil culture. Furthermore, the tourism campaign *Pueblos Vivos* emphasizes towns and sites as an attraction, but also implies that the people are themselves an attraction (Ministerio de Turismo, n. d., 12). Generally, tourism advertisements for this campaign contain visual markers of people dressed in traditional indigenous clothing, further alluding to the authentic experience that these towns and people can offer national and international tourists (Ministerio de Turismo, n. d., 20). As part of *Pueblos Vivos*, towns are engaging in tourism campaigns that are based on the notion that every town has something to showcase (Ministerio de Turismo n. d., 20). There are competitions held on the basis of providing visitors with the best experience.

Nahuizalco, Juayúa and Ataco (all part of *Ruta de la Flores* or the Flowers Route, another tourist trajectory) are among the towns that can be said to be successfully developing their "identities" to meet the demands of tourists. Indeed, informants strongly encouraged me to visit these towns for an indigenous experience (various interviews, Sonsonate).

During my visits, it was common to catch glimpses of women wearing *refajos* selling indigenous handicrafts. An informant from Sonsonate referred to the cultural attractions in nearby towns (Nahuizalco's nocturnal market, artisanal shops and *refajo*-wearing women[88]; Juayúa's many

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[88] Indeed, I did come across two women who wore *el refajo* in the marketplace.

festivals; as well as Ataco's artisanal shops and coffee-growing culture) (nurse, Sonsonate, April 2012). This same informant asserted that such destinations had been designed for tourists, citing the number of "North Americans and Europeans" who often frequent them and the high asking prices for memorabilia. For example, she mentioned wanting to purchase a *refajo* in Juayúa, but was astounded at the high asking price (nurse, Sonsonate, May 2012). While we visited these towns, informants advised me to refrain from buying anything from the main squares, as there would be better asking prices in the marketplace away from all the tourists (nurse, Juayúa, April 2015). In short, tourism has transformed the physical and social landscape of certain towns in the last few years and development has focused on projections of indigeneity embodied in people and the commercial infrastructure.

8.1.2   Tourism in Izalco

Modernization and development has been a key priority in Izalco. According to a city councillor who had recently been appointed under the new ARENA administration, the *obras publicas* or public works file is one of the most important files based in the municipality (city councillor, Izalco, May 2012). I also witnessed this as I browsed through the municipal archives, which illustrated the volume of decisions that get taken at this level (for example, paving and repairing roads, modernizing the market, modernizing the local meat plant, organizing waste disposal, cleaning up rivers).

Prior to 2000, there was a strong emphasis on infrastructure as part of the town's efforts at promoting economic development (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 1984, 1997 and 2000). During

this period, *Revista Cultural*[89] makes a number of references to the roads, buildings and commercial establishments that the municipality has developed, improved, or helped to maintain. In the isolated instances that tourism comes up, the municipality identifies *Cerro Verde*, a former volcano which is now a national park from which the Izalco volcano can be appreciated, as a place where hotels are at the disposal of tourists (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2000, n. p.). In 2000, the municipality indicates that the Salvadoran Corporation for Tourism (*Corporación Salvadoreña de Turismo*, CORSATUR), a national tourism organization, had committed to the re-opening of Hotel Montaña (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2000, n. p.).

Specifically, Hotel Montaña was developed in the 1950s in the hope of capitalizing on the state's massive tourism campaigns.[90] The establishment's main objective was to take advantage of the scenery of the erupting Izalco volcano, something that never happened because the volcano stopped erupting two weeks before the hotel opened its doors to tourists. The hotel continued to suffer as an economic venture. Recently, there have been renewed efforts to open it again and to this end, an article published in a national newspaper called for investors.[91] Indeed, *Cerro Verde* has continued to be a focus for economic development through tourism.[92]

After 2000, there has been a greater focus on the importance of tourism for the social and economic development of the town. In particular, a direct link is increasingly made in the

[89]The magazines that the City produces for the patron saint celebrations are a good indication of the priorities of the municipal administration and the priorities of the town and provide an account of the municipal government's achievements.

[90]See "Hotel Montaña" (March 14, 1967)

[91]See Rodas (July 23, 2013)

[92] See "Cerro Verde" (n. d.)

municipality's bi-annual report between natural environments, tourism and economic development of the town.[93] Like it was evidenced at the national level, the focus on tourism in Izalco also emerged from a desire to exploit natural environments for profit. However, as demonstrated in this chapter, in addition to continuing to target natural landscapes as a source of economic development, Izalco is also a site where ethnic branding has occurred, even linking landscapes to indigeneity, as discussed in the section that follows.

8.2   Indigenizing Spaces

A number of authors have observed the importance of looking at spatial relations in the analysis of colonial relations. For instance, drawing from the colonial experience in Australia, Lydon (2005) argues that the process of imagining indigenous space was instrumental in the process of colonization. This dynamic is important as it points to the significance of looking at how space is represented in order to understand more fully the process of coloniality in the context of spatial analysis. As such, the section that follows describes attempts at portraying indigeneity through space or physical landscapes. While Tilley has described indigenous landscapes as quaint villages, handicraft markets and locales where women wear traditional dress (2005, 97), I also expand my analysis to include natural landscapes. This is because in deciding to support the development of two specific locales in Izalco, *Parque Ecológico* and Atecozol, the state used indigeneity and the preservation of a natural landscape as a justification. I describe these two cases in the sections that follows.

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[93] See Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco (2009) and (2004) for examples.

8.2.1 Changing Landscapes: *Parque Ecológico*

Among the changing landscapes in Izalco is *Parque Ecológico* Izalco, one of the newest attractions in the area at the time of this research. The park is located along the road leading to the Atecozol tourism centre, another attraction discussed in further detail below. *Parque Ecológico* emerged in a context favouring the development of the tourism industry and indigenous representations.[94] According to then FMLN Mayor Roberto Alvarado, who authorized the purchase of the land for the park, the decision stemmed directly from his commitment to indigenous issues and the protection of ancestral land (Diaz, April 18 2012). He further claimed that in purchasing the land, he would be protecting it from developers who planned to divide it into lots and sell it to private owners.

As an "indigenous" locale, very few people in Izalco knew of this development and for those who were aware, the park did not seem to have any meaning outside of the simple notion that there was a new attraction in the works. The Izalco residents I spoke with tended to reference the neighbouring Atecozol as an indigenous locale, but *Parque Ecológico* never came up in conversations. The locale only generated confusion when I asked about it. One person who referred to the project had seen the billboard along the road, but did not seem to know much else about it.

Locally, the project drew little media attention, aside from a national newspaper article that focused on the way that the local government was saving the park from development and thereby preserving the integrity of the locale in support of ancestral land (Diaz, April 18, 2012). As Diaz

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[94]See "Boletin Camino al Desarrollo" (December 2014), where an environmental NGO links the project directly to tourism.

reports, *lotificación* (dividing the land into lots) threatened this part of town which has been home to indigenous plants and wildlife. The article claimed that the project was a culmination of the mayor's concern for the preservation of the flora and wildlife, which were threatened by developers and implied that the community would be better served if the municipality purchased the threatened grounds.

However, a conversation between a landowner, a city councillor and myself, indicated all of the steps involved to divide land into lots (Izalco, June 2012). Specifically, an extensive environmental analysis would have to be conducted and approved by the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (*Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*, MARN). This conversation revealed that the media release had simplistically positioned the mayor as the rescuer of indigenous land, and raised questions about the political motives behind the purchase of the land. That the mayor purchased the land because it was threatened by development is certainly a likely cause for invoking indigeneity and the protection of ancestral land. However, this claim is not supported by the activity that occurred after the municipality seized the land. With an investment from a fund started by the Principality of Asturias (Spain), the municipality began to develop the park into a local attraction that would allow people to reconnect with nature (Diaz, April 18, 2012). What followed was a disruption to the land, however undisruptive the records portray the developments as being (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2012, 6).

As part of the preparation of *Parque Ecológico*, developers and the municipal government have made some strategic choices about the aesthetics of the park, to provide visitors with a natural experience (Alcaldía Municipal de lzalco 2012, 8). Figure 8.2.1 a and Figure 8.2.1 b demonstrate

some of the development that took place while the park was under construction (Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2012, 10-11). Aesthetic modifications include the park's bamboo gates (Alcaldía Municipal de lzalco 2012, 11). Additionally, for the parking lot, the developers purchased red volcanic rock from a local merchant to give off an earthy feel (Alcaldía Municipal de lzalco 2012, 6). As the project report states, disruptions also included bringing in synthetic construction materials for the construction of aqueducts, paths, and playgrounds (Alcaldía Municipal de lzalco 2012, 10). The images provide some indication as to how development in the area is disrupting ancestral land, rather than promoting its preservation.

It is important to note that while *Parque Ecológico* may have been an initiative intended to protect an indigenous environment, other state initiatives aimed at opening indigenous sites to the public have been less then successful. In one instance, an independent researcher explained that people's lack of awareness of indigenous cosmovisions meant that they overlooked indigenous practices in dealing with sacred sites (Izalco, May 2012). He indicated that a group of youth wanted to hold a cultural event at the El Llanito site, which would have involved setting up a stage and conducting dances open to the public. However, El Llanito is a sacred site where victims of the 1932 massacre were also buried in mass graves. According to this researcher, indigenous sacred ground must not be stepped on. I personally witnessed the state of the site after a public event; there had been a lot of garbage left behind, which demonstrated a lack of indigenous consciousness and understanding of meaning towards the land.

Indeed, what is particularly significant about this project is the way in which a natural environment was being transformed as part of the appeal for creating an ancestral feel (Alcaldía
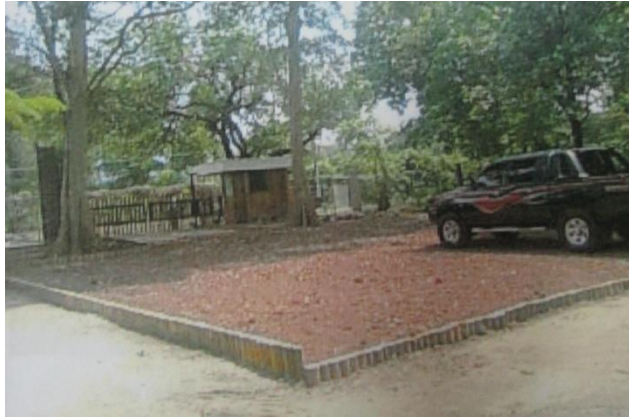
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Municipal de lzalco 2012, 6). It further demonstrates how a process towards authentic natural

representations took place, while simultaneously altering the natural environment.
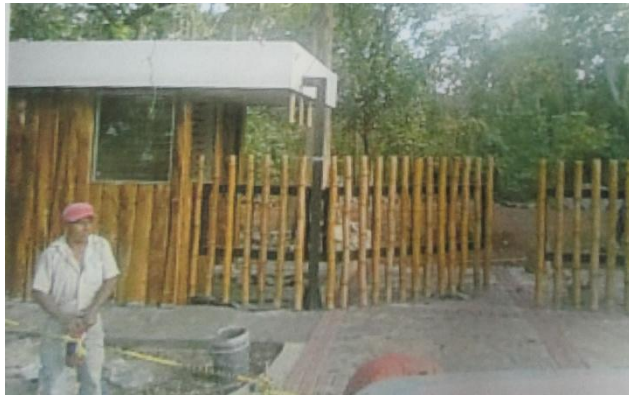

(Figure 8.2.1 a, Development of *Parque Ecológico*, Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2012, 10)

(Figure 8.2.1 b, Development of Parque Ecológico, Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2012, 10)

(Figure 8.2.1 c, Parking lot at Parque Ecológico, Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2012, 12)

(Figure 8.2.1 d, *Parque Ecológico* entrance, Alcaldía Municipal de Izalco 2012, 11)

8.2.2   Atecozol Park

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, Atecozol is a park in the area that stands in contrast to *Parque Ecológico*, because of its indigenous significance.[95] Atecozol, which means Cradle of the Lord of the Waters in Náhuat, is a system of springs that was turned into swimming pools.[96]

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[95] See ISTU, "Parque Atecozol, forma parte de la nueva Ruta Turística Náhuat Pipil" and "Atecozol" (n. d.)

[96] Atecozol is a very important locale for Izalco residents. To some residents it is very dear and even sacred, given that it is one of the areas that is often cited as being reflective of a place that preserves the "natural environment" (Leiva Masin 2011, 218). In addition, Atecozol still carries with it the mysticism of the stories that circulate around Izalco. One of the key attractions is the mysticism that continues to be attached to the place.

Atecozol officially opened its gates to the public in 1951 (Cordon Rivera and Gonzalez Cruz 2007). Since then, Atecozol has come to represent an important part of the town's touristic infrastructure (Berrios Reyes, Cordero Barahona and Monrroy 2010, 145). In 2012, the Ministry of Tourism (Ministerio de Turismo, MITUR) reported profits of US$19 million, with Atecozol being one of the most visited national parks.

Atecozol has certainly been integrated into the process of indigenous branding and there are many elements that allow for the park to reflect the current trend towards a return to an authentic indigenous experience. Unlike *Parque Ecológico,* Atecozol has been part of Izalco's heritage for generations and was a place where people in Izalco claim that indigenous rituals were once carried out (independent researcher, May 2012). However, despite the indigenous significance of the park, it appears that the state is further capitalizing on its indigenous meaning to bolster ethnic tourism, as demonstrated below.

First, the park is already known for its portrayal of indigeneity, as discussed in the previous chapter and as Climaco Villalte, Isassi Pineda and Salguero Melendez (2008) also describe. The park has a number of "Indian" statues dating back to the 1950s, including: *Indio Atonal* (Figure 8.2.2 a), *la Cuyancúat* (Figure 8.2.2 b), *Tlalot* and *Tamatcuisa, la Pila del Padre* (Erquicia Cruz 2012, 72).

In terms of recent efforts of indigenous branding, in 2012 Atecozol became a selected destination for the Náhuat-Pipil tourist route. The project involves a tourist trajectory allowing visitors to stop through various "indigenous" locales, including Santo Domingo de Guzmán, San Antonio del Monte, Izalco, Nahuizalco, Caluco, Cuisnáhuat and San Julián (Benítez Durán,

Hernández Salazar, Himede Rivera 2014, 17). The objective of establishing the route is to promote economic development in the area, while giving visibility to Náhuat-Pipil culture and its ancestral heritage (Benítez Durán et al. 2014, 12, 17). The Náhuat-Pipil route project is part of a broader tourism campaign aimed at encouraging tourists to visit several towns with specific cultural links. As such, the Archeological route takes tourists through pre-colonial ruins (Cihuatan, Joya de Ceren, San Andres, Tazumal, Casa Blanca, as well as the Dr. David J. Guzman National Museum of Anthropology).[97] The Artisanal route takes tourists through various towns specializing in handicrafts.[98]

In 2015, further expansion was announced for Atecozol, given its association with the Náhuat-Pipil route.[99] In addition to the swimming pools, tourists would be able to experience indigenous culture and "ancestral" activities. Nochez and Guzman (January 10, 2016) point out that the planned developments will highlight Mayan culture.[100] For example, the planned development would see that tourists wanting an indigenous experience would be able to participate in sweat lodge session for about US$10 per person. It would also see the addition of infrastructure for Mayan ball sports, which as Nochez and Guzman note have not gained popularity in Izalco due to a lack of local interest. Aesthetically, the article also highlights that there are also plans to develop the "indigenous" iconography at the park even further to include Mayan deities where the Atonal figure was erected in the 1950s.

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[97] See "Archaeological Route" (n. d)

[98] "Artisan Route" (n. d.)

[99] See "Inaguran centro recreativo ancestral Atecozol en Izalco" (June 26, 2015)

[100] As previously stated, historically, the Mayanization of the country has been directly linked to tourism (Tilley 2005).

(Figure 8.2.2 a, Indio Atonal)

(Figure 8.2.2 b, la Cuyancúat)

It should be noted that outside of the ethnic branding occurring, Atecozol has important meaning for people in Izalco, including indigenous people. There are stories of people going for runs or swims in the park before going to work, teachers taking their students to Atecozol, and there are a significant number of people who are employed on the premises (mostly food vendors and security guards). People in the town still recount stories of trespassing to access the park despite the state-imposed fences (motorist, Izalco, April 2012).

Recently, what stood out for people who have lived in Izalco for as long as they can remember, is that the increased focus on tourism has also meant the dispossession of Atecozol—this was especially true for my host families from Izalco. My informants claimed that the park was managed by the municipality. They further noted that the state took hold of the park recently and since then it became part of the country's tourism campaign. My own research suggests that control of the park has been a joint effort between the municipality and the national government, since the 1950s.[101] As Climaco Villalte et al. (2008) state, administration of the park is carried out between MITUR, the Salvadoran Institute of Tourism (*Instituto Salvadoreño de Turismo*, ISTU) and CORSATUR (23). The authors further state that while the land is owned by the municipality, it has been ceded to ISTU's administration: a contractual relation expiring in 2027 (Climaco Villalte et al. 2008, 23).[102]

Nevertheless, several residents of the town mourned the day that the Salvadoran government took over the administration of Atecozol. Originally, Izalco residents recall being able to enter and leave the park at their own discretion as the park's parameters were not sealed off. Gradually, more obstacles were introduced to prevent the free flow of people. The park was part of the community and people went swimming there regularly. A few years later, the villagers recall that walls were created encircling the park and an entrance made on the paved road leading to the park (motorist, May 2012). During this time, Izalco residents were still given free access upon showing identification proving that they were residents of Izalco. This was largely a symbolic act given that most residents knew their way around the woods and would make their way into the park, bypassing authorities; this is something that I witnessed firsthand in earlier

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[101] See Diaz (January 20, 2013)

[102] See Diaz (December 25, 2014)

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visits to Izalco. Recently, however, the state sealed the perimeter completely and now it is impossible to get into the park without going through the main entrance (at least according to my informants). Izalco residents can still get into the park without paying, but people from outside of the town have to pay to enter the premises. However, this is certainly not the case across the board, given that a number of individuals who are not from Izalco but whose parents are from Izalco, continue to enter the premises without paying (as was the case with my host family). They use techniques that allow them to bypass paying the cost at the gates, including passing off as local residents by claiming they own land nearby (also witnessed firsthand). Something that I have indeed noticed through the years is how people are intercepted at the entrance and asked for identification to determine admission fees (given that Izalco residents are not charged for accessing the premises). The tightening of control mechanisms of Atecozol have coincided with many of the state's efforts at leveraging tourism.

It should be made clear that locales with an "ethnic" character are relatively few in Izalco. Atecozol and *Parque Ecológico* represent isolated instances at portraying indigeneity, in comparison to neighbouring towns and villages where indigeneity is portrayed through streets filled with elaborate murals depicting colonial and pre-colonial life, and artisanal markets where women in *refajos* sell their goods. I should also make it clear that spatial indigenous portrayals in Izalco are not necessarily associated with profit, but rather that changes to these locales reflect *perceptions* about profitability from appearing more indigenous. Further research and comparisons would need to be done to determine how profitable indigenous portrayals actually are.

In contrast to many of Izalco's neighbouring towns and despite the fact that Izalco is also seen as a town with solid indigenous foundations, the town seems unable to attract tourists in the numbers of Nahuizalco, Ataco and Juayúa (López Eguizábal 2011, 65; Flores Ramos, Landaverde Deras and Montoya Serrano 2012, 29). Within this context, *Parque Ecológico* and Atecozol developments reveal state attempts at taking a share of the market. However, in attempting to portray indigeneity, Izalco's "indigenous" locales would have to further compete with these neighbouring locations.

Given the prevailing and seemingly contradictory attitudes about the disappearance of Indians in Izalco, it is not surprising that towns like Nahuizalco's tourism industries, for example, are growing at a much higher rate than in Izalco (Berrios Reyes, Cordero Barahona and Monrroy 2010). After all, Nahuizalco is a town that people in the area generally recognize both for the elderly women still wear the traditional *refajo* as well as its artisanal shops and overall exotic landscape (Berrios Reyes et al., 204).

The focus on indigeneity as a potential profitable venture has much to do with the presumption that international and national tourists value certain visual indicators as indigenous (Little 2005a). As seen in Devine (2009), locales compete to provide tourists with the most authentic indigenous experience (34). This is something I witnessed in towns such as Nahuizalco, Ataco and Juayúa, where portrayals of indigeneity are common in murals, shops and parks. According to the indigenous vendors from Guatemala whom I met in Juayúa, people who appear more indigenous tend to sell more handicrafts (vendor, Juayúa, June 2012). Furthermore, it may be the case that towns with effective portrayals of indigeneity also tend to be more productive at attracting tourists than those towns who are struggling to offer tourists the competing

experiences. With ethnic tourism on the rise, essentialist portrayals of indigeneity are also coming to form part of Izalco's economy.

In the section that follows, I move away from analyzing the relationship between indigeneity and space and look at how people are also "becoming" more indigenous, using the market economy as a justification to learn Náhuat. Like this section on space, the purpose is to illustrate yet another experience of indigeneity in order to problematize the observed relationship between the market economy and indigenous experiences.

8.3   *Ne nawat, Tutaketzalis*[103]*:* **Revitalizing the Náhuat Language in Izalco**

The politics of language are deeply embedded in the study of coloniality, often rooted in the effacement of indigenous languages and more recently rooted in their revitalization and promotion (Garcia 2003, 71; Gustafson 2009, 48). The section that follows aims to describe how linguistic revitalization of Náhuat is occurring in Izalco, while drawing attention to the emergent link between linguistic revitalization and the market economy. Specifically, one of strategies that Náhuat language educators used to promote Náhuat lessons was to stress the likelihood of participation in the market economy through tourism. In addition to describing how this might be occurring, this chapter also sheds light on the inconsistencies between the market economy and indigeneity.

On June 13, 2013, *El Diario de Hoy*, a Salvadoran newspaper, published an article in which the author attempted to assess the worth of certain languages, including Náhuat.[104] The author

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[103] Translation: Náhuat, our language

[104] "Siete mil idiomas en el mundo: ¿Cuántos merecen conservarse?" (June 13, 2016).

argued that certain languages are not worth preserving because they are not widely spoken and lack script. The author further argued that valuable knowledge derived from dying languages has already been translated into the dominant languages. In the same article, the author not only called for the obliteration of the Náhuat language, but also for the symbols of indigenous cultures. The author went on to identify those who advocate for the preservation of the indigenous language and culture as "communist," thereby evoking some of those anti-communist sentiments that led to the 1932 massacre. A similar article was published on December 2, 2010 in the same newspaper, in which another author qualified learning indigenous languages and indigenous cosmovisions (my word), as backwards and non-beneficial to youth. Instead, the author glorified Western science and culture, denoting these elements as desirable.[105]

Shortly after the publication of the June 2013 article, CCNIS and several allied civil society organizations, including Izalco's FAMA, Indigenous Rural Agricultural Bureau (*Mesa Agropecuaria Rural Indígena*) and Mesoamerican Campaign for Climatic Justice (*Campaña Mesoamericana de Justicia Climática*) held a press conference and issued an official statement in which they jointly denounced *El Diario de Hoy* for publishing overtly racist remarks against indigenous people. Under the CCNIS banner, the allied organizations argued that the article in *El Diario de Hoy* newspaper reflected the way in which indigenous people continue to be made invisible and continue to be silenced in Salvadoran society. At the press conference, these civil society organizations suggested that preserving indigenous cultures and languages is to the benefit of society as a whole, in the areas of environmental degradation, social stratification and racial discrimination. The implications of language survival extended well beyond linguistic practices. For the civil society groups represented at the press conference, the disappearance of

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[105] "Aprendan inglés y chino no náhuat o kakawira" (December 2, 2010)

Náhuat or the author's call on heaven to make anything indigenous disappear, evoked emotions and discourses associated to invisibility, collective ethnic rights, indigenous cosmovision, *buen vivir*, national heritage, state identity, colonialism and historical oppression.

The publication of the articles that questioned the value of preserving a language and the reactions that ensued, illustrate the scope of language politics in El Salvador, including in Izalco. Language is at the centre of the debates about cultural revitalization and indigenous expressions in Izalco. Furthermore, the revitalization of Náhuat is one of the primary tools through which activists promote indigenous visibility in the town and in the country as a whole (language teacher, Izalco, March 2012). However, the attitudes expressed in the article are consistent with the attitudes of people familiar with the linguistic revitalization, who believed that it was useless to learn Náhuat because it is a dead language (for example, a nursing student from Izalco, San Salvador, July 2013). Parents of school children learning Náhuat most often prefer that their children learn English, which they tend to see as more valuable (artisan, Izalco, April 2012). Despite such prevailing attitudes, activists and the state have more or less successfully positioned learning Náhuat for the opportunities it creates in the tourism industry, especially when taught alongside English.

8.3.1   Náhuat Revitalization in Izalco

Despite being recognized as a more indigenous part of the country, very few people in Izalco speak Náhuat. According to Lemus (2008), there are less than 200 Náhuat language speakers in all of El Salvador (1). Lemus adds that fear of repression due to the prevalent association between indigeneity and communism during the 1930s led to a lack of intergenerational

transmission of the language (2). He also notes that the loss of *vínculos culturales* (cultural links) also contributed to the loss of language (2).

Furthermore, there are no unilingual Náhuat speakers in Izalco (Lemus 2008, 51). Presently, there are a few individuals who speak Náhuat as a second language in Izalco, including several public school teachers (three of whom I met) who are also prominent activists. Since the Náhuat program was introduced in 2008 in three different schools in Izalco, with the support of Universidad Don Bosco, many students have acquired an elementary knowledge of the language, at best (former Náhuat student, Sonsonate, March 2012). *Casa de la Cultura* in Izalco has also attempted to provide Náhuat education, in conjunction with the schools, to different groups who have been receptive of the idea (Náhuat teacher, Izalco, July 2013).

Because Izalco is generally recognized as a town with deep indigenous roots, however, the state selected Mario Calvo Marroquín School (*Centro Escolar Mario Calvo Marroquín*) as 1 of 11 schools in El Salvador that would pilot the Náhuat language program (Lemus 2008, 49). The Náhuat language and Pipil culture revitalization program is sponsored by Don Bosco University (*Universidad Don Bosco*) and the Ministry of Education (*Ministerio de Educación*, MINED).

Since the establishment of the program, the school's administrators have expanded their vision of Náhuat revitalization and now wish for the school to become a "cradle" for indigenous culture (Náhuat teacher, Izalco, April 2012).[106] Part of this shift has occurred since the school has become renowned at the national level after a group of children sang the Salvadoran national

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[106] La *cuna* Náhuat is an education model that was attempted in Santo Domingo de Guzman, another town designated as "indigenous." Educators in Izalco often referred to this project as a model of what the school in Izalco aims to become.

anthem in Náhuat at an event put on by then president, Mauricio Funes (FMLN), which also

gave program administrators momentum (Náhuat teacher, Izalco, April 2012).[107] According to

this language teacher and activist, this event became "the pride of the Salvadoran state."[108] The

school allegedly received further endorsement by the Funes administration to expand their

programs (for which I found no specific figures, only symbolic endorsements through press

releases). The exposure has also affected some of the attitudes towards learning Náhuat and in

some instances, there is now some prestige associated to learning Náhuat. In one informant's

words:

> "Carlos went to that school to learn Náhuat and he was invited to *Casa Presidencial*
> [the President's residence] to sing the national anthem in Náhuat. That's right, the
> President hosted some of the kids from the school. They had breakfast there and he
> was even on television! There he was, singing. I'll introduce him to you and he can
> sing it for you, so you can see for yourself" (resort worker, April 2012).

This quotation demonstrates the sense of value that indigeneity acquired through Carlos'

participation in the Náhuat program, but most importantly of the associated prestige.

According to a retired teacher, recent efforts aimed at teaching Náhuat are not the only time

when the state tried to introduce Náhuat lessons. She claims that when she still taught, around

1983-1984, the Ministry of Education wanted teachers to teach Náhuat at the school where she

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[107] The children have performed the national anthem at various events over the last few years, for example, see
"Presidente del FSV participa en la inauguración del mes cívico" (September 3, 2010), "Izalco se Vistio de Azul
y Blanco" (September 24, 2010) and Mendoza (2011).

[108] See "Canto Náhuatl se une a melodias sinfónicas," an article in which the first lady (Funes Administration) and
the former mayor pose in front of the school.

was teaching. [109] The problem with this was that teachers did not know Náhuat and had no proper training to teach the language; teachers, including herself, simply dismissed the idea. In addition, the school (and teachers) often faced resistance from "the [indigenous] community", since parents were also reluctant to let their children learn Náhuat (former teacher, Izalco, April 2012). Accordingly, "the [indigenous] community" rejected the idea, because indigenous people (including parents) were committed to running their own schools in *Pueblo Abajo*. The former teacher went on to express skepticism about the overall merit of teaching Náhuat and expressed concern about the current direction of the education system in schools piloting the Náhuat program.

Most people I interviewed in Izalco tended to speak positively about the initiatives to teach Náhuat in public schools, when referring to the national language of the ancestors. However, there was also more resistance from people when asked whether they agree that their own children should take part in the program or when associated to a fully bilingual education (artisan, April 2012; baker, Izalco, March 2012). Teachers who are advocates of the revitalization of indigenous language and culture indicated that they are aware that not everyone is in favour of their children learning Náhuat. They further indicated that the school continues to face opposition from other colleagues and parents. Parents have been known to tell their children not to bother learning *indianadas*, a pejorative term meaning practices that reflect a lack of education (essentially that which Indians do). Parents also mock their children because they are

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[109] While it may appear odd that a state that viewed indigenous people as subversive may have tried to encourage learning Náhuat, it is also worth pointing to the indigenist tendencies of the state. In this sense, teaching Náhuat could be aligned with the strengthening of the nation. That being said, I found no record of Náhuat lessons being formerly taught in the 1980s. I did find this discussion meaningful, however, because it pointed to other covert attitudes about indigeneity, especially evident in this informant's negative tone when describing the irrationality (in her view) about teaching the language.

learning a dead language. Furthermore, indigenous teachers do not feel that their colleagues support them. This could be observed during a music practice where the children were performing indigenous songs with traditional instruments and another teacher came into the classroom/practice room to complain that they were disrupting her class, which the indigenous music teacher explained is something that happens repeatedly and that shows a lack of support. He claimed that while some of the teachers working in the school do not support the efforts and progress of indigenous education, they are still benefitting from the prestige that the school has acquired from international exposure as a result of the revitalization of Náhuat and Pipil culture.

Indeed, the exposure that the school has received at the national and international levels has helped to quell some of the reservations that parents and teachers initially had to the Náhuat program (principal and indigenous activist, April 2013). In fact, many community members including parents and the residents at large are beginning to see learning Náhuat as an "opportunity" (Náhuat teacher, Izalco, April 2012). Some community members "accept" the idea of learning traditional language and customs because their children might travel around showcasing their ability, like one of the teachers at the school.[110] Parents with whom I spoke, allowed their children to learn indigenous languages despite questioning the utility of Náhuat, often for the sole reason that English began to be taught alongside, thereby opening up an opportunity in the tourism industry. Instead of having their children learn Náhuat and Pipil culture, many parents would rather have their children learn English because they would be valued and hired by a good employer in the future (indigenous teacher, Izalco, March 2012).

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[110] Two residents in particular were well aware of how teachers had travelled showcasing national culture and one of them recounted how a teacher travelled to Israel showcasing Náhuat culture and language (Izalco, April 2012). This seemed to validate their impression of indigenous educational programs: why learn a dead language if not for the money and opportunities?

By the same token, the school's administration attempts to make indigenous language and culture an attractive subject for people by promoting employment opportunities and secondary and post-secondary education, particularly with the creation of programs focusing on culture and heritage (Ministerio de Educación de El Salvador, 2011). While the study of the post-secondary programs is largely out of scope for this thesis, it is important to highlight that the programs are also subject to contestation. For one, what originally began as an initiative to promote indigenous cultures, languages and cosmovisions, quickly turned into an archaeological and cultural tourism program (Ministerio de Educación de El Salvador, 2011).

8.3.2   Profile of an Indigenous Activist and Teacher

"Mauricio" is a self-described indigenous man from Izalco. He is also a musician and a Náhuat teacher. He takes pride in his indigenous identity and wishes to inspire children to take pride in their own indigenous identity as well, both for the sake of exploring their heritage and because it will create "opportunities" in the future (Izalco, April 2012).[111] At the time of this research, he had recently travelled to Israel to promote indigenous culture. He states that he has not only had the opportunity to showcase Salvadoran indigenous cultures abroad, but also to learn about the implications of the re-birth of a culture. He states that "if Israel was able to do it [revitalize a culture and a language], why can't it be done in El Salvador?". Indeed, Mauricio draws on the experience of the re-establishment of the Jews in Israel and the institutionalization of culture and language that occurred after the Second World War. Regardless of the differences between the two situations, Mauricio uses this notion of re-birthing a nation to remind himself and those

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[111] All references to conversation with Mauricio stem from informal discussions held in Izalco in April 2012.

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around him that it is possible to witness a resurgence of the Náhuat language and to use this to get ahead in life.

In this way, Mauricio recognizes that he is part of an (informal) movement of educators that are contributing to the revitalization of Náhuat and Pipil culture in Izalco.[112] He is also becoming more and more recognized as contributing to the cultural development of the country, since he is one of the people involved in the translation of the Salvadoran national anthem and *Oración a la Bandera*[113] into Náhuat.

As part of his quest, Mauricio not only teaches Náhuat, he also organizes school and community events to motivate youngsters to learn the language. One of these activities involves getting children interested in indigenous song by teaching them traditional Spanish songs in Náhuat, as well as teaching indigenous instruments (marimba, drums, and *pito* or whistle). With the help of the children, Mauricio provides a demonstration of the songs that they have been learning. This is a common sighting in the school, during what they call a "structured recess". The children take out their instruments and begin playing traditional songs, such as *El Carbonero* and *Las Comaleras.* In the midst of guitar sounds, the beat of the marimba and drums, Mauricio points out that some of the instruments are not traditionally Náhuat-Pipil and that indigenous "authorities" have made it clear that some instruments are not to be played during public celebrations because they are not indigenous.[114] As such, Mauricio claims that for public performances, the class opts for indigenous instruments as well as occasionally the guitar. He

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[112] See "El Salvador: MINED trabaja en el rescate de la cultura" (November 9, 2012)

[113] This is a national declaration to the flag, like the American Pledge of Allegiance.

[114] It was never clear from our conversation who these authorities actually were.

further notes that Andean instruments are sometimes acceptable because they are also indigenous.

Despite his attempts at serving his Izalco community, he does concede that it is an ongoing challenge to have their support. Even though he has held a number of fairs that showcase indigenous cultures, and has organized events that aim to encourage the community to learn Náhuat, support for his initiatives is low. He did, however, notice support increasing when it was proposed to parents that Náhuat be taught alongside English. In general, he lives by the mantra that the purpose in teaching students Náhuat is to enable them to take it outside of the classroom and put it to productive use. Therefore, in combining English with Náhuat, he hoped that people would see learning Náhuat as an opportunity for success.

It is worth mentioning that the English and Náhuat that the children learn appear to be rather rudimentary. This is problematic for two reasons and reinforces the idea that experiences of indigeneity operate at the level of a perception of the likelihood of economic participation. First, the English that the students learn would hardly allow them to be functional in the language. Conversations with older students who have taken part in the program reveal that their conversational abilities are very limited. Secondly, the Náhuat that children learn is also rudimentary, which leads me to question the efficiency of the program in light of the competition for authentic representations.

Conclusion

To be sure, the idea behind this chapter has been twofold. Theoretically, my goal has been to show that projections of indigeneity evidenced in space and people are also connected to ideas

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about economic integration. As Ávila-García and Luna (2012) Wilson and Ypeij (2012) have demonstrated in similar contexts, this rapprochement between experiences of indigeneity and the tourism industry also suggests that experiences of indigeneity are sometimes subject to colonial relations. Empirically, this chapter also demonstrates that in Izalco, the concept of indigeneity has come to be associated with ideas of economic participation through tourism, spatially (through an analysis of *Parque Ecológico* and Atecozol) and linguistically (through the revitalization of Náhuat). Tourism is enabling the reconfiguration of locales that convey "indigenous" meaning within a context that favours ethnic tourism. Similarly, Náhuat teachers are promoting language revitalization under the precept of participation in the market economy and employability. As such, in each of these areas, people hope to take part in economic exchanges that value conveyance of indigeneity. In each case, value is perceived on the basis of ethnic portrayals. Tourism is enabling the reconfiguration of locales that convey "indigenous" meaning within a context that favours ethnic tourism.

However, the integration of indigeneity into the market economy might also signal a system that values certain representations of indigeneity over others. While economic integration may create subjects and spaces that are able to perform in the market economy, the effects are such that inclusion into the market may also create subjects that emulate an economic model in order to buy into the capitalist economy, which further marginalizes indigenous identities that do not fit the mould. In other words, while the market is creating "opportunities" for the expression of indigenous identities, it is also creating a model by which indigenous identities must behave in order to be considered indigenous. Unless there is a notion of productivity associated to representation, people are usually dismissive towards expressions of indigeneity. Rather than

benefitting the indigenous cause, this ethnic transformation may pose further challenges to the expression of indigenous identities.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

My goal in this dissertation has been to investigate how people in Izalco, El Salvador understand and experience indigeneity and what this implies for the politics of ethnicity. This research adds to the literature on indigenous politics by exploring indigenous experiences in Izalco from a decolonial and interpretivist political ethnographic lens. In exposing colonial relations in various sites of analysis, this research establishes a point from which to further understand coloniality in the Salvadoran context.

To be sure, El Salvador's indigenous experience is not unlike other countries, where indigenous people have had to re-imagine their individual and collective identities after years of state-led mestizaje. Across Latin America, colonization has most notably resulted in the dispossession of indigenous lands (Huff 2005), the replacement of indigenous institutions (Escobar 2010) and the establishment of new cosmovisions within the context of mestizo nation-building (Kusch 2010). Recently, indigenous movements have attempted to reclaim and decolonize areas where states have exerted their colonial influence (Le Bot 1998). As Warren (1998) describes in relation to neighbouring Guatemala and as Gould (1998) describes in relation to Nicaragua, indigenous resurgence happened within a context of intense nationalistic, de-indianizing efforts at the expense of indigenous identification. As such, indigenous movements in the area have gone through effacement coupled with different periods of self- and collective definition. Nevertheless, within the countries in El Salvador's surrounding area, indigenous movements have experienced varying degrees of success in gaining state and popular recognition and legitimacy.

The case of El Salvador differs from other Latin American cases, however, in that there have been no indigenous movements comparable to those in neighbouring countries and in that the legitimacy of the few indigenous organizations has wavered (Tilley 2002). Indigeneity in Izalco is as much characterized by the absence of unilingual Náhuat speakers, and the lack of indigenous territory or purely indigenous customs, as it is by essentialized understandings of indigeneity. In terms of indigenous organization efforts, my own research from Izalco also suggests that they are weak. This is consistent with the overall weaknesses that Tilley (2002) has observed in terms of indigenous organization and membership throughout El Salvador. Likewise, most informants in Izalco, with the exception of indigenous advocates and activists, tended to believe that indigenous people have disappeared (Tilley 2005). The national census placed the indigenous population in Izalco at 154 people, within a population of roughly 5.7 million (República de El Salvador, Censo De Población Y Vivienda 2007). On the other hand, representations of indigeneity are very common in El Salvador, and Izalco is no exception to this phenomenon (Tilley 2005). As described above, one of the key implications of studying indigeneity in Izalco is this apparent contradiction between beliefs about indigenous "disappearance" and the persistence of indigeneity in discourses, rituals and symbols.

Within this context, Izalco provides a concrete example of the difficulties that self-identified indigenous people face. The conceptual approach to the study of indigeneity presented in this research (focused on meanings, representations, discourses and practices) suggests that the difficulties that self-identified indigenous people and indigenous advocates face when invoking indigeneity are due to the propagation of hegemonic and misconceived understandings about indigeneity that are rooted in coloniality. To put it another way, this research demonstrates that negative and essentialist attitudes towards indigeneity are at the core of ethnopolitical questions

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in Izalco. Such views about indigeneity translate into a lack of recognition and legitimacy for self-identified indigenous people, their cosmovisions, and indigenous advocates.

9.1   Theoretical Contributions

The case of Izalco therefore presents an important theoretical paradox about the study of indigeneity in a context characterized by the absence of identifiable indigenous markers associated to a specific group but where there are prominent references to indigeneity in discourses, visual symbols, landscapes and traditions. Within this context, this research makes two important and related theoretical contributions. First, I have attempted to move the debate about indigenous politics in Latin America from a study of racialized people to the retracing of the concept of indigeneity as it surfaces across various contexts and sites of analysis. Secondly, I have demonstrated the merits of applying an interpretivist political ethnographic approach in studying ethnicity in the absence of ethnic markers as a way of exposing colonial relations. In doing this, I have also linked interpretivist political ethnography and decolonial scholarship.

On the first theoretical point, the literature on indigeneity certainly addresses instances in which indigenous groups have inserted themselves into state institutions, as Van Cott (2005) and Yashar (2005) demonstrated in relation to various South American countries. Indigenous organization in these countries has taken various forms, but the perception of clearly defined groups certainly aided in the legitimization of these groups. Of course, there are exceptions such as the case of Peru, where a large indigenous presence did not translate into effective organization (Van Cott 2005). However, even in the case of Peru, there was a certain degree of

legitimacy attributed to indigenous groups, to the extent that indigenous causes were absorbed into class struggles.

In other instances, authors have described how indigenous movements that emerged after the Cold War organized for political change within and outside of the state (Hale 1997; Hernandez Castillo 2006). In these cases, new social movements positioned indigenous people as political actors and in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela, they even facilitated constitutional changes that recognized the multi-ethnic and pluri-national composition of these states (Escobar 2010).

These studies are useful to contextualize indigenous politics in the region, something that has without a doubt affected the outcome of indigenous politics in El Salvador (Tilley 2002). However, experiences from Izalco demonstrate that in order to fully understand indigeneity, it is imperative to go beyond the study of formal party formation or popular mobilization. My research on Izalco reveals that indigeneity is a concept that operates at various discursive, symbolic and practical levels. In this regard, I presented four areas that served to elucidate how indigeneity functions as a concept in everyday contexts, as part of: cultural celebrations (during *Día de la Cruz*), stories and storytelling practices, gendered depictions of indigeneity, and prospects for participation in the global tourism industry. This method of analysis therefore complements those methods already used in El Salvador which would otherwise use ethnic identifiers as a starting point.

It is in this manner that this dissertation has attempted to move the debate about indigenous politics from the study of racialized people to the concept of indigeneity. As I have discussed, to

date indigeneity has been predominantly studied on the basis of a group's ethnic signifiers, including language, territory, dress and other customs. This method of engagement with the indigenous question may have had benefits elsewhere in Latin America, where indigenous people asserted their legitimacy by demonstrating their ethnic and cultural uniqueness and numerical significance. It may certainly have been instrumental in the ability to organize and carve out space for political participation and cultural expression, even in places where there has been deeply rooted mestizaje (Piorsky Aires 2012). However, as a starting point for the analysis of nascent or struggling indigenous movements, this approach may not be as beneficial. In part, this occurs because in cases like El Salvador, mestizaje (and therefore colonization) has left a profound imprint, which this dissertation suggests is still having an impact on social relations.

As such, in the case of El Salvador, there continues to be an outworking of mestizaje and coloniality at the level of practices, ideas, language and symbols evoking indigeneity. Rather than being the coercive acculturation of people as happened in the past, there are now hidden struggles that are occurring between indigenous and modernist tendencies. As reflected in El Salvador, mestizaje as a political project attempts to make *indigeneity* invisible – not simply indigenous *people*. In other words, indigenous expressions are still existent, but they have become more covert in the face of mestizo tendencies, as my research suggests. Consequently, groupist tendencies in research about indigeneity in El Salvador may in fact reinforce invisibilizing ideas of mestizaje, as well as exacerbate the debate about who is actually Indian and how many indigenous people there actually are in the country.

It should be remembered that to speak of indigenous people in El Salvador is problematic. The historical politics of identification make it so that to examine people inevitably leads towards

groupist tendencies. However, mestizaje has come to permeate social relations in a way that makes it quite difficult to determine who is indigenous and who is not. It should also be noted that the material basis through which people can claim an indigenous identity is precisely what different actors are contesting. For instance, while some actors would argue that there is no material claim due to the mixing of indigenous and Spanish races, others would argue that insigeneity is actually passed down through mestizaje. Moreover, it is also important to take into account that in Izalco, we are also dealing with a case of indigenous revitalization. What this means is that indigenous advocates are encouraging culturally mestizo Salvadorans to rediscover their indigeneity by instilling indigenous pride and rediscovering indigenous knowledge.

Therefore, as I have argued in this dissertation, the context in Izalco and El Salvador affects notions of indigeneity. As evidenced in Izalco, *indigeneity* operates in a way that surpasses ethnic signifiers; indigeneity is best illustrated through a spectrum of practices, discourses and visual representations. Each of my empirical chapters therefore expose and problematize otherwise hidden areas where ethnic relations and indigeneity surface.

Practically, to move the debate of indigeneity towards a more conceptual approach, I trace the concept as it surfaces in social practices, discourses and symbols. In doing so, it becomes possible to study indigeneity in the absence of ethnic signifiers, which is at the heart of the impasse in the study of ethnicity in El Salvador. In approaching indigeneity from this perspective, we therefore gain a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of the politics of ethnicity in Izalco, which can also be applied more broadly to El Salvador because of the shared context in which experiences of indigenous disappearance are taking place.

As a way of accessing practices, ideas, language and symbols that give meaning to indigeneity, I opted for an interpretivist political ethnographic approach. To be sure, interpretivists are also constructivists in the sense that they see world and knowledge as "*historically situated*" and "*socially-made*" (Wedeen 2009, 80). While interpretivism and political ethnography are widely used in scholarship, using such a framework to analyse the ethnopolitical context in El Salvador and Izalco is a novel contribution in the field.This highlights my second theoretical contribution. Specifically, my research attempts to show the utility of interpretivist political ethnographic approaches in the study of ethnopolitical issues. In this case, it has been useful in examining a context of contested identities where colonial relations persist and where the absence of indigeneity *is the perceived norm.*

It is important to note that in addition to providing methodological tools, interpretivist political ethnography also carries epistemological implications about social research, about how to access data and about what elements can inform scholarship (Yanow 2003). In this respect, I have attempted to show that studying ethnicity in El Salvador from an epistemological and methodological stance that differs from many of the studies carried out on the subject, can help to surmount some of the difficulties observed in the conceptualization of indigeneity.

Tilley (2005) certainly helped to advance the study of indigeneity by positioning the case of El Salvador as a metaconflict and problematizing the theoretical tools that have been used to study ethnicity in El Salvador in the past. Her contribution was also important insofar as it incited thinking about indigeneity as a process in a Foucauldian sense, focused on ideas and practices rather than people. In her approach, Tilley certainly demonstrates an interpretivist ethnographic sensibility in the way that she collects data and in how she analyzes it. Without being explicit about an interpretivist political ethnographic framework, Tilley has certainly

helped to advance our understanding of the premises surrounding the politics of ethnicity in the country. In addition, Tilley's research is less explicit about coloniality, which this research contends is an essential framework to understand hidden power relations stemming from racial and ethnic discourses, practices, institutions and spaces.

Other authors such as Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008), Lindo-Fuentes, Ching and Lara-Martinez (2007) have attempted to historicize ethnic relations in El Salvador and although not explicit about their interpretivist political ethnographic inclinations, their work does reveal interpretivist inclinations. While these authors effectively shed light on historical colonial relations, the issue that coloniality is an ongoing outworking of colonization is only tacitly explored. Unlike the aforementioned works, however, my contribution is about how present experiences of indigeneity reflect colonial tensions evidenced in historical racial and ethnic relations, while maintaining an ethnographic sensibility. In this way, my research contributes both to the expansion of interpretivist political ethnography in the context of El Salvador and to the understanding of the reach of coloniality.

As a method of analysis and data collection, the interpretivist political ethnographic approach proved instrumental in identifying sites where colonial relations persist, which adds to my second theoretical contribution. From a methodological stance, this particular method allowed me to follow iterations of indigeneity, and symbols and language evoking indigeneity as they occurred in the field. I was then able to expose accumulated meanings about how people refer to indigeneity, how they depict it and how they may perceive it. Indeed, this method of analysis certainly helped to bring to light concealed accumulated understandings about indigeneity. This framework has proven to be especially useful in navigating through the field when there are no

clear parameters about who or what is indigenous in the absence (and at the same time presence) of indigenous signifiers. This is meaningful in the study of coloniality because colonization, through its modernizing project, has resulted in the continuous effacement of indigenous identities in a multiplicity of contexts (Mignolo 2003). Decolonial scholars contend that colonial relations persist, as evidenced through power relations in politics, economics, knowledge and bodies. Therefore, while constructivism does provide some tools to understand indigeneity, this thesis contends that we cannot rely on constructivism alone. Applying a decolonial framework helps us to keep in focus the colonial imprint, which continues to have an effect on the sociopolitical landscape across Latin America.

By viewing the case of ethnicity in Izalco through a decolonial lens, this research examines the reach of colonial relations in present-day Izalco that contribute to meanings about indigeneity. Specifically, there are four areas that I look to for evidence of persisting colonial relations: indigenous practices, knowledge, visuality and economic relations. In terms of religious practices, there has been a historic tendency of displacing indigenous practices with modern ones that the state endorses. For example, there has been an ambiguous relationship between the state the Church and *cofradías*, whereby the state and Church endorse cofradias insofar as practices that diverge from doctrine only exist covertly (MacLeod 2000, 204). Despite apparent state control of *cofradías*, these institutions have also been a source of indigenous resistance, as they have allowed indigenous people to maintain indigenous identification and at times promote indigenous autonomy (MacLeod 2003; Bastian 2008).

Colonial relations are also present in the area of knowledge, whereby indigenous forms of knowledge have historically been discredited in favour of modern forms of knowledge embodied

in science and reason (Wilson 2004). The phenomenon has resulted a binary system whereby legitimate indigenous forms of knowing such as oral histories and cosmovisions grounded in the "unreasoned" realm have been conceived as inferior (Doxtater 2004). Scholars have described this process as the colonization of thought, which has also affected indigenous expressions through discourses and oral histories (Round 1997). Nevertheless, activists and scholars are now promoting the decolonization of knowledge through the re-discovery of forms of knowing and methodologies (Simpson and Smith 2014).

I also observed colonial relations at the level of visual representations, especially in areas of race and gender. Simply put, images are powerful analytical tools as they evoke accumulated meanings (Hall 2003). In this manner, colonial states have been known to consolidate their dominance over subjects and territory through the instrumentalization of images about the people and territory (Lyndon 2005). Looking at accumulated visual representations is useful insofar as they provide insight into both explicit and implicit meanings conveyed as well as the power relations that are (re)produced through consturcted portrayals of subaltern others.

In a similar vein, Wilson and Ypeij (2012) demonstrate that the tourism industry contributes to the emergence of power relations and constructions of the other. As Little (2008) remarks, indigenous people have in certain contexts re-imagined their identities to conform to the demands of tourists. Moreover, as people seek to experience the exotic, they are driven to areas where producers forge landscapes that appeal to foreign visitors. In terms of coloniality, this means that lansdcapes have been transformed in popular tourist destinations to resemble the exotic locales that people long for (Ávila-García and Luna 2012).In addition, indigenous lands have been expropriated to make way for neoliberal entrepreneurship, which also reflects to new

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forms of indigenous displacement (Ávila-García and Luna 2012). In this sense, these economic processes reflect a new form of colonization that is driven by the market economy.

Within this scope, decolonial approaches have helped to identify areas of persisting colonial influence that contribute to ideas about indigenous disappearance and displacement of indigenous languages, knowledge and practices. In combining the interpretivist political ethnographic (constructivist) and decolonial theoretical frameworks, my goal has been to expose areas where coloniality may have otherwise been concealed.

9.2   Main Findings

9.2.1   Summary of Key Arguments

I have hoped to demonstrate that indigeneity is not confined to people of a particular biological background. While scholars have tended to problematize essentialist and primordial understandings of indigeneity, starting with pre-identified set of "ethnic" characteristics may actually conceal colonial relations that persist in the construction of groups. Instead, as the empirical chapters of this dissertation show, expanding the site of analysis beyond essentialist understandings of ethnicity demonstrates the diverse ways in which people express and experience indigeneity, and the different ways that expressions of indigeneity can be challenged. Within this context, this research also demonstrates the pervasiveness of hegemonic colonial representations through which people give meaning to indigeneity. Specifically, across sites of analysis, expressions of indigeneity (that is: when people speak, in images, spaces, religious rituals and social interactions) consistently reproduce colonial power relations, in which the Indian is positioned as inferior in relation to mestizos.

In the first empirical chapter (chapter five), I therefore described how three informants

(a cofradía leader, a prominent indigenous activist and a retired secretary), whom informants

perceived as sharing a common ancestry, experienced indigeneity in relation to *Día de la Cruz*, a

holiday commemorated across the country which also has local significance in Izalco. I

challenged conceptions of indigeneity that uniquely position it through the lens of ancestry,

given that even people who may share a common ancestry have different experiences of

indigeneity. Each informant elicited different experiences of indigeneity which ranged from

conceiving indigeneity as being closely aligned to the religious institution of *cofradías* to a

colonial institution upheld by the state and Church that needs to be resisted. Yet, another

informant's experience of indigeneity reflected the present-day implications of historical

mestizaje, as reflected in her disassociation with her indigenous past and indigenous name.

In addition to documenting different experiences of indigeneity, this chapter also demonstrated

the extent to which coloniality surfaces in present-day Izalco. Specifically, the state and Church

publicly promote accepted versions of indigeneity and denounce those that diverge from state

and Church doctrine. This was especially evident in the strained relations between the

state/*cofradías* and indigenous activists who work for *Casa de la Cultura*, the latter of whom

have more or less successfully been able to promote the rediscovery of indigenous languages and

cosmovisions.

In chapter six, I then explored how indigeneity surfaces as a discourse through storytelling

practices. Specifically, there is a history of transmitting indigenous cosmovisions through

storytelling closely aligned to the magical or supernatural realm. Historically, there has been a

tendency of discrediting such indigenous knowledge by aligning it with myth and voiding it of

any meaning beyond national literature. This is a process that began with colonization as part of the Christianization mission, but it continued through the republican period as indigenist intellectuals and politicians appropriated indigenous knowledge and used it in favour of their nation-building efforts. In this manner, stories that formed part of indigenous people's cosmovisions were absorbed into the nationalist literature cannon. Coupled with people's revisionist tendencies in which they discredit indigenous ideas at the discursive level, this process has contributed to the trivialization of indigenous knowledge. In the chapter, I argued that all of these elements are equivalent to a discursive mestizaje or the colonization of indigenous knowledge.

In chapter seven, I also examined indigeneity as a regime of representation, in order to investigate what meanings the accumulated visual portrayals of "the Indian" convey. I then used meanings from such accumulated representations to draw conclusions about perceptions of indigeneity. Portrayals of "Indians" encountered in Izalco depicted indigeneity as a gendered performance. First, depictions tended to portray women as symbols of indigeneity. The women conveyed a sense of feminine beauty in passive scenarios, in contrast to men's depictions as being ready for battle as reflected in the sculptures of conquest Indians. Present-day Indians were also depicted as being on the verge of extinction, as reflected in prominent portrayals of elders (both male and female). The meanings conveyed by a majority of visual representations of Indian men also suggested that indigenous vitality is something of the past, as embodied in the statues of the conquest Indians. Overall, representations of indigeneity reflected essentialized images that reproduce colonial understandings of a primitive Indian who is also a national subject. Such representations propagate conceptions about the indigenous peoples' marginality in Salvadoran society.

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Finally, the analysis of indigeneity culminated with chapter eight, in which I offer an illustration of how indigenous revitalization is aligning with perceptions of the market economy and with the state's focus on tourism and economic growth. Specifically, there is an international appeal for authentic indigenous experiences, which people and tourism sector developers are capitalizing on. This demand for indigenous representations has enabled the indigenization of spaces to make them appear more indigenous and thus more profitable. At the same time, people in certain areas of Latin America have become more adept at embodying indigeneity and they willingly participate in profiting from the tourist gaze (Little 2008; Babb 2012).

In Izalco, there have been efforts at indigenizing space and at promoting the prospect for economic integration as reasons for learning Náhuat. Parks are now offering "indigenous" experiences and schools are justifying their Náhuat lessons by offering English lessons alongside. In both instances, this suggests that people perceive indigeneity as being valuable insofar as it can generate profit. At the same time, this chapter also draws attention to the inconsistency between indigeneity and the market economy, while shedding light on the risk for continued indigenous marginalization should indigeneity not align with the demands of the market economy. Given the competition in the global tourism industry over authentic representations, it may be that certain representations are devalued simply because they do not respond to the demands of the market. Such market competition may in turn impact the recognition of indigenous identities in Izalco and El Salvador and raise questions about the (in)authenticity of indigenous people.

To sum up, from the stance of this dissertation, indigeneity is not simply about the discrimination against people. Instead, indigenous expressions are often reflective of colonial relations that tend

to negate certain embodiments of indigeneity, downplay indigenous knowledge, promote racialized and stereotypical images of Indians, and claim to support indigenous people and initiatives insofar as it is productive.

9.2.2 Meaning-Making Practices and Coloniality in El Salvador

My hope is that this research will provide additional means to re-examine the indigenous questions in El Salvador with a focus on meaning-making practices. While struggles over the meaning of indigeneity generally occur as isolated events without much popular traction, what stands out in Izalco is the hegemonic representations that reproduce colonial relations. Struggles are nonetheless appearing, but they are limited to specific instances, such as when CCNIS activists, who happen to be associated to the transnational indigenous people's movement, informally challenge religious *cofradía* practices. Even within *cofradías* there are practices that do not necessarily align with state ideology and Church doctrine, which leads to struggles, but this ambivalence has been a characteristic of *cofradías* which, historically, state and Church have come to tolerate. As such, between the state and *cofradías*, there is an ongoing struggle about what consists an acceptable experience of indigeneity and what does not. Additionally, as individuals explore their indigeneity in a way that diverges from traditional *cofradía* rituals and align themselves with principles of decolonization and *buen vivir*, they are also struggling against hegemonic understandings of indigeneity. This is because ideas of *buen vivir* have not gained significant momentum in Izalco; most informants' understandings of indigeneity were aligned with *cofradías*.

Similarly, indigenous knowledge, which was historically transmitted orally, has been subject to struggles at times in the face of modernist discursive and literary tendencies. The colonization of knowledge that began with the civilizing of Indians during the conquest, also set in motion a process whereby indigenous knowledge and ideas were replaced. Since then, indigenous knowledge and ideas have historically been portrayed as inferior. Discourses that reflect remnants of indigenous knowledge also become subject to mestizaje and take precedence over indigenous discourses.

Struggles over meanings are also emerging when looking at the regime of representation of indigeneity. Visually, indigeneity tends to be represented in ways that favour femininity, passivity and fixity in time. In contrast, images associated with the indigenous movement tend to promote indigenous empowerment. Indeed, the images may be similar in that they continue to portray women in traditional clothing, and elders. However, such images are also coupled with narratives that seek to re-appropriate visual symbols that were traditionally symbols of oppression. In this manner, visual symbols that transgress these essentialist ethnic norms are generally challenging dominant representations that reinforce the permeable narrative of the mestizo nation.

The fact that instances of struggle over meanings are isolated reveals that experiences of indigeneity in Izalco are best characterized through a hegemonic lens. Specifically, colonial ideas about indigeneity are indeed well-sedimented. As such, this research has found that indigenous effacement is not only observable at the level of indigenous quantification or identification of a clearly demarcated group. Instead, effacement is occurring more covertly at the level of ideas and quantifiable effacement is only a ramification of this phenomenon. Put differently, while

indigenous people seem to have been seamlessly incorporated into the state, indigeneity has not. Indigeneity, as reflected in religious practices, discourses, language and visual symbols, continues to be viewed as inferior and opposite to the nation, which negatively affects efforts at indigenous cultural and linguistic revitalization.

In describing some of the emergent struggles about the meaning of indigeneity, the idea has been to shed light on the forces that are acting against expressions of indigeneity and that are therefore hindering indigenous legitimacy and growth of the indigenous movement. To be sure, my analysis did not only focus on indigenous people. That is in part because in order to understand the obstacles that the indigenous movement is facing, I found it useful to examine not simply the attitudes towards indigenous people, but also the attitudes towards indigeneity. Such attitudes towards indigeneity are reflective of certain struggles that self-identified indigenous people and indigenous advocates face and the hegemonic representations that stand against experiences of indigeneity.

9.3   Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

I wish to stress that one of the limitations of this research is that it does not capture more voices. As much as this thesis draws on evidence from the field and employs an ethnographic sensibility in relation to the data, more attention is required on investigating meaning-making practices and coloniality from various stances. This does not simply mean expanding the field of analysis in terms of sample size, although this might be helpful. It does mean, however, diversifying the institutions to be studied.

My research does achieve its objective of approaching the indigenous questions from a different epistemological stance than many of the works on the subject. This was accomplished by first, approaching the field as a participant observer looking for iterations of indigeneity, and second, by framing issues of ethnicity and race within the spectrum of coloniality. My objective in this research was to expose meaning-making practices and colonial relations in the context of Izalco to situate indigeneity. As such, while my contribution exposed other analytical possibilities for a deeper analysis of the indigenous question, it is only a starting point for further study to grasp more fully the impacts of coloniality in Izalco and elsewhere in El Salvador. As such, there is an important link to be made between decoloniality and the work that other self-identified indigenous actors are carrying out. This could be coupled with a more nuanced approach in regards to various levels of governance within different state institutions and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, the dynamics at the local level which involve indigenous actors and advocates is also an area that deserves more attention in future research.

Another limitation of this research is that I did not spend more time in El Salvador to compare my findings in various contexts across time. This may have impacted the types of celebrations and rituals examined, social institutions considered, and the changing political landscape affecting the politics of indigeneity. Again, I stress that this thesis is a starting point for future research. Above all, it was important for me to shift the debate on indigeneity in El Salvador beyond simplistically quantifying an indigenous population, and then parse the case using the analytical frameworks that have been developed based on other contexts of indigenous colonization. This decolonial approach is becoming more pertinent, as scholars further investigate the intricacies and reach of colonial relations. Given that the myth of mestizaje is so

deeply entrenched in El Salvador, further research would need to be conducted to complement these findings using other institutions for a comparative analysis.

There have also been a number of developments that have taken place in the area of indigenous politics in El Salvador since conducting the field research for this dissertation. For instance, the indigenous concept of *buen vivir* was an integral part of the Sánchez Cerén presidential campaign in 2014. Additionally, the inclusion of article 63 into the constitution to officially recognize indigenous peoples is an important occurrence that requires further analysis. This constitutional amendment occurred shortly after Salvador Sánchez Cerén was elected as president; it committed the state to adopt measures that will protect and promote the identity, culture, cosmovisions, values and spirituality of indigenous peoples. Amending the Constitution to recognize indigenous people and to protect their cultural identities has been at the heart of the indigenous movement. Such events, which are helping to define and shape the indigenous movement in El Salvador, must be further problematized.

As explored in this dissertation, there are negative attitudes towards indigeneity, indigenous ideas and political claims that continue to be present in Salvadoran society, despite the official recognition of indigenous people. While recent political changes have seemingly improved indigenous recognition, the ideas and arguments put forth in this dissertation continue to be most relevant given that it exposes negative attitudes towards indigeneity, not simply indigenous people. Such overt and covert attitudes prevent self-identified indigenous people from fully exploring their indigeneity, promoting their cosmovisions, and influencing the state and Salvadoran society as a whole.

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Appendix 1: Original Interview Questionnaire

Site visit questionnaire:

1) Why do you come here?

2) What does this monument represent?

3) Who do you think is responsible for setting up the monument here?

4) Why do you think this monument was built? Who or what does it commemorate?

Questions for indigenous representatives:

1) What kinds of activities do you do?

2) Who participates?

3) How often?

4) When do they take place?

5) What do you hope to achieve?

6) How are you approaching your goals?

Appendix 2: List of Informants

Informant details	Gender	Formal
"Andres", Cofradía mayordomo, age 30 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
"Carmela", resort worker, age 50 (approx.), Izalco	F	
"Fernanda", Casa de la cultura employee, age 40, (approx.), Izalco	F	
"Genaro", archivist, age 50 (approx.), Izalco	M	
"Juana", Retired nurse and landowner, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
"Lucas", cofradía mayordomo, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
"Melida", Izalco resident, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
"Nansin", indigenous activist, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
"Pablo", Izalco resident, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
"Ramona", nurse, age 20 (approx.), Izalco	F	
"Ricardo", resort worker, age 50 (approx.), Izalco	M	
Architecture student whose parents are from Izalco, age 20 (approx.), Sonsonate	M	
Artisan, age 48, Izalco	M	X
Ataco resident, age 60 (approx.), Ataco	M	X
Ataco resident, age 60 (approx.), Ataco	F	X
Baker, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Baker, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Business man, age 50 (approx.), Miami	M	
Business man, age 50 (approx.), San Diego	M	
CCNIS activist, age 50 (approx.), San Salvador	M	X
City councillor (ARENA), age 30 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
City councillor (FMLN), age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Cofradía photographer, age 20 (approx.), Izalco	M	
Craft vendor, age 30 (approx.), Juayúa	F	
Craft vendor, age 40 (approx.), Juayúa	F	
Engineer from Izalco living in Santa Tecla, age 50 (approx.), Santa Tecla	M	
Former electrician, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	M	
Food vendor, age 40 (approx.), Antiguo Cuzcatlán	F	
Food vendor, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	
Food vendor, age 40 (approx.), Planes de Renderos	F	
Food vendor, age 40 (approx.), San Salvador	F	
Former Náhuat student from Izalco, age 16, Sonsonate	F	
Former Náhuat student from Izalco, age 16, Sonsonate	M	
Former secretary, age 72, Izalco	F	X

Former teacher, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Government employee, age 50 (approx), Santa Tecla	F	
Homemaker from Armenia, age 60, Sonzacate	F	
Homemaker from Izalco, age 40 (approx.), Sonsonate	F	
Homemaker, age 20 (approx.), Santa Tecla	F	
Homemaker, age 20 (approx.), Sonsonate	F	
Independent researcher, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident and cofradía participant, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	F	
Izalco resident, age 20 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 30 (approx), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 50 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 50, Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco resident, age 70 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Izalco resident, age 75, Izalco	F	X
Izalco visitor, age 30 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Izalco visitor, age 30 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Man from Izalco area who lived through 1932, age 90, Santa Tecla	M	X

Market vendor, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	
Mayor (FMLN), Izalco	M	X
Mechanic, age 50 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Motorist, age 50 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Museum curator, age 30 (approx.), San Salvador	F	
Musician and artisan, age 60 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
National Civil Police official deployed in Izalco, age 50 (approx.), San Salvador	M	X
National Civil Police official from Izalco, age 50 (approx.), Sonzacate	M	
Nurse whose parents are from Izalco, age 20 (approx.), Sonsonate	F	
Nurse working in San Pedro Puxtla, mid-30s (approx.), Sonzacate	F	
Nurse, age 40 (approx.), Santa Tecla	F	
Nursing student from Izalco, age 20 (approx.), San Salvador	F	
Police officer, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	
Police officer, age 40 (approx.), Sonzacate	M	X
San Salvador resident, age 70 (approx.), San Salvador	M	
Security guard, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Shop owner, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Taxi driver, age 50 (approx.), San Salvador	M	
Taxi driver, age 50 (approx.), Santa Tecla	M	
Teacher and musician, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Teacher, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	M	X
Teacher, Centro Escolar Mario Calvo Marroquín, age 40 (approx.), Izalco	F	X
Tour guide, age 30 (approx.), Izalco	M	
Tour guide, age 60 (approx.), Chalchuapa	M	
University professor, Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas", age 40 (approx.), San Salvador	F	
University professor, Universidad de El Salvador, age 50, Santa Tecla	F	
University professor, Universidad de El Salvador, age 50, Santa Tecla	F	
University Professor, Universidad Pedagógica, age 40 (approx.), San Salvador	M	
University student, age 20 (approx.), Santa Tecla	M	

University student, age 20 (approx.), Santa Tecla	F	
Waiter, age 30 (approx.), Ataco	M	

"Formal" refers to an interaction that was planned because I had been referred by an informant or because I wanted to speak with a person about a specific topic. In such instances, I presented myself to informants as a student conducting academic research. Whether the interaction was formal or informal, interactions unfolded as informal discussions or conversations, in which I relied on situational cues to obtain information and to frame the discussion.

Appendix 3: Ethics Certificate

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche   Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Role
Cédric	Jourde	Social Sciences / Political Science	Supervisor
Juan Gualberto	Melara Pineda	Social Sciences / Political Science	Student Researcher

File Number: 01-12-03

Type of Project: PhD Thesis

Title: The Politics of Identity in El Salvador

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
02/28/2012	02/27/2013	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A