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Reframing Salvadoran Modernity: A Political and Cultural History of Power and the Dialectics

of the Hegemonic Bloc in El Salvador, ca. 1850-1944

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Political Science

by

Raúl Ernesto Moreno Campos

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Reframing Salvadoran Modernity: A Political and Cultural History of Power and the Dialectics

of the Hegemonic Bloc in El Salvador, ca. 1850-1944

by

Raul Ernesto Moreno Campos

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Raymond A. Rocco, Chair

This dissertation analyzes the development, relationship, and intersection of the

economic-political and cultural-intellectual axes that defined modernity in El Salvador roughly

from the period of 1850 to the end of the General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez's regime in

1944 and examines the manner in which this historical process shaped the contours of power in

Salvadoran society. Using an interdisciplinary methodology and drawing from a variety of

archival sources, my study frames the concept of modernity from the perspective of post-colonial

societies and the Global South and reframes prevailing analyses of Salvadoran economic and

political development by interrogating dominant narratives of underdevelopment, state violence,

and facile understandings of political consent. Hence, the central problematic that organizes this

study is explaining the process by which the constellation of leading classes within the axes of

economic-political and cultural-intellectual activity, who were manifestly in tension by pitting

the forces of modernization against the modernist movement, amalgamated into a coherent group

under the leadership of the military regime in the 1930s. Its central question asks: how were these classes able to surmount their differences and transform from a loose coalition, whose interests were at times at odds, into a coherent, ruling group that went on to dominate Salvadoran politics for six decades and defined an enduring nexus of power and domination in El Salvador?

Using a Gramscian theoretical framework, I advance three principal claims. First, I contend that despite the apparently incongruent aims espoused by the forces of economic and political modernization and the cultural movement of modernism, all of these processes were in fact premised upon a fundamental set of presuppositions that reified Western ideas of progress. Second, I posit that the manifest tension between these groups was in fact symptomatic of the dialectical unity between the state and the productive base or society, or what Gramsci termed the historic bloc, and that this dialectical relationship was a central component of the historical process of modernity along its economic and political vectors, and which were mediated by the cultural sphere. Third, the historical processes by which these forces and their representative classes amalgamated into a dominant group was facilitated by the consolidation of the Salvadoran military as a class in a position of leadership within the constellation of dominant classes. The process of hegemonic consolidation thus depended upon a careful balance of consent and coercion, and such a balance helps in part explain the extraordinary longevity and resilience of the Salvadoran military regime. My research reveals that civil organizations, such as the Salvadoran Athenaeum and the country's theosophical lodges, were important interstitial institutions that forged links between the state and the civil sector, and served to legitimize and generate consent for the military regime. This project represents a contribution to both Gramscian theory, the critique of modernity from the perspective of coloniality, and the analysis of power in El Salvador along its economic, political, cultural, and intellectual vectors.

The dissertation of Raul Ernesto Moreno Campos is approved.

Anthony R. Pagden

Lauren Derby

Raymond A. Rocco, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

For the people of El Salvador and Latin America, who've dared to resist empires.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation's represents the capstone to an educational journey that I began as a child growing up in San Salvador during the Salvadoran Civil War. Indeed, its conception attests both to the manner in which my particular biography intersected with my academic interests and training, and it is a reflection of my education both inside and outside the classroom. Its completion, however, would not have been possible without the love and support of family, friends, and mentors with whom I've had the pleasure to share life, love, and light over numerous years.

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VITA

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Introduction

Modernity and the Solitude of El Salvador

"Latin America neither wants, nor has any reason, to be a pawn without a will of its own; nor is it chimerical at all that its quest for independence and originality should become a Western aspiration…Why think that the social justice sought by progressive Europeans for their own countries cannot also be a goal for Latin America, with different methods for dissimilar conditions? No: the immeasurable violence and pain of our history are the result of age-old inequities and untold bitterness, and not a conspiracy plotted three thousand leagues from our home. But many European thinkers and leaders have thought so…as if it were impossible to find another destiny than to live at the mercy of the two great masters of the world. This is, my friends, the very scale of our solitude."

– Gabriel García Marquéz[1]

On November 8 1982, as the brutal civil war raging in El Salvador penned in blood some of the darkest chapters of the Cold War across its dark volcanic soil, the celebrated Colombian writer Gabriel García Marquéz delivered his Nobel acceptance lecture before the Swedish Academy of Letters. Keenly aware of the unfolding Central American civil wars, García Marquéz's speech framed the political, cultural, and intellectual history of the Americas since the first encounters with Europeans in the late 15th-century around the problematic of modernity.[2] The Colombian novelist posited modernity as Latin America's enduring condition of epistemological and ontological alienation based upon the psychical and physical ruptures and continuities wrought by European colonialism.[3] Premised on the region's otherness and subalternity, the colonial condition thus established the contours of an enduring nexus of power and domination in which the economic, political, and cultural/intellectual development of the region was indelibly shaped by the cultural and intellectual legacies, and the economic and

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[1] García Marquéz (1982).

[2] García Marquéz (1982). García Marquéz's lecture framed the development of Latin American literature around the first encounters with Europeans beginning with Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe in the early 16th century. In particular, García Marquéz emphasized the role that the Antonio Pigafetta's account of the first circumnavigation had upon European perceptions of the Americas and its inhabitants, as well as the framework that such account developed for the America's self-understanding against an European epistemological horizon.

[3] García Marquéz (1982).

political imperatives, of European powers and their heir apparent, the United States. García Marquéz's lecture thus echoed Franz Fanon's critique that modernity for former colonial and slave societies means an incessant and painful search for recognition and emancipation from a world that is politically, culturally, and intellectually defined by Western Europe's colonial enterprise.[4] This is indeed the crux and magnitude of modernity, which for the geographical distribution that the West condescends to call the Third World entails a condition of profound estrangement, and whose solitude is only disrupted by modernity's insidious and ever-present ghost: coloniality.[5]

Therefore, perhaps it is unsurprising that El Salvador, a small and mountainous republic situated in the Central American isthmus, figured so prominently in García Marquéz's speech. Indeed, the origins of civil conflict ripping El Salvador apart were part of a historical trajectory shaped by El Salvador's colonial legacies and its culmination in the condition termed modernity. The process of modernity in El Salvador during the first half of the 20th-century was defined by a merging of manifestly contradictory economic-political and cultural-intellectual forces that were grounded in the historical legacies of Spanish colonialism and European expansion.

In this study, I examine the historical context and process of Salvadoran modernity stemming roughly from the last half of the 19th-century to the consolidation of the military regime during the 1930s, while situating this process within its broader hemispheric context. My central problematic lies in excavating the relationships between the manifestly contradictory, and ostensibly separate, economic-political and cultural-intellectual forces that shaped modernity in

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[4] See for instance Franz Fanon's (1994) discussion of the trials and tribulations of national consciousness in post-colonial societies, especially his discussion of the manner in which the westernization of these societies by the national bourgeoisie constitutes a form of neocolonialism. Fanon [1963] 2004, especially pgs. 98-103.
[5] See for instance Octavio Paz's (1998) commentary on Mexican history as a persistent search for identity and estrangement marked by the duplicitous legacies of the colonial project. Paz, Octavio. [1950] 1998, especially pg. 5. See also Paz 1(990). See Also, Dussel (1993, 1994, 2000, 2001), Grosfoguel (2004, 2006), Mignolo (200, 2007).

El Salvador, and the process by which the classes that represented such forces managed to surmount their differences and amalgamate into a coherent, though by no means homogenous, group that dominated Salvadoran society and politics well into the present period.

Based on this framing, what I am referring to as Salvadoran modernity, is a historical and political condition that mediates, and is in turn mediated, by three principal interdependent and reciprocally related processes that spanned roughly from the middle of the 19th-century through the middle of the 20th-century in El Salvador. The first of these processes is grounded on the building of El Salvador's productive forces and all their attendant material infrastructure, technology, and financial institutions. Commonly referred to as economic modernization,[6] these developments were driven by El Salvador's agro-industrialization and the shift to a mono-crop export economy centered on the cultivation and processing of coffee during the late 19th and first half of the 20th-centuries. At its most fundamental level, the process of economic modernization in El Salvador sought to emulate the Western model of capitalist development while couching it in a discourse that was at once European and preeminently national. The building of railroads, sophisticated ports and highways, the country's first telegraphs, streetcars, and a whole scientific and technological armature geared towards the optimal cultivation, processing, and export of coffee were the principal determinants of Salvadoran modernity along its economic vector.[7]

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[6] The debate concerning modernization theory and democratization, a centerpiece of research and discussion within the field of comparative politics, is premised on the conception of economic modernization as the process of the development of the productive forces of society and its attendant infrastructure and technology, and it is perhaps the subject that has generated the most voluminous research within this field since the publication of Lipset's elaboration of a linkage between economic development and democracy (Lipset 1959, especially page 75). For a discussion of the major contours of this debate and its central concepts see Przeworski and Limongi (1997) and Przeworski et al (2000). See also Wucherpfennig and Deutsch (2009) for a reassessment of the modernization and democratization thesis. However, it is important to note that these studies are not framed from the perspective of the critical tradition and generally fail to conduct a serious discussion of the problematic of coloniality and imperialism in analyses of the development of the productive forces in post-colonial societies and its relationship to political development.

[7] See Lindo-Fuentes (1991) and Lauria-Santiago (1999).

A second process that defined Salvadoran modernity is centered on the evolution of the

Salvadoran state and its legal, bureaucratic, and coercive apparatus in relation to the economic

sphere. El Salvador's creation of a modern nation-state flirted with liberal ideologies of abstract

political equality and the racial homogenization of its population while maintaining a

hierarchical system of racial and class differentiation.[8] This process, exemplified by the

expansion of the electoral process as coffee production soared in the late 19th-century, and the

official whitening of El Salvador's population through the erasure of the country's indigenous

people from its memory and official state records between 1930-1950, demonstrates the

contradictions inherent in notions of political belonging and citizenship that have defined the

modern state.[9] More than any other event, the consolidation of a brutal military regime in El

Salvador during 1930s that simultaneously championed elite interests while maintaining a façade

of populism, exemplified the contradiction of Salvadoran modernity along its political vector. At

the same time, the shaping of a political process that was only democratic by the letter of the law,

but that in actuality functioned through patron-client networks that benefited the elite and were

maintained through a balance of coercion and patronage, encapsulates the paradoxes of

Salvadorian political modernization and its "liberal democracy."

The third of these processes was a cultural and intellectual movement that responded to

the economic and political vectors of modernity by seemingly rejecting the heavy ratiocination

of liberal and capitalist notions of progress, while embracing the form of European artistic,

cultural, and intellectual trends as the blueprint for a modern and civilized Salvadoran cultural

identity. Thus, El Salvador's turn to modernity in the cultural sphere from the late 1870s through

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[8] See Tilley (2005). See especially chapters 1, 8, and 9 for Tilley's analysis of the prevalence of racial homogenization via mestizo nationalism in El Salvador and the consequent re-ordering of the central logic of the colonial system of racial classification and differentiation through the erasure of racial categories in national censuses after 1930.
[9] See Tilley (2005), especially chapter 8. See also *Censo de la Población*, 1930.

the 1930s heralded a new age of artistic and intellectual production underlined by the exaltation and emulation of dominant currents in European arts, science, and letters, such as modernist primitivism, while simultaneously casting these currents and their cultural products in a preeminently national indigenist aesthetic. Alongside this cultural transformation, El Salvador witnessed an architectural renaissance that entailed the building of a cultured city in San Salvador whose public parks were fine *jardins a la française* modeled after the symmetrical and orderly French formal gardens of the 17th and 18th-centuries, and whose eclectic neo-classical architecture graced not only these public parks, but also the National Palace and sumptuous private homes alike with Corinthian and Ionic colonnades and marble floors.[10] In step with this neo-classical motif, the country's first Olympic stadium was inaugurated to much fanfare in 1932 thus ushering in a new age of physical culture and competitive sport, and paving the way for the building of even more monumental coliseums three decades later. In the meantime, the interchange between the forces of economic-political modernization and cultural modernism with its dominant currents in the United States and Western Europe ironically coexisted in El Salvador with a denunciation of U.S. imperialism and a strong nationalism that was sweeping Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century.

Late 19th century and early 20th-century El Salvador, therefore, exemplified the contradictions of a historical process in which modernity, and the economic, political, intellectual, and cultural projects that defined it were self-identified with the western mode of capitalist development and progress, and in which the marks of cultural and intellectual sophistication and refinement were coded white. At the same time, the political expediencies of nation building and the protection of state sovereignty demanded a responsiveness to the historical particularities of El Salvador and often necessitated an indigenous veneer to the state's

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[10] See Monedero (2011), Rivas Merino (2010), and Gutierrez Poisat (2013).

political projects, and the economic and cultural projects that intersected it. A contradictory, yet interdependent set of relationships linking the economic, political, and intellectual-cultural spheres in El Salvador thus characterized Salvadoran modernity, even if it is precisely the interdependency, coloniality, and hemispheric scope of these processes that has eluded the attention of scholars.

Indeed, during early twentieth-century El Salvador, the country's bourgeoisie, who hailed from the old Spanish aristocracy, as well as North American and Western European immigrants, championed the forces of liberal agro-industrial modernization that was impelled by the agro-export industry. These forces thus represented one axis of Salvadoran modernity. A second axis was thus ordered around the intellectual and cultural trends that defined the modernist movement, including occultist and esoteric spirituality, that was led by a group of petty bourgeois intellectuals and artists who were manifestly opposed to the heavy ratiocination of liberal thought and its central tenets of order and progress. These processes and their representative classes intersected with the modernization of the Salvadoran state during the consolidation of military regime that promulgated an ideology of national identity based on *indigenismo and mestizaje*, while it conducted the wholesale massacre of indigenous peasants and all of those who opposed the modernizing forces of the coffee industry. These political-economic and cultural-intellectual processes shaping Salvadoran modernity gradually developed parallel to each other in the first decades of the twentieth century, but by the 1930s the linkages and relationships between them became accentuated.

Indeed, key members of the classes that represented these forces formed a conglomerate under the regime of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, El Salvador's theosophist despot responsible for the barbarous massacre of 30,000 indigenous peasants in 1932. Martínez ruled El

Salvador from 1932-1944 and instituted what would become the western hemisphere's longest continuous military regime. Ultimately, under the leadership of the Martínez military regime the contradictory constellation of military, economic, and intellectual/cultural forces that defined modernity in El Salvador created an enduring nexus of power and domination defined by the intersecting cultural-intellectual and political-economic spheres of Salvadoran society As such, this study's central question lies in explaining *how did the leading oligarchic, military, and intellectual classes in El Salvador, who often espoused contradictory interests, transform from a loose constellation of key players in the agro-modernization and the modernist movement in the country during the first decades of the 20th century, into a unified group under Martínez's military regime in the 1930s—a group that went on to dominate Salvadoran politics and society for nearly sixty years, and which shaped the contours of power in contemporary El Salvador?*

Given this central question, I advance three principal claims. First, I contend that despite the apparently incongruent aims espoused by the forces of economic and political modernization and the cultural movement of modernism during early twentieth century El Salvador, all of these processes were in fact premised upon a fundamental set of presuppositions that reified Western ideas of progress, innovation, and a temporal break with the past. All of these ideas were therefore heavily identified with a Western model of capitalist development, the whitening and homogenization of the nation-state, and the emulation of European artistic, literary, and intellectual currents. As Octavio Paz has remarked, these features make modernity an exclusively Western concept, and it is precisely these characteristics that defined modernity in El Salvador.[11] Thus modernity for El Salvador represented the culmination of the colonial project along intersecting political-economic and cultural-intellectual axes.

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[11] See Paz (1990) on the question of modernity as a Western concept. See also Dussel (1993, 1994, 2000, 2001.) For a discussion of the prevalence of western European cultural and intellectual currents in Latin America since the late 18th century see Henighan (1999).

Second, these process were not indeed separate, but were in fact part of a dialectical unity and movement between the social relations that defined the cultural, intellectual, and political activity in the civil sphere of Salvadoran society, with the relations of production that underscored El Salvador's system of agro-industrial capitalism. Indeed, as the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the social relations and cultural and intellectual movements of the civil and political sphere were reciprocally related to the relations of production in early twentieth century El Salvador, yet were not reducible to their economic determinants. The mode of production created the material conditions that led to the evolution of the Salvadoran state and its political system, in turn creating the conditions necessary for the growth of ideas and modes of cultural expression that oftentimes stood in contradiction to the economic and political system that gestated them, while never fully breaking with the principal tenets of Western progress that underlined them.

Modernism was one such cultural movement that mediated the dialectical relationship between the economic and political-civil spheres of society. In many ways, modernism as a movement manifested a particular intellectual and cultural mode of dealing with the process of modernization and the experience of modernity. As Hilde Heynen points out in her critique of architecture and modernity, "consciously and unconsciously, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, [modernism] reflects the effects of capitalist development" (Heynen 1999, 4). Indeed, as a body of artistic, cultural, and intellectual work that grapples with the experience of modernity, modernism is in constant interaction with modernization as the economic process of capitalist expansion upon which modernity is premised. As such, the relationship is often one that produces contradictory outcomes and these paradoxes are often congealed in the range of cultural products that defined the modernist movement. Indeed, as Robin Derby points out, many

of the movements that defined modernism "sought to simultaneously embrace and control, adopt and deflect, symbols of modernity at a time when global commerce" was transforming not only the Caribbean, but also the globe (Derby 2009, 232). The economic, cultural, and political process in El Salvador was exemplary of this dynamic—one in which cultural modernism along its aesthetic, spiritual, and intellectual lines was constantly adopting and deflecting and directly and indirectly grappling with the political and economic process of modernization.

Third, the historical processes by which these forces and their representative classes amalgamated into a dominant group that controlled Salvadoran society and politics well into the present period was facilitated by the consolidation of the Salvadoran military as a class in a position of leadership within the dominant constellation of oligarchic, petty-bourgeois, and military classes. A careful analysis of the Salvadoran military's ascendancy to a position of leadership within this dominant group reveals that it secured its position not only through the prevailing patron-client networks of coercion and patronage that have defined Salvadoran politics for most of its history, but also by taking advantage of liberal reformism of the late 1920s, and forging close ties to leading figures in the economic, cultural, and intellectual spheres of Salvadoran society through the cultivation of networks in key civil organizations that served as the interstitial sites of power between the state and civil society. In particular, General Martínez and his retinue's decades-long cultivation of relationships within the leading intellectual and cultural organizations of Salvadoran society during the first decades of the twentieth-century and their active patronage of arts and letters allowed them to garner consent across a widespread range of sectors in Salvadoran society and skillfully balance persuasion with force. In particular, the close association of Martínez and high ranking military officers with El Salvador's Athenaeum and the Salvadoran chapter of the International Theosophical Society,

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allowed the military to forge ties with key figures in Salvadoran arts, letters, finance, industry, and politics.[12]

This process also facilitated the development of social capital and influence by petty bourgeois and military groups that became heavily involved with esotericism in the western hemisphere during the first half of the twentieth century. Theosophy in particular provided both a new mode of secular spirituality that served as a counterpoint to liberal ratiocination and positivism, thus becoming popular amongst the petty bourgeois and military classes. Theosophy also created a novel avenue for the manipulation of knowledge for those who had been historically excluded from bourgeois education, in particular indigenous Salvadorans and dark mestizos, like General Martínez himself, who filled the ranks of the Salvadoran military. In addition, the spread of theosophy created an unintended consequence: the formation of a new mode of sociability that brought together key players across the hemisphere through the building of far reaching networks that cut across key sectors of society via theosophical lodges. As such, the spread of theosophy was one of the key social and cultural processes in the development of modernity in El Salvador and in the western hemisphere because theosophical organizations served as interstitial sites of power between the state and civil society.

In step with this hemispheric process, a wide range of esoteric currents, and theosophy in particular, became a prominent feature of the Martínez regime. General Martínez regularly couched national addresses that presented a vision of the Salvadoran state, and its relationship to Salvadoran society and culture, steeped in esoteric ideas, including notions of cosmic cycles, reincarnation, and the evolution of mankind.[13] I explain the prevalence of this esotericism in the politics of the regime in part by casting the emergence of theosophy as a mode of secular

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[12] For a discussion of the ties between Martinez and the Salvadoran Athenaeum see Lara Martinez (2011).
[13] See Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, "Pláticas Doctrinarias," 1941-1944.

spirituality that provided a counterpoint to the heavy ratiocination of liberal positivism and the Catholic Church's collusion with bourgeois and oligarchic classes. As such, theosophy as a secular form of spirituality was prevalent amongst the petty bourgeois classes that dominated artistic, literary, and intellectual modernist circles during the first decades of the twentieth-century and through the 1940s.

But theosophy also served as a way for the petty bourgeois and military classes who remained at the margins of power and the state for much of Salvadoran history to lay claim to special forms of knowledge and their interpretation. This was particularly important for the constituents of the modern Salvadoran military who were often indigenous and mestizo Salvadorans, and whose dark skin bore the stigma of colonialism and was coded as low class. Similarly to Lynn Sharpe's analysis of the social function performed by French spiritism and the work of Allan Kardec for marginal groups during mid-19th-century Paris, for the members of the Salvadoran military that been historically excluded from the elite access to bourgeois education, theosophy proved to be an alternative to usual modes of acquiring knowledge and power.[14]

Given the specific set of concerns that frame my study, I have found it useful to develop a Gramscian theoretical framework to explicate the problematic of modernity in El Salvador along its economic, political, and intellectual vectors. Using this framework, I cast Salvadoran modernity as a historical process of hegemonic consolidation that amalgamated the petty bourgeois, oligarchic, and military classes who defined the contours of power in Salvadoran society, while linking them within the broader hemispheric and global framework of western modernity. First, Gramsci's concept of the historic bloc is a central pivot for my study, for it allows me to discern the dynamic interplay and dialectical relationship between the economic mode of production and the state. Such a conceptual framing of the economic and political

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[14] See Sharpe (2006, introduction).

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vectors that defined modernization and modernity in El Salvador is attentive to the dynamic and inductive qualities of the historical process, as opposed to ahistorical positivistic narratives of progress or potentially positivistic and economistic Marxist analyses.[15] As the succeeding chapters demonstrate, much of Salvadoran political and economic development functioned as a unity of often contradictory forces in which the state and society's economic base were in a reciprocal relationship; one in which economic crises led to potential transformations in the political system, while political crises often led to economic reforms. However, it is important to remark that the concept of reform does not signify radical, or even significant, political transformation. Rather, the term "reform" captures the political maneuvering required to reach equilibrium within the prevailing relations of domination once these forces have been confronted with a veritable challenge from below.

Secondly, Gramsci's concept of hegemony allows me to explain the process by which the Salvadoran military rose to a position of leadership within the constellation of ruling classes and was able to establish a durable set of relationships of domination in Salvadoran society through a careful balance of consent and coercion. Using the concept of hegemony I am able to discern how the Salvadoran military class reached this position of leadership during the 1930s and how it managed to maintain it by garnering consent through a variety of coercive and conciliatory strategies and policies. As explored in subsequent chapters, the Salvadoran military was able to generate consent for military rule through a set of populist policies and the creation of far-reaching networks with the leading petty bourgeois intelligentsia and petty bourgeois professional class. This process led to the consolidation of the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc through the legitimizing and agglutinating functions played by the military elite across sectors of

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[15] Part of Gramsci's critique of Marx centered on the deterministic and positivistic elements of Marxist thought, which Gramsci termed "economism." Gramsci's critique influenced my project's framing.

Salvadoran society. Indeed, the Salvadoran military garnered support not only from the ruling classes but also from classes outside traditional bourgeois ruling circles and the masses. Indeed, while the military by-and-large protected the configuration of power that benefitted its allied classes, particularly the oligarchy and petty bourgeoisie, it nevertheless made concessions to the masses and the classes excluded from the centers of power, often earning the enmity of the most recalcitrant sectors of the ruling elite. In fact, part of the explanation behind Martínez's falls lies precisely in his zealous pursuit of populist reforms. Nevertheless, Martínez was able to cement the military's position of leadership within the Salvadoran ruling classes by developing a wide base of support across the professional petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia. Such a strategy for building consent in part explains the Salvadoran military regime's extraordinary resilience and longevity. Such a conceptual framing is thus sensitive to the nuance of Salvadoran political history, whose narration has suffered from an ideological reductionism that often caricatures the function of the Salvadoran military as either the praetorian guard of the oligarchy or patriotic republicans committed to the defense of El Salvador's constitutional ideals.

Lastly, Gramsci's emphasis upon the role of intellectuals in establishing a hegemonic bloc through the creation and dissemination of ideas capable of legitimizing the prevailing relations of domination in a given society is extremely helpful in explaining the historical process behind the consolidation of the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc. Intellectuals, who became first recognizable as a social class in El Salvador as in much of Latin America during the 1920s, had a profound role in articulating the principal intellectual and cultural currents that buttressed the major political projects that defined Salvadoran modernity during the 1940s and 1950s, particularly mestizo nationalism and its indigenist aesthetic. Intellectuals were thus a key class in forging of these political processes, and were influential in defining the prevailing ideas, values,

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and cultural products of Salvadoran society, and often occupying a conflictive, though by no means exclusive, relationship with the ruling elite. For these reasons, my Gramscian approach is well suited for its study since it examines the role of intellectuals in the forging of consent as a key component of the hegemonic process. In turn, I've designated this process as one of the cardinal components of the hegemonic moment in Salvadoran modernity.

As such, the organization of chapters corresponds to this argumentative elaboration. Chapter One develops a Gramscian theoretical framework to explicate the intersecting relationship between the central economic-political and cultural-intellectual axes that defined Salvadoran modernity. First, I take as a point of departure the dominant scholarly paradigms of Salvadoran political and economic development and elaborate a critique of the segmented and often ahistorical discussion of Salvadoran politics and economy carried out in the majority of the scholarly literature within the Political Science discipline. I pay particular attention to these studies' framing around the development of the Salvadoran state's coercive apparatus and the prevailing themes of state-sponsored violence that are often de-contextualized and abscised from a critical discussion of their proper economic and cultural nexus. In addition, I complicate facile notions of domination by pointing to the fact that these analyses often devote scant scholarly attention to the development of consent for the military regime and the nuanced relationship between the Salvadoran military state and other sectors of Salvadoran society. Secondly, this chapter develops an alternative mode of thinking about the politically contested concept of modernity and recasts it according to the critical tradition within postcolonial and de-colonial thought, making a case for modernity as the historical process by which the West consolidated global hegemony. In this discussion I emphasize the way in which modernity from the perspective of postcolonial societies like El Salvador signifies a process of economic, political,

and cultural development framed around Western notions of progress that reified ideas of Western superiority that were central to the colonial logic of domination, even if such ideas were articulated in competing systems of thought such as Liberalism and Marxism. Lastly, I critically engage Gramsci's thought in order to develop a theoretical framework structured around Gramsci's elaboration of historic bloc and hegemony for thinking about the process of Salvadoran modernity. I emphasize the contribution that Gramscian thought makes to a nuanced analysis of power and the extraordinary resilience of systems of domination in the industrialized West, and make a case of how such an analysis is applicable to the case of El Salvador. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of Gramsci's emphasis upon the role of intellectuals in consolidating a hegemonic system, and discuss the gaps in his explication of the historical process by which such systems get legitimized. I propose that my approach to the analysis of interstitial organizations between civil society and the state in El Salvador during the period of the consolidation of the military state provides a way of understanding how this process takes place.

Using this theoretical framework, Chapter Two examines the historical development of the Salvadoran historic bloc by analyzing the dialectical unity and dynamic interplay between the forces of economic and political modernization in El Salvador. Roughly taking the mid 19th-century as its starting point, I excavate the colonial history and political economy of coffee planting in El Salvador and the relationship that the mono-crop export system of production had to political development until the onset of the Martínez era in the 1930s. First I examine how this system of production favored the development of patron-client networks and their careful balancing of coercion and patronage at both the local and national level that defined the central features of Salvadoran politics. Secondly, I pay particular attention to the manner in which

economic crises led to crises in the liberal state, especially during the post-WWI period. I thus explain the emergence of political reforms, particularly around the electoral system and the nature of patron-client networks, and populist politics during the 1920s in terms of the economic crises that led to the radicalization of labor and the challenges posed to the prevailing systems of social and labor relations from below. This analysis allows me to explain how the Salvadoran military was able to exploit the populist politics of the period in order to build a broad base of support amongst the urban classes, including laborers and petty bourgeois professional class. I conclude the chapter by explaining the importance of analyzing the dialectical unity between the economic base of society and its political superstructure in order to understand the consolidation of military-oligarchic-petty bourgeois hegemony in El Salvador.

Given the importance of cultural and intellectual work and the level of civil society in the consolidation of a hegemonic bloc, Chapter Three analyzes the cultural mediation of the political and economic crises of modernity by the works of intellectuals and artists roughly spanning from the period of the late 1870s to the 1940s. In this chapter I explain the rise of modernism as a cultural movement that mediated the crises of liberal positivism and the liberal nation state during the late 19th-century and early 20th-century not only in El Salvador, but in much of the western hemisphere. By surveying the range of modernist expression in Salvadoran letters, philosophy, art, and architecture, I argue that despite the fact that modernism was a cultural and intellectual project that sought to grapple with fundamental questions pertaining to national and regional identity, the nation-state, as well as the nature of the abstract liberal subject, its fundamental intellectual moorings ultimately reified the westernized process of modernization. In the case of El Salvador, the range of cultural products that can be termed modernist drew heavily from the dominant cultural and intellectual trends in Western Europe and France in

particular. Such an intellectual and cultural gravitation to France, which I trace to the ruptures with the Spanish colonial system, did not depart from the fundamental beliefs in the western civilizational project and the fundamental ideas of progress that underscored it. But most importantly, I argue that the development of intellectuals connected to this movement was an important component in the consolidation of the hegemonic bloc in El Salvador because the organizations forged by them created interstitial sites that forged networks between the state and civil society. This chapter thus sketches the manner in which the military and high-ranking military officers like General Martínez forged ties with these organizations and patronized leading artists and intellectuals in El Salvador during the 1930s. In part, this analysis reveals the manner in which the emergence of organic intellectuals that straddled both the state and the civil spheres allowed for the legitimation of the military as a leader within the constellation of ruling classes in El Salvador at the time. This chapter thus concludes in surveying these organizations, especially the Salvadoran Athenaeum, and the cultural work and ideas disseminated by them.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the function that theosophy played in building symbolic capital amongst the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and the military classes. Most importantly, I advance the argument that theosophical ideas, and the lodges through which they were disseminated, served an important agglutinating function within the hegemonic bloc through the creation of national and regional networks amongst key players in the state and civil society. In conducting this analysis, the chapter traces the evolution of theosophical thought in the United States, its dissemination through the Americas via North American and western European vectors, and the historical development of theosophical lodges in El Salvador and their connection to the state since roughly the 1910s. By tracing the biographies of the founding members of El Salvador's principal theosophical lodge and their connections to the military and the Martínez regime, I am

able to sketch the process by which leading members in politics, science, letters, the arts, and industry forged close connections, generated consent for the military regime, and consolidated rule around the military state.

Lastly, I conclude by summarizing the empirical and theoretical dimensions of this project and discuss the manner in which the nexus of power and the hegemonic bloc consolidated during the Martínez era left an indelible mark on the contours of power in contemporary El Salvador. A principal component of this discussion points to the need to recast prevailing understandings of the durability of the military regime, domination, and power in El Salvador by further excavating the linkages between the state and civil society through an analysis of interstitial civil organizations and institutions, like esoteric and intellectual societies, and the role played by them in the building of networks that brought together a wide array of key players, particularly the petty-bourgeois and professional sectors of Salvadoran society, into the fold of the military regime. In addition, a yet unwritten history and analysis of these processes is the racialized nature of the competing idioms that structured Salvadoran modernity, and the manner in which esoteric and intellectual trends during the formative period of the Salvadoran state partook in the whitening trends of modernity across the Americas. An important and understudied aspect of Salvadoran modernity are the magical and spiritual dimensions of political and social life in El Salvador during the early 20th century, and the manner in which magi was linked to politics. This discussion also underscores the importance of examining the historical development of the Salvadoran state, economy, and society within its broader hemispheric context. Thus, this study reframes the development and consolidation of Salvadoran military-oligarchic-petty bourgeois hegemony not as a phenomenon circumscribed within the

boundaries of the Salvadoran nation-state, but as a historical process that was part and parcel of

global modernity.

The Paradoxes of Modernity: Modernization, Modernism, and the Dialectical Process of

the Historic Bloc

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare upon the brain of the living."

-Karl Marx, 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte[16]

"You *norteamericanos* will not control our country, and neither will the Soviets. If we must fight for victory, we will. It is only a matter of time'…I marveled at [this guerilla commander's] certainty. He didn't seem to understand that historical forces far stronger than the FMLN/FDR…may shape the future of El Salvador."

-Charles Clements, M.D. Guazapa Front, San Salvador, 1984[17]

"Politics in fact is at any given time the reflection of the tendencies of development in the structure, but it is not necessarily the case that these tendencies must be realized."

-Antonio Gramsci[18]

Introduction

The weight of the dead, indeed the deliberate conjuring of the dead, in the world-

historical process was a persistent motif in Marx's thought. In much of his historical treatises of

the late 1840s and early 1850s, Marx recasts the heroic and triumphant *zeitgeist* of Hegelian

philosophy into the restless specters of demised Western civilizations who are called upon to

glorify bourgeois struggles, magnify the grandiosity of the revolutionary transformation of

society which they led, and relocate the revolutionary spirit of an epoch that heralded a new

economic organization of society and its attendant political system. In the context of the

revolutionary transformations of the late 18th-century that ushered in European modernity, the

dead were summoned to walk among the living to aid them in a cultural and political task that

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[16] See Tucker 1978, pg. 595.
[17] Clements 1984, pg. 123.
[18] See Forgacs 200, pg. 191.

situated their struggle over power within the plane of great historic tragedy that the ghosts of the West's crumbled civilizations came to represent. The spectral culture of the West thus constitutes not only the material determinants inherited from the past that shape the present economic organization of society, but also the cultural mystification of the social relations of bourgeois society.

In characteristic conceit, the ghosts of the dead weigh heavily in the Americas; a side of the world almost completely ignored by Marx's otherwise keen historical introspection and incisive critique. The ghosts of a violent colonial past have stood next to the cradle of Latin American modernity and have haunted it since its birth. But these specters were also accompanied by ancient spirits from across the sea, which boarded ample galleons and troubled the febrile men who commanded them and who ventured across treacherous seas seeking fortune and power. Below decks in an abyss of pain, ghosts of deep sorrow roamed the morbid galleys of slave schooners. The weight of the colonial enterprise and its incalculable violence shaped and continue to mold modernity in the Americas.

El Salvador's historical trajectory and the political and historical condition it calls modernity is haunted by both the ghosts inherited from its colonial founders and the ones inherited from the violence of progress on American soil. Indeed, the dynamic interplay between the economic and political vectors of Salvadoran modernity, and their mediation by the cultural sphere, were steeped in the historical legacies of the European colonial enterprise, and incessantly tied the very same vectors that defined modernity for the West. El Salvador's quest for political and economic emancipation, and for identity was from its inception shaped and troubled by the political, economic, and cultural inheritance of the ruptures and continuities of European colonialism. At the same time, the cultural presence of Europe in El Salvador,

particularly its manifest spectral culture and its influence upon the conception of the historical process, mystifies the coloniality inherent in the process of modernity in El Salvador.

This chapter seeks to elaborate a theoretical framework for a critical discussion of the condition that I am referring to as Salvadoran modernity. The inquiry takes as its point of departure the existing scholarly framings of the Salvadoran political and economic process. Next, it engages the critical tradition to define an alternative mode of theorizing the process of modernity in El Salvador. Not much work across various social science disciplines exists on the nexus between the rise of Salvadoran modernity, modernism—with its attendant cultural, intellectual, and economic projects—and Salvadoran modernization, particularly the rise of the agro-industry, the development of the state, and the consolidation of the military regime during the 1930s-1950s. Conceptually, the work done on this crucial and formative period of Salvadoran history and politics can be broadly categorized in three dominant themes and frames: 1) the development of the Salvadoran oligarchic-military state, 2) the development of the Salvadoran productive forces, 3) and political crisis and revolution, the latter discussion being primarily centered on the massacre of 1932. The latter theme has in particular been a dominant topic of academic research and can admit of further subdivisions and categorizations. Theoretically, these projects' particular framings revolve around the problematics of political violence, in particular state violence, the political economy of mono agro-industrialism and development, and revolution and political development. Despite the richness of studies centered on these three broad theoretical axes, however, the question of how to interpret Salvadoran modernity, and its intersecting economic, political, and cultural vectors against the broader process of Latin American modernity remains understudied and unanswered. Most importantly, the central question of power and coloniality as the pivotal nodes of this historical configuration

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is rarely, if ever, discussed in the existing scholarship. This chapter offers a critique of the central organizing problematics of studies done comparative politics on El Salvador, and analyses of Salvadoran history more generally. In doing so, I lay out the concepts of modernity and modernism, and continue onto a theoretical elaboration of a Gramscian framework that offers a critical lens to interpret the process of modernization in El Salvador during this period to the modernist movement, and casts the intersection of both historical processes as the defining movements of the concluding phase of late modernity in the Americas.

Literature Review

The post-Salvadoran civil war period witnessed a renewed interest in the study of Salvadoran politics and history in the U.S. academy, as scholars carried out projects that sought to deepen the understanding of Salvadoran political history. Within this body of literature, and in particular within the Political Science discipline, William Stanley's *The Protection Racket State* is perhaps the most thorough and historically inflected exposition centered on the problematic of state violence in El Salvador. Yet, despite its copious documentary evidence and its concern with the origins and development of state violence in the country, Stanley's exposition devotes only ten pages to the Martínez regime and an additional ten pages to the period of military institutional reform immediately following Martínez's fall. Most importantly, since Stanley's conceptual approach to the Martínez regime is theoretically framed around the problematic of state-sponsored violence, his work emphasizes the dictator's innovations solely in terms of his legacy on the development of the military state's coercive forces and its influence over the productive forces, in particular "the elaboration of the internal security apparatus, state

intervention in the economy, expanded administrative role for the armed forces, and personalism" (Stanley 1996, 58). Stanley's study does not offer much beyond the narrow discussion of the Salvadoran state's coercive apparatuses, and not much is known about its non-coercive forces in the civil sphere.

Also within the field of comparative politics, Jeffrey Paige's *Coffee and Power* offers a comparative examination of the genealogy of the coffee elite in Central America and their influence on state crises and economic and institutional development in the region.[19] His study is therefore situated within the body of work that focuses on the second broad thematic of approaches to the formative period of 1930-1950 in Central America; namely, the development of the productive forces and its relation to the oligarchic-military alliance. Indeed, Paige's study is a notable achievement on the political and economic history of the Central American oligarchic class. Extensively researched, Paige offers a methodologically diverse approach to the study of this problematic. Bridging archival and ethnographic work with statistical data, this work of comparative politics sheds light into the Central American crisis of the 1980s by tracing their origins to the coffee elite's hold on power in the isthmus through their monopoly of planting, processing, and exportation of coffee. However, similarly to Stanley's analysis, Paige's examination of the Central American coffee elite and their influence on institutional development, which spans from the late 19th-century through the onset of the Central American civil wars does not undertake an analysis of the development of Latin American modernity from a critical lens, despite the fact that this problematic its part and parcel of Paige's broader concern, namely the historical development of the oligarchic-military alliance and the nexus between this process and the evolution of the region's productive forces. Indeed, though thorough in its discussion of the Central American coffee elite and their influence over the political process,

[19] Paige (1998). See also Paige (1994).

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Paige's work does not trace the linkages that the military state developed with other sectors of Central American society and the manner in which this process was an important component in the development of oligarchic-military dominance in the isthmus. Most importantly, despite Paige's concern over the problematic of power, the study does not offer a theoretically sophisticated discussion of this concept and its various vectors, such as intellectual and cultural power. This is perhaps one of the most vexing lacunae in the study, since it seeks to explain why revolution seemed like the only viable option in certain Central American countries while not in others, most notably Costa Rica.

Lastly, Thomas Anderson's *Matanza* is perhaps the most notable and extensive study concerned with the third broad theme that dominates scholarship on the formative period of the Salvadoran oligarchic-military bloc during the Martínez era; namely, the problematic of revolution and in particular the origins and development of the revolutionary crisis of 1932 and the rise of the Salvadoran Left. Anderson's study is foundational to the historiography of El Salvador's massacre of 1932 and the origins of the oligarchic-military Salvadoran state. Yet Anderson's work is principally concerned with an analysis of the events leading to the 1932 peasant revolt in western El Salvador and its immediate aftermath.[20] His study does offer a fourteen-page epilogue on El Salvador dealing with the immediate years after the massacre.[21] Though concise, that exposition is important for its emphasis on some of the populist measures undertaken by the Martínez regime in the massacre's aftermath. Some of these policies, couched in Martínez's own brand of authoritarian populism, such as the *programa de mejoramiento social*, would not be researched or discussed in any major academic work until nearly four

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[20] Anderson ([1971] 1992).
[21] Anderson ([1971] 1992).

decades later, namely in the studies published by Erick Ching.[22] It is important to note, however, that Anderson was perhaps the first North American academic to pay notice to Martínez's populist policies and also to address some of the era's important cultural and intellectual movements, in particular *vitalism* and the work of Alberto Masferrer, and the influence it had on the development of populism during the 1920s.[23] Aside from these important insights, the central problematic of Anderson's study and its particular framing limit the inquiry to an analysis of the political history that defined the historical conjuncture of 1932, and which heralded the dawn of Salvadoran modernity under the Martínez regime. Anderson does not, however, extend the discussion of the massacre's political history to the cultural and intellectual nexus that was crucial in defining that conjuncture and the subsequent alignment of classes and forces.

Yet, perhaps all of this work is commonly linked by the fact that these inquiries that pay some attention to 1930s-1950s El Salvador read largely as background studies on the origins, onset, and development of the Salvadoran Civil War of the 1980s.[24] None of these studies seek to understand the rise and durability of military rule in El Salvador in the 1930s as part of a broader hemispheric process that depended largely on the consolidation and building of alliances of a class conglomerate composed of a military-oligarchic-petty bourgeois intelligentsia and their supportive sectors amongst the working and peasant classes that would maintain and reproduce the existing set of social relations and patterns of domination in El Salvador. Moreover, these works do not undertake a critical examination of this hemispheric process of oligarchic-military-petty bourgeois consolidation that was a central component of the development of western hemispheric modernity. As such, cogent analytical axes integral in the explication of this process, such as the colonial ruptures and continuities that shaped the racial valences of this

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[22] See Ching (2014).
[23] See Anderson ([1971] 1992).
[24] See also Grenier (1998), and Wood (2000).

hegemonic configuration and its cultural and intellectual articulations, are largely ignored in favor of structural approaches to what I characterize as a dominant class-struggle and "Third-World" state-formation paradigm.

Indeed, most of the scholarship on El Salvador published in the U.S. academy dates either to the period of 1971-1989 or from 1995-2005, and it is principally concerned with class struggle and politics in El Salvador. During the former period, scholarship focused on the causes, onset, and development of the revolutionary process and the "political crisis" in El Salvador. Work during the latter period dealt primarily with the conflict's resolution and aspects of regime transition, transitional democracy, or democracy in general. A new body of scholarship dealing with human rights in the post-war period, women's rights, transnationalism, the sociology of gangs and gang culture in the country, and the impact of neo-liberal policies pursued during the ARENA administrations following the war, in particular new regional free-trade agreements, free trade zones, remittances, and dollarization is just beginning to emerge.

Aside from these concerns that form the core of the central problematics and organizational axes of the new body of work that comprises Salvadoran scholarship, an examination of the events of 1932 and the Martínez era has garnered attention primarily from historians over the last few years. Most notably amongst these works are Aldo Lauria-Santiago's studies on Salvadoran peasant communities and a separate collaborative project with Jeffrey Gould on an oral history of 1932. In addition, Hector Lindo Fuente's study on the formative period of the Salvadoran economy in the late 19th-century, and Erick Ching's new study on the origins of authoritarianism and military rule in El Salvador have shed new light on the economic and political processes that shaped Salvadoran modernity roughly from the end of the 19th century to the end of the Martínez regime. Despite these works' important contributions to

Salvadoran historiography, however, the central question of power and the historical process of hegemonic consolidation in the isthmus and the western hemisphere remains largely untouched.

This survey of North American scholarship on the politics and history of El Salvador during the establishment of military rule in the 1930s reveals three important intellectual trends. The first of these is what I would like to call the fetishism of political violence. That is, a conceptual approach that overemphasizes the coercive forces and apparatuses of the state. Irrespective of the field of study, whether history or political science, major works on El Salvador have tended to emphasize state, military, and oligarchic elites and their coercive mechanisms as the driving forces behind what some scholars have termed El Salvador's "closed political system," its "authoritarian" regime, and its "protection racket state."

A closer look at the framings of these texts reveals a subtle sensationalist impetus that thrives in the description of political violence in El Salvador, in particular tales of death-squad killings, torture, massacres, and political assassinations. In addition, these studies often couch El Salvador's oligarchic elite as "recalcitrant" and cast the military elite as mercenaries and gangsters for hire. While there is no doubt that El Salvador, and in particular its political history from the period of 1979-1991, has become synonymous with political violence precisely because of the widespread repression and persecution of the poor and those who worked amongst them during these years, and while the incalculable loss of human life and human suffering during this period are not to be minimized, what this fetishism of violence does is to eclipse the military and oligarchic elite's more sophisticated methods for generating consent across a wide spectrum of social and political actors.

It is simply not the case that El Salvador's military-oligarchic regime stayed in power for so long simply through force, coercion, and intimidation. Even perhaps more provocatively, I

would venture to claim that these violent mechanisms were generally well-calibrated modalities of rule, and that the prevalence and intensity of the maintenance of power through force has to be first historically contextualized and, secondly, regionally examined in El Salvador. More precisely, the process of generating consent for military rule, and of forging ties between social and economic elites and the military, is a long cultural, intellectual and political project that finds its inception at the turn of the twentieth century, and intensifies in its power and scope during the era of Martínez. It is this process of generating and garnering consent through a wide range of social actors that needs to be explained as an important vector of power in not only in the sustainment of the Salvadoran military regime, but also in understanding the intersection between the historical forces that defined modernity in the Americas. As such, this was a process that was not only "national" or a phenomenon of a particular society. Rather, it was a process that was regional, hemispheric, and global in scope.

A second conceptual trend in this scholarship, and one intimately related to the first, is the primacy of the class-struggle paradigm and what I term the "Third-World" state-formation paradigm. In turn, this paradigm has led to a methodological overreliance on an analysis of El Salvador's political economy and its political history. Whether this framing has opted for structural or agency-oriented approaches, it has led to a dominant academic discussion of El Salvador's politics through the interplay between the processes of economic development, particularly the evolution of the agro-industry, class struggle and popular uprising, and the state. More vexing, perhaps, is the fact that the studies that adhere to or adopt some variation of these paradigms often produce analyses that are largely parochial, failing to see the liberal political-economic process in El Salvador from its inception in the late 19th-century as an integral part of a hemispheric and global process.

The critique advanced here does not propose that the case of El Salvador is simply a generalizable interpretative lens that can be applied to other contexts. Rather, what I propose is that the historical development of El Salvador's politics and productive forces need to be contextualized as an important linkage in a broader set of economic and political processes in Latin America that brought to fruition the economic, social, and philosophical imperatives of the liberal project started in the late 19th-century. Moreover, though it is incontestable that the contours of power in El Salvador have been shaped by its economic history, and also that the political process is intelligible only in relation to the material interests of the ruling classes and the challenges posed to these interests from below, these economic and political vectors of power need to be examined within the body of cultural and intellectual work that served not only to buttress them, but also to generate them.

Indeed, in order to historicize and trace the development of power in El Salvador, it is imperative to examine the unification of the oligarchic-military classes as an ongoing dialectical process between the group of oligarchic-military-petty bourgeoisie and their organic intellectuals, and the grouping of Leftist proletarians-peasants-students and their intelligentsia. Moreover, it is important to remember that both the right-wing conglomerate and the leftist-conglomerate contained sympathizers and supporters from other classes, as for example the peasant supporters of the military regime through much of the 20th-century, and the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois intellectuals and supporters of the peasantry and popular liberation forces.

This, of course, points to the third trend in the scholarship El Salvador during the Martínez regime and the decades leading to the onset of the civil conflict; namely, the virtual omission of any serious engagement with the country's cultural and intellectual history and its

proper placement within the regional and hemispheric political and economic developments of the late 19th to the mid-20th century. Only until recently scholarship emphasizing Salvadoran social history has begun to displace the predominance of political history in analyses of this formative period in El Salvador. For instance, although not exclusively a work of social history, the oral history on 1932 compiled by Lauria-Santiago and Gould has begun to recast the importance of El Salvador's social history to its political and economic development. Only Salvadoran and Central American scholars, writing almost exclusively in Spanish, have begun to shed new light on the intellectual and cultural history of the Martínez era. Ranging from philosophy to literary criticism to intellectual history, these studies have examined the cultural and intellectual trends that defined Salvadoran bourgeois intellectual activity during the first half of the twentieth century, as well as the national and broader regional networks through which the dominant ideas of the time were disseminated. But perhaps more importantly, this new body of scholarship has begun to sketch the outlines of a previously unwritten, and virtually unknown, cultural and intellectual history of El Salvador.

Yet, despite the fact that these studies represent a much needed intervention in the prevailing academic dialogue on early to mid 20th-century Salvadoran and Central American history and politics, they often do not elaborate the manner in which key intellectual and cultural movements of the period, and the members which comprise them, were linked to the state and the sphere of economic activity. More precisely, little is know of the manner in which modernism, as a cultural and intellectual movement, was linked to political and economic modernization not only in El Salvador, but also in the broader Latin American region and the hemisphere. In addition, these works rarely offer a rigorous theoretical elaboration of these dominant intellectual and cultural movements of early to mid-20th-century Latin America and

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their role in the development of western modernity in the 20th-century. Perhaps more problematical, some of these studies tend to replicate the romanticized notion of intellectuals and their circles during this time as progressives and radicals. The work of Rafael Lara Martínez is a notable exception to this latter trend, but his work does not rigorously and theoretically develop a framework for understanding the intellectual history sketched-out in his most innovative work on the Martínez era.[25]

Given the prevailing intellectual trends and their lacunae as outlined above, this project is concerned with making an intervention in the framing of the problematic represented by the intersection of the political-economic and cultural intellectual valences of modernity in El Salvador during the consolidation the Salvadoran military regime. This study offers a theoretical elaboration that aims to address this problematic. In addition, I seek to articulate a cogent explanation as a response to this study's central question, and provide a theoretically rigorous elaboration of a conceptual framework that allows us to understand this process. First, my study's theoretical discussion is not principally concerned or framed around either one of dominant themes/problematics and the intellectual trends discussed in the preceding exposition. Rather, I approach the question of the durability of military rule in El Salvador as an essential phase in the consolidation of national and regional oligarchic-military-petty bourgeois hegemony, and the cusp of the second phase of modernity for Latin America.

This particular framing is partly due to the fact that the process of hegemonic unification under the Martínez regime heralded a new phase in the development of the productive forces, the sophistication of the state and its linkages to the oligarchic classes, and the growth of an intellectual class whose ideas were posited as the national patrimony, and who were linked to and nurtured by the oligarchic-military regime. This phase is thus what I call Salvadoran liberal-

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[25] See Lara Matínez (2011).

fascist modernization, and it corresponds to the last few decades of the period that scholars have termed "second modernity."

First, amidst the milieu of economic and intellectual innovation, this period witnessed the emergence of ideas about national identity that were anchored by notions of racial homogeneity, which ultimately entrenched the whitening tendencies and philosophy of the colonial project rather than celebrate diversity. This nationalist project is the political vector of the modernization of the productive forces, and its part and parcel of the modernizing tendencies of this period.

Second, from the vector of political economy, El Salvador during the era of Martínez became one of the most advanced agro-industrial economies in the world. This meant an expansion and modernization of El Salvador's national infrastructure, most notably highways, bridges, and ports that linked the country to the regional and global economic system. In turn, such an expansion of El Salvador's productive capacity also meant an expansion in the systems of finance, exchange, and distribution, including the consolidation of regional banks into a single entity: El Salvador's National Reserve Bank.

Third, complementing this explosive growth of the productive forces, El Salvador also developed and nurtured the first national figures of arts and letters, who constituted the incipient petty bourgeois and intellectual class of the 1920s and which came into its apex during the Martínez regime. This process included the construction and dedication of national monuments, a "*ciudad universitaria,*" museums, and other cultural centers that showcased the regime's patronage of what came to be known as "high culture."

For all these reasons, I consider my framing of the study of the period roughly spanning from the middle of the 19th-century to the end of the Martínez era as one deeply concerned with the problematic of modernity in the Americas as a process that consolidated the historical groups

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and forces first articulated from the colonial project into a durable hegemonic bloc. For these reasons, I find my framing of the problematic of the linkage between the process of political and economic modernization since the late 19th-century in El Salvador to the cultural and intellectual currents of the modernist movement at the turn of the 20th-century as a process of hegemonic consolidation fitting because this process was integral to the configuration of the modern/colonial world system.

This approach shifts the emphasis away from discussions centered on the Salvadoran state's coercive apparatuses and recasts the emphasis upon the linkages that the Salvadoran state built with key sectors in civil society to garner a widespread consent for military rule. In turn, this analysis shows the way in which the Salvadoran military state was able to create a durable hegemony by not merely co-opting key civil sectors, but by organically incorporating key military figures and officers within leading sectors of Salvadoran society, primarily in literary, artistic, and intellectual circles. As such, this project is principally concerned with complicating facile notions of political consent and the establishment of oligarchic-military rule in El Salvador by examining the cultural and intellectual vectors of this configuration. This discussion therefore gives rise to a central question: what central concepts and theoretical framework helps explain this process? As the preceding section intimates, modernity and hegemony are the conceptual nodes for this elaboration. The next section is devoted to an exploration of this question and the elaboration of such a framework.

Theoretical Framework: Modernity, Modernism, the Historic Bloc, and the Dialectical Process of History

My particular framing of the problematic of modernity in El Salvador as a political and historical condition which is mediated, and in turn mediates, the interrelated processes of political and economic modernization with the intellectual and cultural currents that defined the modernist movement in the Americas, offers a rereading of El Salvador and Salvadorans as part of what Walter Mignolo has characterized as the "modern/colonial world system." Indeed, my approach to the question of Salvadoran modernity and the role played by the inception and durability of the Salvadoran oligarchic-military regime and the process of hegemonic consolidation in El Salvador depends upon two central presuppositions. The first is that this project conceives of El Salvador not merely as a "society," but as a "historical system," defined as "an integrated network of economic, political, and cultural processes."[26] As such, the second presupposition is that my study conceives of the problematic of modernity not only as a national phenomenon, but as part and parcel of a regional and hemispheric process. As the case of El Salvador reveals, the sum of these processes and their forces serves to buttress a particular set of relations of power and domination whose contours were defined by the colonial project. I pay particular attention not only to the economic and political relations of this configuration, but also to the cultural and intellectual forces at play in this process. As such, I conceive of the political, economic, and cultural process in El Salvador roughly from the middle of the 19th-century until the end of the Martínez era as an organic unity and a dialectical interplay of forces that defined modernity in the Americas. Modernity is thus conceived primarily as a *condition* shaped by the ruptures and continuities of European colonialism and U.S. imperialism. Moreover, I conceive of the historical forces at play in the creation of this condition as two broad sets: the first as political-economic and the second as cultural-intellectual. The first of these is defined by a *process* of agro-industrialization and state-formation that facilitated the expansion of capital

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[26] See Grosfoguel (2006)

accumulation and the productive forces, and which consequently led to greater urbanization, bureaucratization, and the overall development of the sophistication of civil and political institutions and their mechanisms for generating a balance of consent and coercion. This category I term modernization. The second category captures the activity of cultural and intellectual life, and thus refers to *both a process and product* that is preeminently cultural in nature. The intersection of these two sets processes, which was impelled no less by General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez and the Salvadoran state, is the historical process by which the Salvadoran historic bloc is configured and ultimately consolidated as a hegemonic bloc through the work of organic intellectuals involved in this process.

Given this particular framing, I have found it useful to begin this project's theoretical elaboration by explicating the concept of modernity as the cardinal, historical process by which the West has placed itself in a position of economic, political, and cultural leadership in the world. In turn, I explicate the role that El Salvador, and the country's oligarchic and military elite—many of whom were European immigrants or their descendants—played in this process. Modernity as discussed here is reframed as the historical process and condition, understood as a state of being, of colonial and imperial domination. This discussion recasts the importance of Salvadoran cultural and intellectual history to the formation of this hegemonic configuration. This exposition serves to elaborate a conception of the establishment of Salvadoran oligarchic-military hegemony in the 1930s as part of the process of modernization in the Americas, and as such, a culmination of the ends of the colonial project in its modern articulation in the first half of the 20th-century. Most importantly, this analysis links the groups in positions of economic, political, cultural, and intellectual leadership in El Salvador to the dominant classes in the Americas.

The concept of hegemony, as first elaborated by Antonio Gramsci, serves as a conceptual pivot that allows me to explain the nature of this conglomerate of dominant groups and their historical role in the political and economic development of the Americas. Lastly, because I pay particular attention to the role played by cultural and intellectual groups within this bloc during the modernist period, I use Gramsci's discussion of intellectuals and hegemony to conceptualize the politics in which these cultural and intellectual movements were embedded as well as their broader historical place within the hemispheric and global movements of modernization. The following sections are thus devoted to a systematic explication of these conceptual nodes and their linkages that constitute the conceptual elements of my theoretical framework.

Modernity

Modernity is a contested concept, both in terms of the substantive meaning adduced to the term and its political signification. Modernity is therefore by no means unequivocal, and much of the interpretative limits of any discussion concerning its meaning are demarcated by the particular framing within which the concept is deployed. As Edward Said advances in his critique of Orientalism, ideas and concepts cannot be properly understood without their proper relations of force and their nexus of power also being understood; that is, one needs to take into account the nexus of political and material interests and the relations of domination in which concepts and ideas arise, for the epistemological field for such ideas is structured by their political valences.[27]

My discussion of modernity thus emphasizes the global relations of domination in which the concept arose along with the political implications for colonial subjects in the Americas. In particular, I use the narrative of the process of modernity in El Salvador to re-situate and re-

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[27] See Said ([1978] 1994), especially the introduction.

locate the place of El Salvador within the development of the world system that arose after 1492, and in which Europe represented its center and the rest of the world its periphery. It is thus important to remark that my discussion of modernity is framed around the normative critique of the European colonial enterprise from the perspective of the Global South, and in particular from the perspective of emancipatory political projects in El Salvador during the 20th century for which modernity represented a condition of colonial and imperial domination.[28] I articulate a vision of modernity as the culmination of the colonial project in the Americas, and one in which the modes of Western economic, political, and cultural development came to signify the pinnacle of economic, political, and cultural achievement.

Debate over modernity's meaning and its political implications are appreciable since the early modern period. This is particularly appreciable in the so-called Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns in France during the late 17th-century. The superiority of the Ancients over the Moderns was a heated topic of debate. In general, arguments for the superiority of the moderns hinged upon technological and scientific innovation, highlighting accomplishments of the early modern period such as the printing press that set the moderns apart.[29] It is precisely this sense of technological superiority that is an important interpretative node for my critique of modernity from the standpoint of coloniality.

From this perspective, the concept of modernity designates both a historical period and a broad set of economic, political, cultural, and intellectual processes that have defined the relations of power and domination of our world as it is today. Prevailing definitions of modernity, however, hinge upon the values and philosophy of the Enlightenment, particularly

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[28] See Dussel (1993, 1994, 2000, 2001), Grosfoguel (2004, 2006), Mignolo (2000, 2007).
[29] David A. Boruchoff, "The Three Greatest Inventions of Modern Times: An Idea and Its Public." In: *Entangled Knowledge: Scientific Discourses and Cultural Difference.* Ed. Klaus Hock and Gesa Mackenthun. Münster and New York: Waxmann, 2012, pp. 133-63.

those that stressed a break from "traditional" ideas and cultural values in favor for those of liberalism and scientific rationalism, and in which the abstract "individual" was its principal historical agent. Indeed, in its common-sense usage, modernity is a noun that describes the quality or condition of being modern and that celebrates the Enlightenment ideals of individualism, secularism, scientific inquiry, technological and scientific innovation, and free enterprise. In turn, the English word "modern," based upon the Middle French *modern and* derived from the Latin meaning "just now," refers to the cotemporary moment. From its earliest usage in romance languages around the 14th-century, the word connoted a temporal awareness of the present, and the trends that come to define it, as novel, path-breaking, and useful in innovative ways. This contemporary meaning was already in use in the English language by the late 16th-century. As the word's etymology makes evident, the definition of the "modern" connotes an idea and awareness of spatial and temporal superiority, which in time would occupy a more pronounced part in its conceptual and everyday use. The notion of superiority connoted by the term modern, in which the temporal rupture between past and present was articulated, came to define the meaning of the term in the English and Spanish languages by the 19th-century and during the turn of the 20th-century. [30]

Most importantly, however, this historical conjuncture in which the term became a central pivot of European thought was economically and politically defined by the expansion of the slave trade and European imperialism, the dawn of the capitalist mode of production, the growth of the productive forces in Europe, and lastly the development of political systems of thought and an attendant body of cultural and intellectual work that articulated the central values that buttressed colonial and capitalist expansion while positing them as universal. Indeed,

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[30] I draw most of this discussion from Hunt (2008), especially pages 47-48.

historians trace the development of a sense of temporal rupture in European political thought and cultural history around the late 17th-century.

It is thus contestable that a central and recurrent conceptual underpinning of this body of work, which came to be called "modern," was the idea of development through stages over time. This idea is most notably contained in the work of Enlightenment philosophers, particularly Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Kant. The beginning of the 19th-century, and the rise of European nationalism in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquest of Europe, did not disavow the recurrent idea of "developmental" or "evolutionary" history but couched it in terms of national culture and self-expression, as evident in Hegelian philosophy.

Indeed, despite Hegelian philosophy's deification of Knowledge, the restoration of the primacy of metaphysics in philosophical elaboration, and a break from Kantian ratiocination, Hegel's notion of historical development does not depart from the central evolutionary thesis that defined Enlightenment thought, and the conceptual ordering of his philosophical system does not stray too far from the basic categories that ordered Kantian logic. This is most notable in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and his lectures on the *Philosophy of History* and the stages of historical development towards the perfection of human society that according to Hegel culminate in the German state. Hegel's break with Kant, however, was defined by the development of a philosophical system that stressed the interconnection of the categories, or pure concepts that belong to the understanding, into an organic whole that was premised on the interconnectedness of all reality. As such, it did not conceive of discrete analytical categories as developed by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, but rather of immanent expressions of a divine mind and essence in the process of development towards its actualization. The implications for Hegel's conception of history were an emphasis upon epochal development that would culminate in the actualization

of the divine mind in the perfect state: Germany. Ultimately the dominant paradigm of Enlightenment rationalism would exert an overriding influence on the development of the prevailing concept of the modern and modernity, as Hegelian philosophy and its Kantian critique did not enjoy the level of popularity in other parts of Europe as it had in Germany.

Indeed, the branches of rational philosophy that later led to the development of the analytic tradition and positivism remained the dominant philosophical currents of the 19th-century in France and England. Ultimately, all of these traditions shared a belief in the epochal development of mankind, and the "evolution" of the products of human economic, cultural, and intellectual activity. The principal philosophical traditions and thinkers that stemmed from the Enlightenment through the 19th-century shared a sense of temporal awareness that posited their contemporary moment, or the "modern," as superior to what came before it. But these systems of thought, and their attendant cultural and intellectual movements, reflected the particular relations of power that defined their historical nexus. Most importantly, even when articulating competing interests, as in the case of bourgeois vs. critical political economy, these systems of thought were linked by a central presupposition: the supremacy of Europe defined and cemented by the historical processes that had seemingly placed it in a position of spatial and temporal superiority in this grand narrative of world development; that is, the narrative of modernity.

For example, this process is visible in the evolution of positivism and its influence in the development of many disciplines spanning the 18th and 19th-centuries. Marxism and Liberalism are perhaps the most notable philosophical movements that defined the conceptual contours of many 19th-century disciplines and also shaped the ideological development of two diametrically opposed political projects. As we shall see in the next chapters, the opposition and tension between these two theoretical traditions, and the historical processes and material interests upon

which such tensions are based, illustrates the central logic of the historical process in El Salvador. However, both Marxism and Liberalism drew from and shared elements of the positivist philosophical tradition that had come to define the 18th and 19th-centuries. For instance, despite the keenness of Marx's historical awareness and the centrality of historicity to Marxist thought, which indicates a clear departure from pure rationalism or later analytic philosophy, his view of historical development was nevertheless positivistic in its insistence upon the scientific infallibility of its conceptual armature, Marx's laws of historical development, and the sequential stages in the development of the productive forces.

In fact, Marx's critique of Hegel can be read as a proto-Kantian critique Romantic philosophy. Despite the more inductive quality of Marx's early thought, Marx's intellectual project demonstrates a clear positivist tendency that is only accentuated with the rigorous development of its conceptual armature by the 1860s and the publication of *Das Kapital*. Some of these elements of Marxism, especially the determinacy of the economic base's influence upon the civil-political-religious superstructure that often fails to emphasize historical contingencies on the attainability of class consciousness and viability of revolutionary activity that the dialectical relationship between the to spheres creates, are tendencies in Marxist thought that Gramsci has referred to as economism. Marx's positivism is thus evident in his "scientific" explication of historical development and his economistic reduction of cultural and intellectual life and its influence upon the economic and political spheres of human activity.

On the other side of this political spectrum, 19th century Liberalism, a political and philosophical tradition influenced by the work of John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and the foundations of English political economy dating to the Scottish Enlightenment, most notably Adam Smith and his *Wealth of Nations,* developed a positivist tendency not initially associated

with foundational thinkers such as Locke. In particular, positivism became associated with liberalism through Auguste Comte's influence on Mill and the development of utilitarianism, as evinced by Mill's treatise on *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. Most notably, Mill suggests that Adam Smith shared in the philosophical tradition of positivism, as he credits Smith with being the only political economist to have expounded an economic theory based on "positive" science. This tradition of course had a profound effect in the development of Liberalism as the dominant system of political thought of the late 19th century. In particular, utilitarian ideas about efficiency and profit maximization, the free market and free enterprise, and the subsequent development of human societies were often couched in positivist terms, as the scientific scope of human knowledge was presumed to be applicable to human social and political development. For example, Leopoldo Zea's study on the development of a new national order in Mexico after the collapse of the colonial regime, the triumph of liberal reform, and the overcoming of colonial conservatism, demonstrates that liberalism in Latin America was heavily influenced by Auguste Comte and that much of the readings and interpretations of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, as well as other liberal thinkers, were conducted through a positivist lens.[31]

This discussion of the development of cardinal philosophical movements of the 18th and 19th centuries that were temporally self-aware, and which conceived of their present moment as innovative and superior to its preceding epochs, reveals also a spatial awareness that was both a central presupposition and point of departure for theoretical elaboration that posited Europe, and Europeans, as superior to the rest of the world. In particular, this temporal awareness casted the European Enlightenment and its conception of European modernity as the definitive stage in the progress and evolution of mankind. Most importantly, it posited that the social and political orders derived from the European enlightenment, such as the Comtian liberalism adopted in

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[31] See Zea 1980. *Pensamiento Positivista Latinoamericano*, Vols I y II. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho.

Latin America whose motto was "Order and Progress", that came to replace the colonial order was in no way different from the logic that justified the domination and exploitation of the groups marginalized by the progress of modernity. Whether liberalism or Marxism, the central presupposition underlining these systems of thought was what I call an evolutionary conception of history in which Europe, or specific European states, represented the apex or culmination of both human development and human history, and which the central categories of the new social and political order did not dramatically, if at all transform the relations of power of the colonial order. A crucial point in the critique that I've developed in this section is that the temporal experience, in particular a sense of break with the past, and an over-riding concern with innovation and "human progress" couched the project of modernity and the "modern" according to a European conception of progress underlined by a relations of domination between Europe, Europeans, and their descendants, and the colonial and post-colonial world. This vision of order and progress, as we've seen, was articulated by the luminaries of this broad world historical movement, extending from the enlightenment through the Liberal period, through the middle of the 20th century and the projects of mestizo nationalism in the Americas. Ultimately, modernity and the modern articulated the material desires and political aspirations of the Liberal project, with its attendant set of social property relations and relations of power, as the telos of human development. But more importantly, its very idea of progress was premised upon relations of domination and subjugation, in which most of the colonial world, and what later came to be known as the Third World. This is the unspoken underside of modernity.

From the perspective of critical theory, therefore, modernity is the process by which Europe, and the United States as its political, cultural, and intellectual heir have progressed

towards global hegemony.[32] As such, from the perspective of the coloniality of power school of thought within critical theory, modernity first commences with the colonization of the Americas and European colonial and imperial expansion in the 16th-century, and then undergoes a second phase beginning roughly with the late 17th-century, the height of the slave trade, and the foundations for the industrial revolution in Europe through roughly the middle of the 20th-century.[33] This latter period, commonly referred to as a second modernity or late modernity, not only heralded the inception and development of the capitalist mode of production in tandem with the development of European racial thought and white supremacist ideology, but also defined the central ideology of nationalist movements across many post-colonial states, particularly in the Americas, roughly from the second half of the 19th-century to the first half of the 20th-century.

It is precisely this phase of modernity, occupied roughly by the period from 1850-1944 and with particular emphasis on the period of 1870-1944, that this study of El Salvador is concerned with. Specifically, this study is preoccupied with two broad historical processes that defined the major axes and valences of the last phase of modernity in the Americas; namely modernization and modernism. These concepts generally capture the set of political-economic and cultural-intellectual forces that defined the culmination of this historical epoch in El Salvador, and more broadly in Latin America. Modernization, the first of terms, is centered on the problematic of Latin American political and economic development in its proper regional and global context, commencing roughly during the late 19th-century. The set of forces and processes referred to as "modernization" dealt primarily with the development of the productive forces and an increase in the sophistication of the civil and political institutions that assisted this development. Prevailing notions of modernization in the Americas are centered upon concepts

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[32] See Mignolo 2005, especially pg. xiii.
[33] See Mignolo (2005), Dussel (200), Grosfoguel (2000)

such as "liberalization" and "democratization" in an uncritical manner without considering the meaning of these terms in historical perspective. However, as my analysis of El Salvador from 1850-1944 demonstrates, modernization commenced during the last half of the 19th-century with rapid agro-industrial growth, and it was further shaped in its latter stages by the reconfiguration of Latin American economies and states as a response to the crisis of global capital in the 1920s and 1930s. This process included the building of infrastructure that was principally devoted to facilitating economic activity, including roads, canals, ports, and modern highways. Generally such projects would also entail civil engineering at a massive scale that ultimately benefitted urban populations, especially those that resided in the capital and important cities. Such projects included the building of a variety of public works, including modern water supply piping and electricity, theaters, auditoriums, museums, public parks, stadiums, universities, hospitals, and a full array of other civil institutions. The public works projects undertaken under Martínez's populist programs, such as those of *mejoramiento social* (literally, social improvement) and his "politica de caminos" (politics of roads) are exemplary of this process of socioeconomic infrastructural modernization. On the political spectrum, such a trajectory of economic development was facilitated by regimes openly amicable and deferent to the interests of the industrial and oligarchic classes at the expense of the people. El Salvador is exemplary of this process under the Martínez regime.

Modernism

The development of modernism as an influential and widespread hemispheric and global cultural, artistic, and intellectual movement intersected the process of political and economic

modernization. This was in part due to the fact that modernism developed in the Americas primarily as a cultural and intellectual counterpoint to the ratiocination of late 19th century liberal positivism and in the context of the crisis of the liberalism and the liberal nation-state during the late 1890s and early 1900s. As a vast cultural enterprise, modernism was centrally concerned with the problematic of representation that the late 19th-century crises of capital and the liberal state ushered. As discussed in Chapter Three, this problematic revolved around the specification of the abstract liberal subject, the definition of the nation-state along racial and cultural lines, and the attendant aesthetics of such projects. Thus, the agro-industrial and socio-economic infrastructural modernization impelled and buttressed by liberal positivism created the conditions for the development of modernism as a cultural movement. In turn, modernism did not develop in a fixed oppositional relationship to the modernizing forces of the late 19th and early-20th centuries, but rather evolved in a dialectical relationship with these processes: challenging, adapting, and reconfiguring. Modernism as a cultural movement thus mediated and attempted to make sense of the economic and political vectors of modernization, often simultaneously embracing and rejecting the central tenets of modernity.

Alongside the modernist trends in literature and art, the spiritual sphere of cultural activity was also shaped by the modernist avant-garde impulse which issued a challenge religious institutions deemed archaic such as the old guard of the Catholic church allied with 19th-century liberal positivists and the oligarchic and bourgeois classes to which many of them belonged. In particular, this period witnessed the rise of esotericism, most notably perhaps with the rise of Theosophy across Latin America, as a secular form of spirituality that provided a counterpoint to liberal and positivist hyper-rationality and what was regarded as antiquated Catholic orthodoxy. Despite the fact that its apogee in the Western world is situated within the

modernist period, particularly from the 1880s to the 1940s, theosophy is often not thought of as an integral part of modernism. Rather, scholars have casted the rise of theosophy in the Anglophone world during the late Victorian period as symptomatic of the "crisis of faith" onset by the maturation of Enlightenment thought and, consequently, the loosening of moral moorings articulated by Protestant Christianity. This "crisis of faith" was also accompanied by anxieties surrounding the rapid economic expansion and urbanization characteristic of the late 19th century, and the transformation of Victorian societies.

However, I see the "crisis of faith" of the late Victorian period and these other developments during the late 19th century in part as a product of the growth of liberal positivism and its ideological prevalence during this time. Insofar as modernists reacted to these changes by breaking with artistic and literary conventions in favor for the avant-garde, while rejecting industrialization and urbanization for their mechanization of thinking and their blunting of feeling and spirituality, then the crisis of faith and the novel spiritual paths that sought to address it should be considered as an integral part of the problematic facing the modernists' at the dawn of the 20th-century. Esotericism thus became part of the modernist movement's expanding cultural and intellectual horizon. Theosophy arose precisely within this cultural nexus and was of great appeal to many of the literary figures and artists of this movement who demonstrated a growing concern over the place and nature of spiritual life in a changing and increasingly industrial world. Consequently, the rise of theosophy is linked to, if not an imminent part of, the broader cultural and intellectual movements and transformations broadly designated as modernism.

Often treated as a footnote to the cultural and intellectual history of the late Victorian period and the early 20th-century, theosophy was in fact a powerful cultural and intellectual

movement in the western hemisphere until the late 1940s. In particular, theosophy's

cosmopolitan appeal attracted a wide array of modernists who shared an interest in mysticism

and oriental religions. This process grew against the backdrop of modernist primitivism in one

hand, and the growth of Orientalism in the Americas on the other. Theosophy, which I explicate

in detail in Chapter 4, syncretized a variety of elements from Western hermeticism, Eastern

mysticism, philosophy, and spirituality. The growth of appeal of Hinduism and Buddhism, and

its wider acceptance in Latin America and in particular amongst artists and intellectuals, created

a receptive space for theosophy from 1910-1930, though not without coming into friction with

traditional Roman Catholicism. This theosophical esotericism not only shared in the heritage of

19th-century French spiritualism and mesmerism, but was also conversant with other leading

intellectual currents in the first decades of the 20th-century, such as *vitalism,* and was capable of

incorporating these trends within its own framework.

More importantly perhaps is that the history of esotericism and theosophy in the

Americas, and particularly the International Theosophical Society, shed light into the importance

of cultural life to the political and economic processes and transformations experienced by many

Latin American societies during the first half of the 20th-century. Indeed, during this time

theosophy was one cultural current that strongly linked the cultural with the political and

economic spheres, as the case of theosophy's role in the growth and development of Indian

nationalism demonstrates. But a careful retracing of theosophy's history and influence in the

politics of this formative period in the development of Latin American nationalism and national

identity also reveals the manner in which many adherents to theosophical movement were also

key players in the political arena across the western hemisphere. And many used theosophical

ideas about the progress of mankind and patriotism to frame their political and economic

projects. Perhaps General Martínez is one of the most notable figures in this respect, since as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, he was an avid theosophist and drew heavily in his political discourses from esoteric doctrines to philosophically justify a wide range of policies.

Above all, theosophy and its place within Latin American economic and political modernization and its attendant modernist movement demonstrates the importance of interstitial sites to the amalgamation and legitimation of leading social groups into a consolidated and dominant bloc. In the Americas the growth of theosophy and its networks in the Caribbean and Central America begins with the process of European migration into these regions in the middle of the 19th-century, and is accentuated by the opening of new transnational cultural flows between the U.S. and Latin America after the conclusion of the Spanish–American War of 1898.

The hemispheric configuration of power between the U.S. and Latin America after the Spanish-American War not only augmented the reach of the International Theosophical Society, but also demonstrated the manner in which theosophists and adherents to the movement were linked to intellectuals and artists, as well as leading statesmen, politicians, and military men in the halls of power. A such, this rich history tells much about the reach of U.S. imperialism into the cultural life of the western hemisphere, and demonstrates how dominant political projects of the time were impelled or buttressed by prevailing discourses on race, modernity, and progress that were articulated in esoteric philosophy and were widely disseminated through various civil and cultural channels. As such, an analysis of these esoteric societies and the growth of the theosophical movement during this period illustrates the process by which interstitial sites and organizations in civil society brought together leading figures in arts, letter, politics, and industry under the banner of esoteric brotherhood. In turn, the analysis of these interstitial spaces reveals much about the process of generating consent for regimes like Martínez's in El Salvador, and

illustrates the manner in which a loose constellation or association of these leading figures was transformed into a unified group in a position of leadership that upheld shared, if contested, vision for the political, economic, and social evolution of Latin America.

As the preceding sections outline, the project of economic, political and social modernization in El Salvador during the first four decades of the 20th-century was intertwined with the cultural and intellectual movement of modernism. This linkage stems from the fact that modernization and modernism represent the economic-political and cultural-intellectual valences of late modernity in El Salvador. Here I utilize the idea of late modernity to express a historical condition shaped by the ruptures and continuities of the European colonial enterprise. The processes of modernization and the growth of modernism as a cultural movement were shaped by the legacies of the colonial project because the colonial rupture structured the historical forces that defined these movements and the nexus of political-economic and intellectual power in the Americas. In addition, the continuity of these movements with the colonial legacies lay partly in these movements' self-awareness and concern with their temporal and spatial positioning within the European sphere of modernity, and the respective political, economic, and intellectual projects that they carried out. Indeed, although the social groups and classes involved in the modernizing impulse were often at odds with the modernist intellectuals, writers, and artists, both groups adopted the basic belief in "progress," understood as a break with the past and convention based on innovation. Whether such progress was framed in economic-political terms or in a vision for the evolution of civilization through a novel cultivation of the arts and letters, both groups shared a preoccupation with staking out a place within the hierarchy of an industrializing and changing world. Thus it may seem paradoxical that the manifestly opposing camps of the oligarchic and military classes espousing the forces of modernization on the one

hand, and the intellectual modernists contending its deleterious effects on creativity and artistic originality on the other, ultimately reified what was in essence the liberal project and the culmination of Western modernity in the Americas. The problematic thus lies in explaining the historical process that led to the amalgamation of these disparate groups into a unified entity. Hence, I have found it useful to explain the course of oligarchic-military-petty bourgeois unification by utilizing Antonio Gramsci's concepts of historic and hegemonic bloc, and sketching out a framework that traces the process by which a conglomerate of historical groups and forces get legitimized and transformed into a dominant and unified group in a position of intellectual and moral leadership. The next section is thus devoted to this theoretical elaboration.

Historic Bloc, Intellectuals, and Hegemony

In 1926, as the modernizing impulse of the coffee boom and the modernist movement in El Salvador were in full swing, the Italian political thinker and strategist Antonio Gramsci worked through the problematic of failed revolutions and the rise of authoritarian regimes in Europe. A revolutionary intellectual and founder of the Italian communist party, Gramsci was deeply concerned with the problematic of revolutionary transformation. For Gramsci, the political reality of Western Europe after 1921 was different from the historical conditions that had set in motion the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Most importantly, socialist revolutions had been defeated or failed to take place, "capitalism had managed to survive the post-war economic crisis and stabilize itself," and fascist and authoritarian regimes were on the rise (Forgacs 2000, 190).

This historical configuration resembles that of El Salvador in the 1930s, where the economic crisis of the late 1920s led to a failed socialist-indigenous revolt in 1932. After the initial crisis was averted through brutal military repression, the capitalist economy in El Salvador underwent a period of unprecedented expansion, charging triumphantly alongside a fascist military regime that would dominate Salvadoran politics and society for nearly sixty years and shape the enduring contours of power in the country. Thus, the case of El Salvador in the 1930s poses similar vexing questions as those of 1920s Italy regarding the conditions necessary to actualize the revolutionary potential created by political and economic crises. But more importantly, the historical process in El Salvador raises parallel questions as those pondered by Gramsci on the resilience and durability of capitalist societies and authoritarian regimes.

Indeed, the historical trajectory of El Salvador after the failed uprising of 1932 requires a mode of analysis that can account for the unification of the conglomerate of classes in positions of leadership and the overcoming of their contradictions. This analysis also requires understanding the nature of the relationship that such classes and groups had to each other, and an explanation of the structural unity of the political, cultural, and economic spheres of life in Salvadoran society. Such an analysis would also shed light on the ensuing durability of the Salvadoran military regime. The succeeding sections are devoted to this elaboration.

For Gramsci, the rise of Mussolini in 1922 represented just the type of problematic that called for a new mode of analysis. As Forgacs states, the conditions that defined the period after WWI in Italy "…demanded a new analysis of the political and ideological resources of capitalist societies, the sources of their extraordinary resilience" (Forgacs 2000, 189). A central theoretical concern of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* was precisely the development of a basis for a new analysis and strategy capable of explicating and challenging the rise of fascism. Indeed, some

scholars have characterized the central problematic of Gramsci's notebooks as the elaboration of a new, non-positivistic, and non-economistic philosophy of praxis. In order to carry out this theoretical task, Gramsci reworked Marx's crude theory of the state by returning to the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, fleshing out the "sphere of the complex superstructures" in his reworking of the relationship between the economic base and the political-civil superstructure.

In addition, Gramsci turned to the thought of the Italian idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce for the latter's insights in the "ethico-political sphere" while he undertook a "non-economistic" reading of Marx (Forgacs 2000, 190). To Gramsci, what Marx's preface to *The Critique* states is that economic and political crises only create the conditions that make revolutionary change possible. What is crucial in ushering in a revolutionary transformation of society are the relations of force that define the sphere of complex superstructures and the world of politics, law, and culture. It is within this sphere of activity that the wondrous resilience of capitalist societies is to be found, and it is out of this theoretical engagement that Gramsci develops the concepts of historic bloc and hegemony.

First, the concept of historic bloc emerges from Gramsci's theoretical reengagement with Marx's distinction between the economic and political spheres of human activity and the relationship between them. Marx first elaborated the analytic distinction between the economic base and the political superstructure in several writings of his "early period," particularly in *On the Jewish Question.* In this essay, Marx differentiated between what he called civil society, which contained the sphere of economic activity, and political society that encompassed not only politics, but the realm of religion and philosophy. Marx's essential point in this early critical work was that real human emancipation could not be achieved in the realm of politics alone.

Actual human emancipation required that man overcome his estrangement as an abstract citizen

of the state on the one hand, and an egoistic being in civil society on the other. The overcoming

of this estrangement therefore could only be achieved by transforming the very set of alienating

social relations established by what he called "huckstering" and which he identified with

Judaism. In time, Marx would designate this huckstering as the capitalist mode of production.

According to Marx, therefore, the relationships in the civil and political spheres of life were

shaped by the mode of human economic activity; that is, the economic base shaped the nature of

social relations and the political superstructure. These writings prefigured the more rigorous

development of the base-superstructure distinction in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political

Economy*, which is one of the primary texts that Gramsci thoroughly examined in his theoretical

elaboration of the concept of historic bloc.

Hence, the concept of historic bloc does not simply refer to a conglomerate of

contradictory forces, as is commonly misinterpreted. It is in fact the dynamic unity of between

the contradictory and broad spheres of human activity through contestation and adaptation; that

is, the dialectical unity between the relations of production and social relations. Indeed,

according to Gramsci: "…structures and superstructures form a historic bloc. That is to say, the

complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructure is the reflection of the

ensemble of the social relations of production" (Forgacs 192). Gramsci goes on to state in the

same passage that the conclusion that follows from this relationship is that "only a

[comprehensive] system of ideologies gives a rational reflection of the contradiction of the

superstructure and represents the existence of the objective conditions for the revolutionizing of

praxis" (Ibid). This latter statement has to be read against the last part of Marx's Third Thesis on

Feuerbach: "the coincidence of the changing of [historical] circumstances and of human activity

can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice" (Tucker 1978). To

Marx, the idea of revolutionary praxis stressed the unity of thought and practice that was capable

of changing the material circumstances of human activity (Tucker 1978, 144). More importantly,

for Gramsci the idea of revolutionary praxis as defined by Marx articulated the essential

dialectical relationship between the main spheres of human activity, as well as the dialectical

unity of thought and action that linked these spheres and that defined the movement of history.

The philosophy of praxis in Gramsci's writings, therefore, often meant a conception of

historical materialism or Marxism that was *not* strictly economistic or positivistic. Indeed, in

another passage of the notebooks Gramsci interprets Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach as positing

"…a necessary relation of active reaction by man upon the structure, affirming the unity of the

process of reality" (Forgacs 193). As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, although Marx

first developed the analytical distinction between economic base and political-civil

superstructure, Gramsci's important contribution to this theoretical elaboration is his insight that

the condition necessary for the development of revolutionary praxis was precisely the presence

of a homogenizing ideology that resolved the contradictions reflected in the political-cultural

superstructure, and thus made this ideological rationalization of contradictions a reality in the

sphere of human activity. As Gramsci states, this rationalizing ideology "is actively and actually

real." It reflects the power of this "totalitarian system of ideologies" to actually transform

historical circumstances and the actions of people who create those circumstances.

From this standpoint, the dialectical relationship between the economic structure and

political-civil superstructure that comprise the historic bloc undertakes a revolutionizing

historical role: once a dominant group develops a homogenizing ideology that enables its allied

classes to overcome its contradictions and points of fracture, then it is in the position to

transform both human activity and its historical circumstances. It is at this moment that it creates the conditions for the "revolutionizing of praxis." The philosophy of praxis thus articulates the "contradictions in society and at the same time people's practical awareness of those contradictions" (Forgacs 2000, 429). As Gramsci states, "this reasoning is based on the necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructures, a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process" (Forgacs 2000, 193). Hence, it is through this necessary reciprocity between economic structure and civil-political superstructure that the contradictions of society are made rational. According to Gramsci, therefore, the actual mechanism of historical development is to be found in the reciprocal relationship that constitutes the organic unity of both thought and human activity, and structure and superstructure. It does not, however, necessarily entail a linear or evolutionary development through historical periods defined by the mode of production, as posited by orthodox historical materialism. Rather, it stresses inductive uncertainty and contingency inherent in historical development.

Much of this contingency stems from the ability of a dominant group within the amalgamation of leading classes and their allies to develop a dynamic system of thought capable of overcoming their contradictions, rationalizing the existing set of social relations, and actively responding to ideological challenges to the established social order. A successful homogenizing ideology serves to rationalize the existing set of social relations and the material conditions upon which they are embedded. The ability to develop this dynamic system of thought is nothing less than the development of the cultural, moral, and intellectual leadership of the dominant group, and which Gramsci termed hegemony. As Gramsci states, the development of this moral and intellectual leadership is a necessary condition for the seizing and holding of power. While the position of leadership of a group may be initially based on the economically central role of the

leading class, in the long run it is secured politically through the making of concessions to its allies (Forgacs 2000, 422).

Indeed, the supremacy of any given group in society is manifested in dominion (force) and direction (leadership). As Gramsci writes in his notes on the development of modern Italy, force may be used to swiftly liquidate dangerous and militant opposition, while direction is utilized to create consent amongst the allied classes and the masses. Such leadership is also used to disseminate the official conception of the world amongst the masses, and the norms of conduct that are posited as universal not only at the level of ideas, but also generalized as a social reality. In this sense, this form of leadership or hegemony is economically based in a dominant, or potentially dominant, mode of production and upon one of the fundamental classes, but it is defined precisely by the expansion beyond economic class interests into the sphere of political direction through a system of class alliances based on consent. The crucial point in the maintenance of power is that the dominant group and its conglomerate of allies find a skillful combination of force and persuasion, and that such a group takes into account the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is exercised, adapting according to the exigencies of the historical circumstances.

Given that the creation of hegemony depends on the development of cultural leadership, intellectuals play a central role in producing ideas, institutions, and personalities capable of generating consent for the dominant group. Although it is commonplace to think of intellectuals as "great thinkers," Gramsci's definition is not as restrictive and encompasses all of those involved in organizing, directing, educating, and leading the masses (Forgacs 2000, 300). Intellectuals thus perform an imminently social and public function that is at its core political, not just merely an inward scholastic pursuit of what is generally regarded as pure knowledge. A

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logical extension of this argument is that all ideas are politically embedded in a nexus of power relations. It is therefore only natural that intellectuals should constitute a focal point of interest for Gramsci, given his conception of the historic bloc as the organic whole of the ethico-political and economic spheres of human activity linked by the dialectical unity of thought and action. As such, intellectuals function as political and cultural intermediaries for the classes in power, playing a central role in culturally producing, reproducing, and maintaining the dominant social order.

It follows from this discussion that in order for the working class and the subaltern classes to challenge the dominant groups, they must develop intellectuals of their own to prepare to wage battle in the cultural and ideological terrain. Indeed, as Gramsci states "every social group…creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic, but also in the social and political fields" (Forgacs 200, 301). The creation of this semblance of homogeneity and self-awareness of the economic and social function performed by the leading classes in society is precisely the fundamental process required for the development of the cultural, moral, and intellectual leadership of those in positions of power. Only then does the particular configuration of the historic bloc become hegemonic. Broadly conceived, intellectuals are therefore an integral link between the cultural-political activity at the level of the superstructure, and production at the economic base. What is now left is to demonstrate how this process takes place by elaborating its historical development in El Salvador during the 1930s.

Conclusion: Modernity and the Dialectics of History

The Gramscian elaboration above provides a cogent theoretical framework for
explicating the historical process in El Salvador during the era of Martínez. The concept of
historic bloc allows me to explicate the organic unity between the forces of modernization in the
sphere of agro-industrial production in El Salvador and the development of the modernist
movement in the cultural and political realm. Modernist intellectuals, writers, and artists in El
Salvador served to create a new "national-popular" ideology and to forge a novel conception of
Salvadoran modernity framed around pastoral portrayals of *indigenismo* as a preeminently
national aesthetic alongside a vision of progress premised on strong republicanism, nationalism,
and social evolution which was informed by theosophical esotericism. Such an aesthetic and
esoteric-modernist vision for national development was reconciled with coffee production and
the system of peasant labor that sustained it by identifying the forces of production as a national
technology and mechanism capable of creating the material conditions for a new era of
civilization in El Salvador. At the same time, these forces were brought together and morally and
intellectually legitimized by the Salvadoran military, which emerged as the dominant group
within the conglomerate of powerful classes that included the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and
the oligarchic coffee elite.

The military thus assumed the role of intellectual, cultural, and moral leader of
Salvadoran society under the Martínez regime, allowing it to consolidate a hegemony that
brought the propertied classes and the petty bourgeois intellectuals under its fold. Indeed, part of
the reason behind the Salvadoran military's great success and durability lay in its skillful
balancing of force and persuasion. Martínez used brutal, swift, and decisive force against the

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revolutionaries of 1932, whom he deemed barbaric and inassimilable into the project of the nation. But he was careful to balance the repression by making concessions to the peasantry and working classes through his social betterment plan, which included land redistribution, restructuring of the hacienda system by promoting better wages and working conditions, and the construction of affordable housing. In addition, he garnered consent from the bourgeois oligarchy, petty-bourgeoisie in the capital, and the intellectual classes by beautifying San Salvador's public spaces, creating the country's first national reserve bank, and promoting the national arts and letters.

However, the Gramscian framework used to understand this hegemonic configuration does not offer much for understanding the process by which the Salvadoran historic bloc of the 1920s and early 1930s became a hegemonic bloc. Indeed, Gramsci does not offer a specific elaboration of how the processes of hegemony takes place beyond the insight of the necessary precondition of the development of a homogenizing system of thought that could achieve moral, cultural, and intellectual legitimation for the regime in power.

The present study offers a contribution to this theoretical elaboration by tracing the manner in which the leading intellectual and esoteric organizations in El Salvador during the first decades of the 20th-century served as the interstitial sites between the structure and superstructure of Salvadoran society, bringing together the key players in the political, cultural, and economic spheres of life in 1930s El Salvador through a series of intellectual networks. The analysis of these networks also demonstrates the hemispheric reach of this hegemonic consolidation, and thereby expands Gramsci's analysis within the scope of geopolitics and the global production of modernity. This makes Gramscian analysis an integral part of the critique of modernity as a condition created by legacies of the colonial project. In particular, it makes the analysis of the

dialectical unity of politics/culture and production, as well as thought and action, a central part of the critique of modernity. This permits a historically situated and materially based analysis of this process without resorting to economistic determinism, or without remaining in the realm of a nebulous philosophical critique. The next chapters are devoted to carrying out the analysis of the important cardinal processes and organizations that shaped the last phase of late modernity in El Salvador and that allowed the Salvadoran military to consolidate its hegemony in the country.

As I dug through the Salvadoran national archives looking for clues as to disappearance of racial categories from the Salvadoran national population censuses during the Martínez regime, I discovered that Martínez in fact promoted indigenismo during his dictatorship. More importantly, my research led me to uncover that the general was not only associated with the leading intellectual and esoteric societies in El Salvador, but was in fact a high ranking member of these organizations. A closer look at the founding members of these organizations led to another discovery; namely, that the members of these societies were linked to a broad and far-reaching network across the Americas.

My research demonstrated that the transnational reach of these networks linking intellectuals and key players in politics and the economy pointed to a hemispheric and global hegemonic process. In particular, the fact that non-Salvadoran nationals were founding members of one the leading esoteric societies in El Salvador between 1910, and that Salvadoran intellectuals were part of a broader network in the Americas indicates that this problematic was not one which could be easily accounted for by simply seeing their origins and function just in relation to the historical process and the development of the historic bloc in El Salvador. Therefore, the process by which these intellectuals and organization emerged represented a problematic of systemic proportions, one which demanded that El Salvador be resituated within

the development of modernity as a global condition shaped by the ruptures and continuities of European colonialism in the Americas. A theoretical implication of these findings is that the development of the historic bloc of any given society needs to be situated not only within the particular historical circumstances of that society, but also within the global dialectical unity between economic and intellectual production, and the reciprocity between the modes of economic and intellectual production on a broader scale. Only by recasting this problematic and reframing it within the scope of modernity can these processes be made intelligible. While I will devote Chapters 3 and 4 to these concerns, the next chapter turns to a closer examination of the dialectical relationship between structure and superstructure in El Salvador and what Gramsci called the "real dialectical process."

Chapter Two

Coffee and Modernity: Economic Modernization, Political Development, and Military

Hegemony in El Salvador, ca. 1850-1948

"Structures and superstructures form a historic bloc. That is to say, the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructure is the reflection of the ensemble of social relations of production….[The] necessary reciprocity between structures and superstructures is nothing other than the real dialectical process."   -Antonio Gramsci[34]

"What is modernity?...Nobody knows for sure. It doesn't matter much: we follow it, we pursue it…Modernity has been a universal passion. Since 1850 she has been [Latin America's] goddess and our demoness…We were born at a point when Spain and Portugal were moving away from modernity. This is why there was frequent talk of 'Europeanizing' our countries. Modernity was outside and had to be imported. [Latin America] was searching for the present outside, only to find it within, buried but alive…A simultaneous plurality of time and presence: modernity breaks with the past only to recover an age-old past and transform a tiny fertility figure of the Neolithic into our contemporary. We pursue modernity in her incessant metamorphoses yet we never manage to trap her."   -Octavio Paz[35]

"It is only a berry, encasing a double-sided seed…Yet coffee is big business, one of the world's most valuable agricultural commodities, providing the largest jolt of the world's most widely taken psychoactive drug…The vast majority of those who [labor in the coffee plantations]…earn an average of $3 a day. Many live in poverty without plumbing or electricity, medical care, or nutritious food. The coffee they prepare lands on breakfast tables, in offices and upscale coffee bars in the United States, Europe, Japan, and other developed countries where cosmopolitan consumers often pay a day's Third World wages for a cappuccino."

-Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*[36]

Introduction: Modernity, Modernization, and Coffee

As with most demarcations of historical epochs, the period that designates the beginning

of Salvadoran modernization tends to be arbitrary and depends largely upon the criteria by which

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[34] Forgacs (2000), pgs. 192-193.
[35] Paz (1990)
[36] Pendergrast (2010), xv.

modernity and the process of modernization are defined. However, most scholars tend to agree that industrialization and the development of the productive forces of society are the cardinal features of modernization. As discussed in the previous chapter, the process of capitalist development hinges precisely on the transformation of the prevailing relations of production and social-property relations through rapid industrialization. This process is often underpinned by technological innovation and infrastructural development that facilitates production itself, though historically those innovations often move beyond their economic determinants and shape other spheres of human activity. It is impossible to ignore, however, that many, if not most, works of scientific invention, technological advancement, mechanical, infrastructural, and architectural innovation have to be situated in relation to the historically-specific human needs, wants, and demands to which these innovations are responsive, as well as the material and political interests behind the advancement of knowledge and technical expertise in any given field.

From this point of view, modernization is precisely the process of capitalist development posited as the primary historical force behind the innovations that define breaks with tradition and what has preceded the present moment, as well as the primary force behind a conscious self-awareness of the contemporary period. Modernization theorists, however, are rarely critical of the normative implications of the concept of modernization via capitalist development as they deploy it. As a concept, it is undoubtedly bound up with a whole set of normative assumptions and values that presuppose the superiority and desirability of the capitalist mode of production and its attendant scientific, technological, and infrastructural armature.

From this point of view, Salvadoran modernization does not begin in the 1950s-1960s, as commonly situated by scholars, but roughly at the end of the 19th-century, when El Salvador began undergoing a process of economic and social transformation based on the imperatives and

exigencies of coffee production. In turn, the history of Salvadoran modernization is inexorably

bound up with the history of coffee in Europe and the cultural phenomenon that would be

destined to play an important role in ushering European modernity itself.

Coffee was a crop introduced to El Salvador during the middle of the 18th-century under

the reign of the Bourbon king Charles III. It is of no small importance that coffee came to

Central America during the Bourbon period. Historically, coffee was first cultivated and brewed

in the Ottoman Empire, starting roughly around the 15th-century, when the dark and fragrant

stimulant was first enjoyed in Yemen and Ethiopia.[37] From there, coffee travelled across the

lands under Ottoman control, eventually making its way through most of the major cities of the

Islamic world including Mecca, Damascus, and Cairo by the 16th-century.[38] Although the

Ottomans enjoyed a monopoly over coffee for two hundred years, between the 1650s-1660s,

coffee was introduced to London and Paris by European travellers who were riding the wave of

Orientalism sweeping early modern France and England.[39] Credit for the introduction of coffee

to the Parisian scene generally goes to Jean de Thevenot, the French Orientalist and botanist who

travelled through the East and brought back the custom of coffee drinking which he shared with

his intimate circle.

Although initially looked at with suspicion and condescension due to its ubiquity in

taverns and popularity with street vendors, the practice of drinking coffee gradually became

fashionable with the French aristocracy, mainly in the court of Louis the XIV. The coffee house

would soon follow, impelled by amongst other things the presence of Turkish ambassadors in

Paris during the 1660s. By the 1680s, the drink and its consumption received the seal of

respectability as stylish coffee houses embellished with Armenian furnishings opened up in

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[37] Agoston and Masters, 2009. *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*. Pgs.138-139.
[38] Agoston and Masters, 2009, 138.
[39] Ukers [1922] 2009. *All About Coffee*. Chapter 5, Pg 31.

Paris. Singular amongst these establishments, the historic Café Procope opened in Paris in 1689 and drew luminaries of French letters enticed by "The wine of Islam," as coffee came to be known by Europeans. Voltaire and Diderot were amongst the distinguished patrons of Café the Procope, and were recorded engaged in spirited philosophical debate over cups of coffee in etchings of the period. The drink, and the houses in which it was served, therefore introduced a new mode of sociability and space for the exchange of ideas that would be destined to play a revolutionary role in French history and consequently the political development of modern Europe. Indeed, the coffee house was amongst the prime spaces for the circulation of ideas considered seditious, which would later play a crucial role in the unfolding of the French Revolution 100 years after Café Procope opened its doors. Hence, the cultural and political history of early modern Europe is enmeshed with a drink whose stimulant effects, aromatic allure, and stylishness made it a center point for new modes of sociability and in time came to be associated with productivity and industriousness, becoming the most consumed drug in the West.[40] Modernity and coffee for Europe, and much of the world, are therefore inextricably linked.

It is against this cultural, intellectual, and political context of late 17th-century and early 18th-century France and Western Europe that coffee became one of the principal commodities cultivated by European colonial possessions situated in the humid and temperate climate suitable for coffee plantations, primarily in the warm, mountainous, and sea-breezed swept Caribbean. Haiti, or Saint-Domingue as it was known during the period of French colonial rule, exhibited such characteristics in the northwestern part of Hispaniola. A French colony since 1659, Haiti became France's principal coffee producer during the 18th-century. At a mere 21,000 square kilometers, it is estimated that by the 1780s Haiti produced half of the world's supply of coffee,

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[40] Ellis, 2014. *The Coffee House: A Cultural History*. Preface, xi.

becoming Western Europe's primary supplier. Haiti's coffee, otherwise know as *café Bourbon*,

was the variety introduced to El Salvador around the late 1740s and early 1750s. Such is the

reason that even today 65% of the coffee cultivated in El Salvador continues to be of the

Bourbon variety.[41] The history of coffee, and its influence in the very development of the

intellectual and cultural life of Western Europe in the 18th-century that defined much of

European modernity, has to be situated against this colonial and imperial backdrop.

Coffee, however, did not become a major crop for cultivation and export in El Salvador

until approximately a century after its introduction. This was in part due to the fact that under the

Bourbon Spanish monarchs, which dominated the Spanish crown until well after the colonial

period in the Americas, Haiti continued to be the preferred colonial possession for the cultivation

of the crop. In addition, the Ottoman Empire continued to be an influential player in the

cultivation and processing of coffee until its disintegration after 1919.

As such, El Salvador did not figure as a potential player in the coffee economy until the

early 20th-century. During much of the colonial period and well into the 19th-century, much of

the Salvadoran economy was geared towards the production of indigo and cotton, crops which

were also crucial to the development of the industrial revolution in Europe and the modernization

of its emerging armies. Indeed, cotton was the primary raw material that fueled the textile

industry across Western Europe, and which became the basis for the industrial revolution. In

turn, cotton was used to fashion military uniforms, a phenomenon of the late 18th-century that

accompanied the rise of the nation-state in Europe. Indigo was thus a crop that went hand in hand

with the demand for cotton, since it was used as a natural dye for cotton products and became the

preferred hue for military uniforms. For much of the 19th-century El Salvador's agro-export

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[41] http://academic.uprm.edu/mmonroig/id45.htm; See also Tipos de café cultivados en El Salvador, El Volcan.
http://www.coffeevolcan.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=125

economy thus revolved around these two crops, and to a lesser extent, cacao. Their cultivation would lay the foundations for the development of a mono-crop, agro-export economy structured around coffee growing that defined economic modernization in El Salvador into the second half of the 20th-century.

Although coffee was cultivated since the colonial period, the possibility of exploiting the crop for the global market did not enter El Salvador until the late 1840s and early 1850s. The shift to coffee production was in part a response to the declining prices of indigo, which by the middle of the 19th-century were at an all-time low. Three decades later, the introduction of synthetic dyes in the 1880s all but destroyed the indigo economy and made the virtually complete shift to coffee planting a natural, though by no means simple, choice. Coffee represented a new crop that required sophisticated planting and processing techniques, as well as knowledge of the international coffee market and financial savvy to bankroll the cultivation of a perennial crop that required a substantial investment in capital since it did not yield fruit during its first three years of life. Coffee planting thus entailed a long-term investment, and success in the coffee business was contingent upon the technological and scientific innovation necessary for its optimal cultivation. The capital required by such an exigent crop was beyond the reach of most common Salvadoran farmers and small producers, and certainly beyond the means of indigenous *campesinos* who had first labored under the yoke of Spanish laws that demanded tributary and forced forms labor, such as the *hacienda* and *encomienda* systems, and who later resorted to laboring in large estates and supplementing their livelihood by engaging in small scale subsistence agriculture. Coffee was therefore a crop reserved for the elite who could afford the long-term investment and had any hope of securing a return.

The Coffee Industry and Salvadoran Modernity

The capital and material sophistication necessary for coffee cultivation led to the development of infrastructure, technology, and scientific advancements that were centered on increasing the efficiency and productivity of the coffee industry. For these reasons, the modernization of El Salvador has to be traced to the development of the coffee economy and its colonial and imperial history. In particular, this process of modernization was defined by the transportation revolution, which included the constructions of railroads; a technological and communications revolution, whose center pieces included the establishment of public electricity and the telegraph, and perhaps one of the most defining processes of all, the privatization of land. In addition, the increase in sophistication of the coffee market led to the development of the country's system of credit and finance, as well as the development of several regional banks associated with the coffee industry. Seeing coffee planting as a way to enter the global market and develop Salvadoran infrastructure and economy, the Salvadoran state invested heavily in the importation of technology from the United States: scientific literature, including a botanical library was brought from France to develop the country's first agrarian library. Trained scientists, specifically entomologists, were brought in to aid the modern and scientific approach to coffee cultivation.

Perhaps the most visible, lasting, and widespread of the achievements ushered by the coffee revolution were those associated with the transformation in infrastructure and basic services necessary for coffee growing and processing. Principal amongst these developments were the building of a streetcar system throughout San Salvador by 1865 and the construction of

the country's first railroad in 1882 that connected the coffee growing region with San Salvador and the northern ports situated in Guatemala's Caribbean coast. Improvements in communications that translated into greater efficiency for business transactions also led the way, as El Salvador's first telegraph cable opened in 1870. By the late 1880s, San Salvador also unveiled the electrification of the entire capital, an unprecedented engineering achievement in Latin America, particularly since Edison had developed the first commercial power plant in 1882 and electricity had only first made its debut at Chicago's Columbian Expo in 1883. Indeed, much of the United States remained without electricity well into the first decades of the twentieth century, at a time when kerosene lamps still constituted the principal form of nocturnal lighting. San Salvador's electrification by the late 1880s thus represented a significant scientific and technological achievement.

Yet, the capital, technology, and financial and technical expertise necessary for the construction of these projects made the process of economic modernization in El Salvador increasingly more enmeshed with the global capitalist economy at the turn of the twentieth century. Most notably, North American and British railway companies received unprecedented concessions from the Salvadoran government to undertake these projects. For instance, the building of El Salvador's first railroad was undertaken by the *Salvador Railway Company*, an English company that imported the first locomotives in El Salvador on March 28, 1882 through the port of Acajutla. The Salvador Railway Company was later bought out by the *International Railways of Central America*, of which the *United Fruit Company* held 43% of the shares. These companies were given staggering concessions whose tenure extended for over a century. Indeed, it would not be until the 1970s, at the onset of the civil conflict, that the Salvadoran state would finally take control of the railroads.

In addition, the development of Salvadoran banking was directly linked to coffee producing and made the country increasingly more dependent on foreign capital. Prior to the dawn of coffee, usurious private lenders were the primary financiers in El Salvador. After several failed attempts by foreign investors in the 1860s and 1870s, the first successful bank opened in 1880. From that point on, regional banks were established in the western coffee growing zone of El Salvador. The exact sources of funding for these banks remains obscure, but what it is know is that from the moment of their inception, banks in El Salvador would be tied to foreign investors. Banks would not be nationalized until the 1930s under the Martínez regime which would also create the country's first national bank.

As these innovations impelled by the coffee industry were transforming the country's infrastructure, technology, and systems of finance, coffee also changed the patterns in the ownership of land. The ownership of land was a fundamental feature of Salvadoran society. Given that agricultural production was the principal economic activity in El Salvador since the colonial period, land ownership was crucial not only in determining who had property, privilege, and power, but was also essential for the very survival of common farmers and in the structuring of daily life for peasant communities. Indeed, in an agrarian society, land was the primary basis for wealth and power and also the basis for the social organization and livelihood for indigenous and peasant communities.

Especially the communal ownership of modest to large plots of land, known as *ejidos*, was a central feature in the economic, social, and political organization of indigenous communities. The cultivation of traditional colonial crops, indigo and cotton, posed a small threat to these communal estates, since these crops were coastally grown and out of the range of communal lands that clustered around western and central El Salvador. It is perhaps unsurprising

that most *ejidos* were situated in this part of the country, since it is precisely along these regions where indigenous communities tended to nucleate. Side from being the foundation of communal subsistence, *ejidos* were the basis for the political activity of many communities, as the communal ownership of land was often linked with political control and influence at the level of local municipalities. However, unlike traditional colonial crops, coffee did pose a threat to ejidos since coffee demanded the mountainous, fertile, and temperate areas that were found in western El Salvador. Communal land ownership, which was the pillar of peasant and indigenous communities, thus came to signify an impediment to the process of economic modernization and Salvadoran modernity.

This impediment was removed through the process of privatization. The expropriation and the privatization of indigenous and peasant communal lands began precisely as coffee ascended to a position of primacy within El Salvador's export economy in the late 1850s. The growth of the coffee industry required on the one hand the fertile lands that were situated in the western part of the country and which were ideal for coffee growing. On the other hand, coffee growing was labor-intensive and required a growth in the labor supply, which was in part accomplished by forcing peasant farmers away from traditional forms of subsistence agriculture that was generally carried out on communal and family plots of land. Therefore, the process of expropriation and privatization of land achieved both goals.

The privatization of land in the city of Juayua during the last half of the 19th-century illustrates the process by which expanding coffee production led to both the expropriation of peasant communities and the subsequent establishment of seasonal labor patterns for peasant in coffee estates. By 1858, coffee estates owned by western European immigrants, some of which boasted as many as 40,000 coffee bushes, began encroaching upon indigenous communal lands

in Juayua, located in the mountainous region of western El Salvador. The growth of these coffee estates created a de facto expropriation of land. But it wouldn't be until 1881 that all communal ejidos in Juayua were extinguished through legislative decrees passed by the Salvadoran Assembly. These laws were the culmination of the Liberal reforms of the late 19th-century. Aside from taking away Indian lands, the process of expropriation also created a landless peasantry that was now forced to labor in the coffee estates. As the case of Juayua exemplifies, the expropriation of Indian communities was a gradual process that began with the informal encroachment of privately owned coffee estates upon communal land, and which was completed through the legislative decrees of 1881 that simply formalized a mode of primitive accumulation that was several decades in the making. All communal landholdings were extinguished in El Salvador by the end of the 1880s, creating both the capital and labor force necessary to fuel the coffee industry. It is thus on this primary or primitive accumulation that Salvadoran economic modernization was based.

It is also of no small significance that this city, as most of western El Salvador, was heavily populated by indigenous peasants well into the 20th century, as the census of 1930 demonstrates. As a matter of fact, Juayua would become the center for the indigenous and peasant insurrection of 1932 that was put down by the forces of General Martínez. This in part illustrates that the grievances that led to the 1932 insurrection were not merely class based, but also had a strong racial valence. In El Salvador, "middle class and elite racism revolved around the notion of Indians as impediments to progress" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago, 2008, 117). Indeed, much of Salvadoran economic history and its social relations since the growth of the coffee industry and the consequent privatization of land were defined by the emergence of what was in essence a new form of colonialism in which the descendants of the old Spanish

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aristocracy, Western Europeans, and North Americans controlled the country's productive forces and instituted a system of labor in the coffee states that came to be know as the colonato.[42]

The economic foundation of El Salvador's modernization was thus based upon the success and consequent expansion of the coffee industry. Although some economic historians have criticized the Salvadoran state's decision to base its strategy for capitalist development upon the coffee economy, it was not an insensate choice given the country's history of colonialism and the state of the development of the productive forces at the time in which coffee began to be exploited for export. This is one crucial fact often elided by scholars in discussions of "underdevelopment" who commonly fail to conduct a serious analysis of the legacies of Spanish colonialism and the continued influence of Western European immigrants and the United States in the domestic economies and affairs of post-colonial societies like El Salvador. In addition, it is either naïve or plainly disingenuous to suggest that the path to industrialization, capitalism, and wealth for other nations, such as the United States, is a function of sounder economic decisions taken by captains of industry and heads of state that ultimately generated wealth to the benefit of all.

One need only examine the period of the late 19th-century through the end of the McKinley administration to understand that in the United States, just as in the Global South, the state was strongly responsive to the imperatives and exigencies of capital, more often than not at the expense of the working class and groups that were deemed marginal and backward -an impediment to modernization and therefore expendable. The central logic of the market and the capitalist mode of production profoundly shaped the nature of the political process and the contours of power in the United States. The centrality of capitalist interest to politics, and the

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[42] For a discussion of the class differentiation and hierarchical ordering of Salvadoran society ushered-in by coffee production see Anderson ([1971] 1992), especially pgs. 24-25.

dialectical relationship between the economic base of society and its political superstructure, is best illustrated by the manner in which J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and J.D. Rockefeller manipulated the political process that culminated in the election of William McKinley to the U.S. presidency, and the manner in which the period of U.S. industrialization and modernity in the late 19th-century was heralded by the conquest of the West by the railroad and the consequent rise of the industries that became the foundation for U.S. industrial development and its immense wealth, particularly oil and steel. In addition, the struggles for the organization of labor and better conditions for workers across these industries bears testament to the fact even in the "developed world" the state was not always at odds with capital, even if such collaboration meant an uneven distribution of wealth and misery for the vast majority of the people.

By contrast, for a post-colonial society whose position in the 19th-century global economy was shaped by the processes of European colonialism and U.S. imperialism, coffee, not heavy industry, became an attractive venue to pursue capitalist development. More importantly perhaps is the fact that as coffee production and processing became exceedingly efficient in El Salvador, the proportion of profits made from coffee became the foundations for the Salvadoran oligarchy's fabulous and fabled wealth. In turn, the Salvadoran state garnered greater revenues from coffee production and put its newfound source of income to use to expand the country's infrastructure and institutions. Ideas of redistribution of wealth or even development did not figure in this picture, as the Salvadoran state, which collaborated closely with the planting elite, was often times controlled by members of those elite families themselves, such as the Melendez-Quinones dynasty that held the Salvadoran presidency for decades.

From a cultural angle, coffee planting was also appealing from the perspective of the Salvadoran state since it attracted a host of immigrants from Western Europe and the United

States, who flocked to El Salvador in droves from the 1860s to the 1890s. This was favored by the Salvadoran state for two reasons. First and foremost, it represented the inflow of investment capital for the coffee industry. As the previous discussion demonstrated, capital was scarce in the 19th-century, as were the individuals who had the business experience, savvy, and networks to invest it in an industry that required a lot of technical sophistication and knowledge of the global markets. Secondly, in the context of the growing scientific racism and eugenics movement of the late 19th-century, which often accompanied liberal thought, these western European immigrants also represented the improvement of the country's racial stock during an era in which Latin American liberals were encouraging heavy European immigration to assist in the project of *blanqueamiento* that was taking place across the hemisphere, most notably illustrated by the cases of Argentina and Brazil. Although El Salvador did not have a formal state-sponsored program of European immigration as these South American countries, the state and the country's oligarchy participated in these currents and welcomed the whiter stock amongst the ranks of the country's elite.

The Coffee Industry and the Modernization of the Salvadoran State

Controlled as it was by both liberals and conservatives who tended to share a generalized liberal ideology that championed planters' interests, the Salvadoran state remained relatively small for much of the 19th-century and the early 1900s (Ching 2014, 45). Thus, the type *laissez-faire* economics and policies favored by the economic elite dominated Salvadoran politics for most of this period. As discussed above, the privatization of land was the best example of this type of liberal policies and the notions of productivity, order, and progress that structured their

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central logic. It is important to note, however, that Central American liberals differed slightly from their western European and North American counterparts in that they did favor the expansion of the state only insofar as it could intervene to promote economic and technological development (Paige 1999, 45). As such, the state generally refrained from meddling in economic affairs if the goal was one other than stimulating the coffee economy. Yet, to the extent that the state did grow during this time, it was precisely in relation to the exigencies of coffee production. This is illustrated by the modest expansion of the Salvadoran state during this period that centered upon the development of the bureaucratic and legislative apparatuses that could administer the coffee industry. Legislative and bureaucratic institutions evolved in tandem with the expansion of the liberal state, which entailed the evolution of ideas of abstract political equality and representative democracy and the consequent expansion of the electoral system. Additionally, the Salvadoran state developed its repressive apparatuses in turn of the agro-industry, particularly its security forces whose primary purpose was to ensure the security of coffee estates, the protection of elite property, and the maintenance of the social order and hierarchy that was conducive to coffee production. Both of these processes, which were reactions and responses the development of coffee planting, constitute the cardinal axes of Salvadoran political modernization and hence merit closer attention.

Coffee and Electoral Politics

New archival evidence that has come to light reveals that El Salvador's legislative and political development during much of the 19th-century is marked by two broad periods, the latter of which was demarcated by the evolution of the electoral code around the development of the

agro-industry and the liberal political ideologies that buttressed it. The first epoch of Salvadoran political development is an early republican period prior to coffee production in which the acting constitutions of the Central American Republic remained "conservative" and increased the distance between the common voters and elected representatives, while decreasing accountability. This enabled elites to maintain control of the legislative process and protect their interest following the pattern of political control established during the colonial period, and which suited traditional economic activity. But a second period of legislative development that commenced after El Salvador broke with the Central American Republic in the 1840s opened up the electoral process precisely at the time when coffee cultivation began to expand in the country. This period was defined by increasing suffrage, direct representation, and the removal of wealth requirements for voting such that by the 1870s all the restrictions that had been codified by earlier constitutions during the period of the Central American federation withered away (Ching 2014, 48).

However, the development of representative democracy and the codification of mass political participation in El Salvador through the constitutional reforms from the 1840s through the late 1870s did not automatically signify that such electoral processes were devoid of elite manipulation and ultimately entailed only an abstract form of political equality. Indeed, as explained in the subsequent sections, elites utilized liberal political reforms to generate electoral outcomes that suited their interests. In the meantime, the growth of the coffee industry led to increasing class differentiation and social stratification, making the social and material quotidian reality for most common folk profoundly inequitable. The inherent contradiction of growing class inequality amidst expanding political equality can be explained from two angles.

First, the modernization of the electoral code and the rise of electoral politics in El Salvador partly reflected the wish of Salvadoran liberals to "participate in cutting-edge forms of nation-state formation, which often meant embracing liberal principles, while still protecting themselves from the vagaries of autonomous mass action" (Ching 2014, 49). As comparative studies of Latin American political history demonstrate, in many contexts, elite recalcitrance towards the implementation of a liberal electoral code and the maintenance of a closed political system had the unintended effect of generating extra-electoral forms of political activity that defined the political praxis of poor and marginal communities outside of the formal mechanisms of the state. In doing so, many of these communities broadened the conception of political inclusion and citizenship within and beyond the formal political sphere. Studies on mass popular movements in Colombia, Chile, and Peru during the first half of the 19th-century illustrate the process by which the popular political mobilization of poor urban and rural communities that were marginalized from the formal mechanisms of politics and belonging were able to broaden the realm of political inclusion and practice through contestation from below. Although the further retraction of rights was a common response to these movements, the state, and the elites that controlled the formal political process, often responded to these challenges by strategically broadening the conception of citizenship and political equality and granting of new political rights in the hope of coopting support from these communities. However, this form of abstract political equality rarely translated to the transformation of economic and social relations on the ground. In addition, as the next section shows, the electoral process was often manipulated by elites through coercion and negotiation. For instance, the Huanta rebellion of 1820 in Peru, and the consequent shaping of the political process that led to the formation of the modern Peruvian state, illustrates the manner in which citizenship and abstract political equality was broadened to

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meet the challenge of mass political mobilization.[43] Given that Salvadoran history during the first half of the 19th-century was punctuated by a series of indigenous and peasant revolts, the broadening of the political process in El Salvador precisely during the period in which expanding coffee production accentuated the country's class and racial hierarchies can be understood as a strategy to preempt the threat of mass political mobilization from below.

Second, the modernization of the nation-state through the liberalization of the electoral process facilitated the building of patron-client networks that came to define Salvadoran politics since the independence period. Electoral politics allowed the informal clientelistic political system to endure through the veneer of legitimacy created by the formal political process. Indeed, the nature of politics in El Salvador was shaped by social and economic inequalities created by the Spanish system of indigo and cotton cultivation, and subsequently exacerbated by the rise of coffee planting since 1850. In particular, the vast gap in the distribution of wealth and landownership wrought by the expansion of coffee established the conditions necessary for the evolution of patron-client networks that defined Salvadoran politics well into the second half of the 20th century. The strength and durability of these patron-client networks depended upon both the formal legislative and electoral mechanisms that signaled legitimacy through popular consent, and the informal system of payoffs and coercion. As such, universal male suffrage ensured that local political bosses could build their networks of clients, whom they retained either through coercion, or patronage and negotiation. These local political bosses could them summon their clients at election time to ensure an electoral outcome in their favor, creating a veneer of legitimacy to electoral results. This process vested de facto authority with de jure legitimacy and was used as a method of securing economic and political position and control. Clients could also be called upon in times of crisis and warfare to defend the interests of the local

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[43] I drawn this discussion and materials from Ching (2014).

elite in the municipalities that they controlled. At the national level, these political bosses would then be incorporated into a national network of patrons and clients, becoming clients themselves for national level patrons to whom they pledged loyalty based on the prestige and favors that these patrons could command.

Payments for local political bosses from national level players therefore came in the form of favors, such as favorable rulings over land disputes and promotions, which ensured not only their loyalty, but also the loyalty of their local-level clients. In an interview with a British journalist in 1926, ex-Salvadoran president Jorge Melendez, a member of the Melendez-Quinones clan that controlled Salvadoran politics from 1913-1927, succinctly explained the process of clientelism at the level of national politics: "Well you see, you externalize your wishes, so to speak. You let the notion get out that this or that man would be a good fellow for president. Then everybody begins to whisper to everyone else, 'Don Jorge wants So-and So.' And they start forming clubs to support him. If the opposition wants to form a club, why you let them do so by all means, but one got the notion that when election day came around, there were ways of managing things" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 41). This made Salvadoran "democracy" from the period of independence until the populist reformist governments of the 1920s a process defined by electoral politics that were easily manipulated to suit elite interests, since "voting reflected political networks ability to monopolize voting stations and ensure that whoever came to the polls voted accordingly" (Ching 2014, 53). Defined as it was by an electoral process manipulated by elites tied to coffee production, for much of the 19th and 20th-centuries, politics in El Salvador exemplified the coexistence of coercion and consent in a political processes designed to protect property, privilege, and power.

<u>Coffee and the Repressive Apparatus of the State</u>

Coercion was thus an important component in the modernization of Salvadoran political system, though it needed to be lanced with consent garnered through patronage and negotiation. Therefore, a crucial process that defined Salvadoran political modernization in relation to coffee growing was the development of the repressive apparatus of the state and the security forces. El Salvador's infamous National Guard arose in fact to protect coffee estates in the 1910s (Stanley 1994). It is unsurprising that the National Guard continued performing this function seven decades later at the onset of the Salvadoran civil conflict. These were the principal axes around which the modernization of the Salvadoran state's repressive function was structured mot only through the first decades of the twentieth century, but also through the period of military rule as the fundamental pattern was not transformed by the consolidation of the military regime in 1932.

Therefore, it is necessary to explicate the development and expansion of the Salvadoran state and El Salvador's process of political modernization around these axes by tracing the dialectical relationship that the state had to the system of coffee production. Hence, such an analysis entails tracing the relationship between the oligarchy and the military, which was more often than not fraught with points of fracture and contradiction, often pitting the economic elite's belief in the primacy of economic libertarianism against the military's reformist tendencies and their own conception of the institutional and constitutional mission. But more importantly, the explanation for the political modernization of lies in the period between 1931-1940, when General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez consolidated military control of the state and instituted the military as the leading class amongst the elite constellation of classes that drove Salvadoran political and economic modernization. The next section is thus devoted to explicating

the rise of the Salvadoran military regime in the context of the economic and social ruptures created by the country's agro-export economy.

Economic Crisis, the Labor Movement, and Democratic Reforms in the 1920s

Scholars generally agree that the seminal event in the evolution of Salvadoran political modernity is the consolidation of the military regime in 1932 by General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez, dividing El Salvador's political development into a pre-1931 period and post-1931 period.[44] Ironically, the root of Martínez's rise to power can be traced to the democratic reforms of the late 1920s under the presidency of Pio Romero Bosque. By the mid-1920s, the clientelistic system that defined Salvadoran politics faced a challenge from the organization of urban labor and its radicalization in the context of the expansion of global socialism after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. The historical conditions for the organization of labor in San Salvador and other major Salvadoran cities was tied to the rise of a working class whose growth was directly linked to coffee production.

First, the connection between the coffee industry and the rise of the urban working class lies in the fact that the growth of an urban proletariat was a function of both the privatization and concentration of land ownership amidst the expanding coffee economy which dislocated rural workers and created a landless peasantry that increasingly flocked to the cities in search for work during the first decades of the 20th century. Additionally, the seasonal nature of coffee picking, which left rural workers without land or work for much of the year, only exacerbated rural poverty and hence accelerated the process of *campesino* migration from the countryside to the

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[44] See Ching (2014), Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008), Stanley (1997), Anderson ([1971] 1992).

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urban centers. These processes led to the growth of the urban working poor from the 1890s to the 1920s.

Second, the economic modernization driven by the coffee industry created new technological needs and infrastructural demands that required a skilled labor force. Consequently, a skilled labor force composed primarily of artisans whose work was directly connected to the ancillary industries and occupations that sustained the agrarian economy, such as carpentry, metalwork, and railroad work, emerged in urban areas (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008). This labor force also included workers involved in the manufacturing, service, and transportation industries, which had become more prevalent as a result of the coffee modernization since the 1880s.[45]

The growth of worker radicalism in the early 1920s, shaped by both the economic crisis of the global market in 1919 and the rise of socialist influence in El Salvador, became an increasing threat to the Melendez-Quinones administrations. The presidencies of the Melendez-Quinones dynasty, a planting family that controlled the Salvadoran state from 1913-1927, increased the process of state centralization initiated by late 19th-century liberal regimes. The Melendez-Quinones clan ingratiated itself with the most powerful sectors of the oligarchy by abandoning previous regimes' protection of small coffee producers and land holders, and fostering a new wave of "large-scale investments and subsidies for the development of rail, road, port, and communication infrastructure, along with notable increases in other areas, including urban schools and a modernized military" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 34). This led to unprecedented export and internal tax revenues (Ibid). The Melendez-Quinones were thus poised to control the political arena for nearly two decades and lead the process of political and economic modernization into a new phase.

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[45] See Anderson ([1971] 1992).

The period of dominance of the Salvadoran presidency by the Melendez-Quinones clan would prove to be a decisive point in the development of the modern Salvadoran state. As in previous administrations, the Melendez-Quinones administrations were adept at generating favorable electoral outcomes by manipulating patron-client networks. Workers in the urban areas organized and demonstrated, sometimes violently, throughout the late teens and early twenties against the electoral fraud and policies pursued by the regime that did not benefit the urban working class. Notable events during the ostensibly stable Melendez-Quinones period includes demonstrations in San Salvador in 1918 and 1922 that turned violent and were suppressed by the national guard. By the mid 1920s, discontent had grown and these urban popular and middle class sectors began calling for electoral reforms.

Pio Romero Bosque's reforms were thus were rooted in the need of the Salvadoran state to respond to the challenge posed by the organization of labor by radicalized urban middle class professionals, proletarians, and skilled artisans that were directly linked the expansion of the coffee industry and the growth of cities in the late 1910s.[46] Yet, scholars do not elaborate on the precise legislative mechanisms for Romero Bosque's reforms, if there were indeed any, and limit themselves to discussing the pressure that the central government exerted on local officials to allow elections free from coercion and adopt a conciliatory style to solve factional disputes and reach a consensus (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 43; Ching 2014). What is clear is that Romero Bosque's electoral reforms undermined the power of local political bosses and their coercion and patronage strategies used to generate electoral outcomes that favored political and economic elite. This marginalized the local and national level networks controlled by the PND,

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[46] In addition, as explored in subsequent chapters, based on my own research I hypothesize that the growth of an intellectual class that was linked through Athenaeums and Theosophical lodges, which appealed to this petty bourgeoisie, was influential in building networks of key players across civil society that could challenge the economic elite for political control.

the traditional party of the elite. Romero Bosque's decision to undertake the reforms appears to have been based on his understanding that urban labor was not as easily disciplined by patron-client networks that had defined rural labor relations since the independence period, evinced by the intense factionalism and conflict in the cities that the clientelistic system could no longer successfully negotiate. The sensible political solution to the threat posed by the organization of labor thus entailed democratic reforms to the electoral processes that undermined the power of political bosses and their patron-client networks. This would lead to the first, and perhaps only, truly free presidential election in El Salvador's history. Despite this, however, electoral reform would prove to be the liberal equilibrium and a mechanism to stymie the forces that called for a radical transformation of society. More importantly perhaps, it would usher in the era of militarism.

Ultimately, Pio Bosque's reforms led to the election of Arturo Araujo in the presidential campaign of 1930. Araujo ran on a populist platform that drew a broad coalition composed of urban laborers, the bourgeoning middle and professional class in San Salvador, and peasant laborers—a most decidedly unprecedented event in Salvadoran history. The alliance between urban workers and the middle classes "had roots in the decades old political culture of reformism [in the cities], but its extension into mass rural support that did not rely on patronage networks was unprecedented" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago, 2008, 59). Araujo's Labor party modeled itself after the British Labor party. Indeed, the party's *laborismo* was "El Salvador's version of social democracy inspired by firsthand knowledge of the British Labor party and other reformist currents in Central America" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 59). Araujo's party was thus an effort to induce political reforms strong enough to turn the tie of the radicalization of labor that only intensified from the period of 1927-1930.

Ideologically Araujo drew from the vitalist philosophy of Salvadoran intellectual Alberto Masferrer as a way to challenge the rise of socialist ideas and prevent the spread of communism. Masferrer *vitalismo* was an economic and political philosophy influenced by the economic thought of Henry George,[47] whose 1879 publication of *Progress and Poverty* is credited with influencing the political and economic reforms during the Progressive Era in the United States. Among other things, the progressive era reforms that spanned from the Teddy Roosevelt to the Wilson administration targeted the power of political machines that functioned not unlike the patron-client networks of El Salvador. The next chapter will devote closer attention to Masferrer's thought in relation to other Salvadoran intellectuals in their hemispheric context. For now, however, suffice to state that Masferrer's *vitalismo* referred to

> the 'vital minimum' which Masferrer declared that all should have to lead a decent human life. He included nine major points, among them: hygienic, honest work; sufficient varied and nutritious food; good housing; decent education; and rest and recreation (Anderson 1992, 67)

Masferrer's *vitalismo* thus focused on the betterment social and economic conditions for common Salvadorans, a departure from liberal politics based on abstract political rights that informed the logic of Salvadoran electoral politics. Most importantly, Masferrer proposed that in order to achieve these goals, the state should cut military expenditure and pursue land reforms (Anderson 1882, 68). Hence, he called for the abolition of land monopolies that formed the backbone of the coffee industry and recommended that the state redistribute land.

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[47] Born in in Philadelphia in 1839, Henry George was an autodidact that "…identified the land monopoly of the newly formed corporations as the primary reason for the massive poverty of the working class." In Francis J. Sinicus, The Progressive Era: A Reference Guide 2015, pg. 123. Cf. William J. Link and Susana J. Link, eds. *The Gilded and Progressive Eras: A Documentary Reader*. Wiley and Sons (Blackwell Publishing): MA and Oxford, 2012, pg. 109. Recent studies also point to the influence of Henry George's ideas on the development of Jose Marti's economic thought. Cf. Mace, Elisabeth. "The economic thinking of Jose Marti: Legacy foundation for the integration of America". Retrieved 5 August 2015.

Although the sources extant seem to indicate that Arturo Araujo had profound respect for Masferrer, as evinced by his *laborista* party's social democratic ideology, Araujo was a practical politician who was careful not to try to implement most of Masferrer's recommendations, especially land reforms or a reduction of military spending. Indeed, Araujo most likely never intend to follow through with Masferrer's recommendations on land distribution (Anderson). To do so was politically dangerous, since some members of the oligarchic families and the military viewed Masferrer as redder than Trotsky, and whose association with the president casted a cloud of suspicion upon Araujo himself. Araujo was thus faced with the problem of balancing the interests of competing factions, the most important of which were the oligarchic elite, peasant workers, the military, and his own party. Out of these, the military was a crucial class, since Araujo's regime could not survive without their support. Ultimately, the solution that Araujo pursued to solve the problem of garnering military support would prove to be one of the most decisive in the development of Salvadoran modernity along all its mediating vectors.

When Pio Bosque made the decision to open up the electoral system for the presidential election that would chose his successor in 1930, there were no democratic mechanisms capable of accommodating competing factions and interests in a national-level election. At the time El Salvador's political system was a two party system in which the elite-controlled PND ruled almost uncontested, save for instances in which the party fragmented along the lines of local chieftains. In the absence of parties who could hold primaries to screen and nominate candidates, the election turned out to be a chaotic bid for the Salvadoran presidency. As it became clear that Pio Bosque genuinely intended to hold free elections, General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez decided to resign from his post as inspector general of the army and run for the Salvadoran presidency.

As the next chapters will show, Martínez was well known and respected in the Salvadoran capital amongst petty bourgeois intellectual and esoteric circles, whose members were key players in Salvadoran arts, letters, and science and who held important positions across several civil institutions. This fact, rarely discussed by the existing scholarship, since no academic study has traced Martínez's membership into these organization and the key networks of these societies, may have been what emboldened Martínez to seek the presidency despite being a dark-skinned mestizo with strong indigenous traits, hailing from humble origins, and without wealth or having ever held an important political office. What is certain, however, is that Martínez's core base of support came primarily form a conglomerate middle, professional, and military classes in the capital.

Yet, as the process leading to election day unfolded, General Martínez inexplicably fell out of the presidential race and lent his full support to Arturo Araujo's Labor party.[48] None of the major studies on the development of the Salvadoran state and political modernity around the events of 1932 (Anderson 1992, Stanley 1997, Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, Ching 2014) have uncovered documentary or other archival evidence that can shed light or provide an explanation for Martínez's decision to drop out of the race. Perhaps Martínez's decision was based on foresight that a successful bid for the presidency was untenable without a broader coalition that included the labor party. Whatever the case, the results of the election are well known. Ultimately, Araujo won 46% of the vote and nearly twice as many votes as the next candidate, Alberto Gomez Zarate, who was "the favorite of the remnants of the Melendez-Quinones faction and the PND" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 61). As Gould and Lauria Santiago point out:

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[48] See Anderson ([1971] 1992)

Araujo's sweeping victory was a testament to the power of the…opposition and labor

movements that flourished during the 1920s. And yet, that hope and promise that

Araujismo embodied would be shattered shortly after he assumed office. (Gould and

Lauria-Santiago 2008, 61)

Indeed, the events unfolding shortly after Araujo's election to the presidency would usher in

nearly 60 years of uninterrupted military rule in El Salvador. But ironically the seeds of

militarism were sown during the years of democratic reform.

What exactly transpired after Araujo's election is unclear, and sources disagree as to how

Araujo as president-elect decided to name Martínez as his vice president. Some sources indicate

that one of Martínez's influential Masonic brothers approached Araujo and suggested to him that

the General would be the ideal candidate for the vice presidency (Anderson 1992). More recent

sources point to a deal brokered by Romero Bosque in the presidential palace that would bring

the military into the fold, thus favoring Martínez for the job (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008).

Whatever the case, the exact details of the process that got Martínez into the vice-presidential

seat may never be known. However, what is clear is that Araujo not only named General

Martínez vice president, but also minister of war, creating the ideal conditions for a successful

coup. This decision may have been based on Araujo's need to gain support from the military, and

naming a well respected general like Martínez as both his vice president and minister of war may

have seem like a good choice to coopt the military.

Martínez seized the opportunity to take power in the midst of Araujo's declining

popularity a mere nine months after the election. On one hand Araujo's rapid decline was in part

due to the fact that he drew from a fragile coalition whose sectarianism threatened to dissolve it

from the very start; on the other hand, Araujo's failure to deliver on many of the promises that

had brought the rank and file of the labor movement into his fold alienated the more radicalized

sectors of his labor party. Through a murky series of dealings that culminated in a plot whose

details remain obscure, General Martínez exploited the divisions of the Araujo coalition and

enlisted the loyalty of military officers that early on had looked at Araujo's election with

suspicion. Martínez thus seized the presidency on December 2, 1931 through a well-orchestrated

military coup that sent Araujo into exile, never to return to El Salvador.

The Rebellion of 1932, Consolidation of Military Hegemony, and Salvadoran Political

Modernity

The historical processes leading to the insurrection of 1932 are complex and have merited

book-length studies.[49] A thorough account of these events and their aftermath thus lies beyond

the scope of the present inquiry. However, in order to understand the centrality of 1932 to the

development of Salvadoran political modernity, and in turn the perpetuation of an economic

system upon which Salvadoran modernization was based, it is important to retrace the dialectical

relationship between economic crises ushered in by coffee production, the organization of labor,

and the response of the Salvadoran state and the army leading to the development, resolution,

and aftermath of the 1932 insurrection.

Rooted as they were in the structural material conditions created by the expansion of

coffee production, Romero Bosque's short lived "democratic" reforms and Araujo's labor party

could not turn the revolutionary tide that would soon engulf the country. The flame for the

caldron of revolutionary activity was lit before Araujo took office with the crash of the global

market in 1929, which slashed coffee prices in half and consequently plummeted worker's

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[49] See Anderson (1992), Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008), Ching et al (2012).

wages. This crisis created the historical conjuncture seized by revolutionaries of the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS) in 1932. The PCS originated from the labor movements of the 1920s and quickly came under Soviet influence. The foundation for the organization of labor established during the 1920s, and the democratic reforms that ironically facilitated it, thus created the organizational infrastructure for a full-scale insurrection.

The basic strategy for the PCS called for organizers and leaders of the party in El Salvador to coordinate an uprising of peasant workers in the coffee-growing zones with urban workers in San Salvador. The insurrection exploded on January 6, 1932, just a month after General Martínez had seized the presidency. The urban labor organizations understood even as early as the mid 1920s that they could not be successful without the support of indigenous peasant workers in the countryside. Indigenous peasants in the coffee zones were therefore the key component of the mass organization and the uprising, and they would bear the brunt of the appalling repression that would ultimately crush the insurrection.

Indeed, indigenous peasants formed the core of the revolt in the western coffee growing region of El Salvador in 1932, the economic backbone of the country. Beyond the strategy pursued by the PCS to create a coalition of urban proletariats and campesinos, the pivotal role played by indigenous peasants is grounded in the political and economic processes that exacerbated the racial and class hierarchies of El Salvador and that defined Salvadoran modernity. Perhaps no other sector of Salvadoran society was hit as hard by the historical process of modernity than El Salvador's indigenous peasantry, whose communities languished as a result of the ruptures ushered in by El Salvador's agro-export economic modernization and who were all but ignored or stood to benefit little from liberal political reforms since the late 19th-century. In sum, the bases of the revolt of 1932 were precisely the intersection of the

economic and political processes that shaped Salvadoran modernity. Anderson's succinct

summary and analysis of the effects of these processes merits quoting at length:

> …When one combines all the reasons for peasant discontent—the breakdown of the
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> *ejidos*, the miserable treatment of the *colonos* and hired hands, the social problems and
>
> dislocation caused by the coffee economy, the cultural hostility between Indian and
>
> Ladino, and the class hostility between *campesino* and landholder—and then when one
>
> adds to this the economic disaster of the Depression, it is not hard to see the basis for the
>
> revolt of 1932. (Anderson 1992, 36)

It is against these processes that defined Salvadoran modernity, and the grievances which

accompanied them and which cut across urban and rural workers, that the PCS laid the

groundwork for organizing the masses. The PCS entrusted Augusto Farabundo Martí with the

organizational work. Born to the Pedro Martí and Socorro Rodriguez on May 5, 1893 in

Teotepeque, Department of La Libertad, Marti became the symbol of a true internationalist Latin

American revolutionary. Growing up among *colonos* and *jornaleros* that worked in his father's

1,289-hectare farm, Martí identified with peasant workers and their struggles from a young age.[50]

Marti went on to study law at El Salvador's National University, eventually becoming involved

with revolutionary nationalist movements across the Americas. He built networks with

revolutionaries and labor organizations in Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. In time, Martí

gained notoriety throughout the Central American region as fervent communist, and was well

known for fighting in Sandino's army in Nicaragua against the invading U.S. Marines. He

distinguished himself during his military service in Sandino's army, earning him the rank of

colonel. His activities posed such a threat to the established order that was imprisoned numerous

times and was forcibly exiled from El Salvador during the so-called democratic reforms of the

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[50] See http://www.oocities.org/guerrillasenlatinoamerica/farabundo.htm

Romeo Bosque administration to prevent him from becoming a candidate in the 1930 election. Yet, Martí managed to slip back into El Salvador aided by his Central American networks, and began organizing the masses for revolutionary movement.

After a series of electoral frauds during municipal elections and worker strikes that were suppressed with violence by armed troops in the key coffee growing department of Ahuachapan in late 1931, and subsequent failed attempts by the PCS to negotiate with Martínez's government, the possibility for a political solution to *campesino* and proletarian grievances seemed foreclosed. The PCS moved ahead with violence. On January 22, 1932, as ominous volcanic eruptions in neighboring Guatemala darkened the Central American skies and covered Salvadoran soil in ash, eleven cities across western El Salvador erupted in violence. The revolutionary fighters included both ladino and indigenous peasants and urban workers, and even some people described as "mulattoes" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 171). The attacks concentrated in major cities of the coffee growing zone and were directed at military barracks, municipal seats, and the properties of landed elites. It is estimated that between 5,000-7,000 revolutionaries participated in the uprising.

The insurrection, however, proved to poorly planned and executed and culminated in the massacre of an estimated 25,000-30,000 peasants, a figure that well surpassed the number of people who actually participated in the revolt, by the forces of General Martínez under the command of General José Tomás Calderón. Documentary evidence from the Soviet archives and oral histories on the events of 1932 point to the fact that the insurgents were poorly organized and poorly armed, and lacked a sound military strategy for the insurrection. These studies reveal is that a large force composed primarily of indigenous peasants armed mostly with machetes and

a few rifles were pitted against the professional training and sophisticated weaponry of the National Guard. Consequently, the state's force swiftly overwhelmed the revolutionaries.

The massacre was incalculable, as revolutionary campesinos were ruthlessly mowed down by the *guardia's* machine guns, peasant dwellings were burnt with women and children still inside, and mass executions and hangings of captured insurgents took place in the various towns were the violence erupted. When not burnt or mutilated, the bodies of dead insurgents were often deposited in mass graves (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008). Often times, insurgents who were taken prisoner under false promises for amnesty were forced to dig their own graves and were then summarily executed in groups of men tied together. In some cities like Sonsonate, where the damage caused by the rebels was considerable, the infuriated bourgeoisie often took prisoners from military barracks to beat and lynch them. These lynchings turned into theaters of the macabre, as pictures of the hanged and mutilated bodies were often sold as souvenirs in San Salvador. The extent of the massacre was so severe in many of the key cities were the violence erupted that the streets were said to have run red with blood. The leadership of the revolt was equally decimated, as intelligence reports compiled by paid informants alerted the National Guard of the whereabouts of Martí and the leadership of the PCS. Farabundo Martí's exemplary revolutionary life ended before a firing squad, and with it a career of political activism that embodied Latin America's drive for self-determination from the forces of modernity. His vision for the emancipation for Latin American and El Salvador would rise again in the 1980s when his name and political project were resurrected by the FMLN, an umbrella revolutionary organization that bore his name.[51]

Now recognized as one of the most barbarous massacres of Latin American history, *La matanza*, as the blood shed of 1932 is known, had a crucial role to play in the development of the

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[51] The *Frente Farabundo Marti para La Liberacion Nacional* (FMLN) was founded on October 10, 1980.

Salvadoran state and Salvadoran modernity. After the *Matanza*, the long and dark night of military rule descended upon El Salvador. It is thus important to highlight the historical legacies of 1932 that shaped development of Salvadoran politics and society. Indeed, 1932 had "devastating long-term political, [economic], and social consequences for the entire country….[The *Matanza* resulted in] an enormous concentration of wealth and power in the hands of an agrarian elite, who evinced a mixture of scorn and fear of the rural poor, and depended upon a brutally repressive regime to remain in power" (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 240). It is incontestable that 1932 ushered the era of military-oligarchic alliance, a conclusion sustained by the historical evidence and expressed in the scholarly consensus.[52]

Of equal importance, the state's massive retaliation set the pattern for the magnitude of violence that the Salvadoran state and its military were willing to pursue in times of crisis. Since it is estimated that the rebel force numbering between 5,000-7,000 killed approximately 100 people, the state killed at a ratio of at least 100 to 1, but it was perhaps closer to 250 to 1.[53] The scope of the violence is commonly explained as Martínez's strategy for preventing direct intervention from the United States, which had set a precedent of military occupation in Cuba, The Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua in the decades just prior to *La Matanza*. The threat of U.S. direct intervention and invasion seemed imminent, as the U.S. placed Navy destroyers just off the port of La Libertad, laying in wait as the rebellion unfolded.[54] Martínez thus did not want to give the U.S. an excuse to occupy El Salvador. The exaggeration of the communist threat and the extent of the slaughter were in some ways designed as a strategy to prevent U.S. occupation

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[52] See Paige (1996), Stanley (1997), Grenier (1999), Wood (2001).
[53] See Anderson (1992).
[54] See Anderson (1992).

and aggrandize Martínez's capacity as a military and political leader who could maintain a strong stance against communism.[55]

On the other hand, the extent of the killing and its barbarity can be explained as a internal political calculation in which brutal repression by military forces could garner the consent of economic elites, for whom the uprising represented the realization of their worst nightmare: an Indian and ladino peasant insurrection under the auspices of international communism.[56] As the events following the massacre demonstrate, the violence did have the effect of ingratiating Martínez with the country's oligarchic elite whose relations with the military had been strained since the Melendez-Quinones administration.[57] Indeed, the extent of the massacre to assuage elite discontent made Martínez and his military government seem like the ideal political and military leaders who could protect their interests from the rapaciousness of domestic and international socialism. This in turn was one pivotal element in transforming the military class into a leader amongst the conglomerate of classes that constituted the Salvadoran historic bloc.

Beyond the domestic and international political expediency of the massacre and the effect that it had upon the shaping of the Salvadoran historic bloc, *La Matanza*'s legacies also shaped the patterns of political participation and party affiliation in El Salvador. Indeed, the violence had the effect of suppressing future political and labor organization in El Salvador's western coffee growing zone, a pattern that endures well into the present period. This may well be part of what explains the subsequent development of the western coffee zone as a political stronghold for the far right and the FMLN's historic and continued inability to command popular support and

[55] See Anderson (1992).
[56] See Gould and Lauria Santiago (2008).
[57] See Ching (2014).

establish a strong political presence in western El Salvador.[58] But part of the explanation behind

the far right's influence in western El Salvador resides in the social policies that the Martínez

pursued after the massacre. Most studies on the development of the Salvadoran state and politics

tend to emphasize the coercive mechanisms of the state and its brutality, exemplified by *la*

matanza, as the primary explanation for the durability of the Salvadoran military regime and the

oligarchic elites' control of the Salvadoran economy. Yet, this explanation obviates the important

function that consent played in the consolidation of Salvadoran military hegemony. Indeed, a key

feature of the Martínez regime was his political dexterity and ability to manage coercion and

force with a whole set of populist policies that became the cornerstone of his regime's social

policy.

The resurgence of populism during the Martínez regime and the fact that Martínez made

an effort, however mild, to implement some of the policies and principles of his two

predecessors, is rarely taken into account by analyses of the Salvadoran military regime. These

policies are exemplified by Martínez's *Mejoramiento Social* (literally "Social Improvement")

program and his regime's "política de caminos" or "highway politics."[59] These programs and

public development projects stand out as the most notable social policy achievements of the

Martínez regime. When combined with the measures that Martínez took to give the Salvadoran

state greater control over its banks and economic affairs, as well as his nationalist stance against

U.S. imperialism and European economic control, it becomes clear that these policies were

paramount to the consolidation of military hegemony. The next section is thus devoted to their

analysis.

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[58] See Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008). Historically, the FMLN's geographical zones of control lay primarily in the eastern part of El Salvador. See Clements (1984) for a discussion of the regional division of El Salvador during the period of the civil conflict. See also Consalví (1996) and Danner (1994).

[59] See *Diez años en la historia de El Salvador*. Ramo de Fomento, Gobierno de El Salvador, 1942.

"Benefactor de la Patria": Masferrer's Ghost and the Politics of Populist Authoritarianism

Under the Martínez Regime

As discussed in the previous section, General Martínez enjoyed political support amongst the middle, professional, and military classes of San Salvador that backed his predecessor's bid for the presidency and remained loyal to Martínez after the coup that deposed Araujo. In the context of pre-1932 El Salvador, the growing professional and petty bourgeois classes, which included the military and intellectuals, did not share the clout and power that the economic elite and those tied to the upper echelons of planting society exercised in the political arena.[60] The interests of the elite class and their ability to secure them through networks of patronage based on coercion and negotiation shaped El Salvador's clientelistic political system and left many of these urban petty bourgeois outside the sphere of political influence. As I have suggested, this is in part what explains Martínez's base of support amongst these groups, who, still at their nascent stage in the late 1920s and 1930s, were both marginalized from the very center of power and not as easily disciplined by traditional patron-client networks.[61] Martínez's mestizo and professional military pedigree, as well as his ties to the intellectual and esoteric circles controlled by these petty bourgeois classes, made him a desirable petty bourgeois-military opposition candidate that could bridge these groups' base with the labor movements.[62] But in the aftermath of the massacre of 1932, General Martínez shrewdly pursued a series of fiscal, political, and social reforms that

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[60] See Ching (2014), Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008), Stanley (1997).
[61] See Casaus Arzu and Garcia Giraldez (2005), pgs. 1-8 for a discussion of the historical emergence and evolution of Salvadoran and Central American intellectuals. The next chapter will also expand this discussion in the context of Latin American modernism.
[62] See Anderson (1992), Marmol (1997).

allowed him to consolidate and widen his support base, even if it alienated some of the most radical elements from competing oligarchic, petty bourgeois, and labor factions.

Martínez's political strategy after 1932 can be thus divided into three broad measures: 1) economic and fiscal policies that centralized the Salvadoran state's control over financial institutions, the management of external debt, and money supply and exchange rates; 2) The investment of funds into the building of new infrastructure that was not solely centered on the exigencies of coffee production and which enhanced the quality of urban living for Salvadorans while signaling the magnanimity of the regime, particularly roads, highways, public parks, and coliseums; and 3) the social improvement program know as *Mejoramiento Social*, which included a series of manifestly radical social policies, most notably land distribution and the construction of cheap housing for the rural poor. In many ways this set of policies marked an ideological continuum with the reformism of previous liberal regimes, making them an intelligible choice given Martínez's initial basis of support. But these reforms can also be interpreted as calculated measures that made the military an important player and mediator of the central forces and processes that defined Salvadoran modernity along its economic, political, and cultural vectors, transforming the military into the leading class of the historic bloc and thus the group who would take up the historic role of consolidating the military-oligarchic hegemony that defined the historical development of El Salvador.

The first set of measures concerning fiscal and economic policies came almost immediately after the massacre. In a bold move and much to the chagrin of foreign banking interests, Martínez defaulted on a $21 million loan that had been contracted in 1922 during the Melendez-Quinones administration. In addition, Martínez ordered that custom duties be paid directly to the treasury of El Salvador and not to the representative of the U.S. banks that had lent

the money, as stipulated by the terms of the loan. This was a considerable move, given that the coffee-export economy made consumer goods scarce and imported everyday items highly sought-after commodities. Hence, there was a lot of revenue to be made through custom duties that were levied for both imports and exports. The loan therefore not only made El Salvador's economy further dependent on foreign capital, but also enriched foreign bankers while the national economy languished behind. In this context, Martínez's default o the loan and his control of custom duties made him a nationalist and protector of the country's economic interests against the powerful U.S. banking institutions. The U.S. did not come to the aid of the bankers, partly because "the state Department…did not want to embarrass the dictator who seemed the only bulwark against communism" (Anderson 1992, 193).

In quick succession, Martínez declared *la ley moratoria* on March 12, 1932, or a "suspension of payment on all domestic, private debts and a 40 percent reduction of the interest due on them" (Anderson 1992, 193). Coffee farmers, in particular small scale producers, found themselves in a dire situation in the early 1930s, partly as a result of the fall of coffee prices in the world market, which had plummeted to 57%, and partly as a result of predatory lending by the three regional financial institutions that controlled Salvadoran banking and which, as explored in previous sections, were tied to foreign capital. The suspension on the payment of internal debts and the drastic reduction in the loans' interest rates saved small-scale producers from bankruptcy. In step with these fiscal changes, Martínez founded El Salvador's first Central Reserve Bank, giving to it "…the exclusive right to print money, control the export and import of gold, and control foreign exchange rates" (Anderson 1992, 193). The regional banks that previously controlled Salvadoran finance printed their own money by enlisting the aid of U.S. printing companies and speculated in foreign currency, weakening El Salvador's national

currency. By contrast, Martínez's measures gave El Salvador's first national financial institution the power to peg the colon at 2.5 to the dollar, where it remained well into the 1970s- a "remarkable feat of financial stability" (Anderson 1992, 193). These measures not only filled the coffers of the national treasury and alleviated the economic plight of small-scale producers, but also made Martínez seem like the savior of El Salvador's national economy. More importantly, however, it increased the centralization of the Salvadoran state and its role in the country's economic affairs, which had hitherto being the realm of the economic elite and their financial partners. The incursions of the military-controlled Salvadoran state into the sphere of economic activity and regulation thus made an unmistakable statement about the new institutional and historic role played by the Salvadoran military in the development of Salvadoran modernity.

Alongside these economic and fiscal reforms, the Salvadoran state under Martínez also pursued an unprecedented program of public building projects that set modernization under the Martínez regime apart from the six decades of Salvadoran infrastructural modernization that preceded it. Unlike previous advances in infrastructure, architecture, and technology, these public building projects were not immediately tied to the infrastructural necessities of the coffee industry and their utility was often based upon the expansion of public education, healthcare, transportation, recreation, sport, and leisure. Indeed, the manifestly paradoxical populism of the Martínez military dictatorship is exemplified on a material plane by the colossal and unprecedented public beneficence projects undertaken between 1932 and 1942. It is important to remark, however, that while these projects mark a departure from previous building projects under the auspices of the Salvadoran state, they are nevertheless situated within the continuum of Salvadoran economic modernization that began since the late 19th-century.

As previously discussed, although public works projects were part of El Salvador's

economic modernization strategies during the late 19th century, most of these projects, such as

the country's first railroads, electricity, and the telegraph, were tied to the coffee economy.

Consequently, these projects primarily benefited the western coffee-growing region of the

country and important urban centers, as well as those involved in the coffee production,

processing, and export. By contrast, the public works projects of the Martínez era were far-

reaching and widespread, and centered upon both the creation and beautification of public

spaces; the construction of national highways and roads that could connect the country's western,

central, and eastern regions for the first time; hospitals, wards, and hospices that improved

hygiene and healthcare in the cities; and lastly theaters, stadiums, and public parks that heralded

a new age of recreation, leisure, and cultural sophistication. I will discuss these latter public

works as part and parcel of the modernist cultural trends of El Salvador in the next chapter, and

will remained focused on what Martínez's administration characterized as "*a política de

caminos.*"[63]

Indeed, this "*política de caminos*" and unprecedented public works projects were some of

the highlights of the Martínez era's accomplishments and embodied the regime's discourse of

populist politics. From 1932-1942, the executive branch of the state, through its *Ramo/Ministerio

de Fomento* (Development Department), spent an unprecedented 11,157, 250.64 colones

(approximately $5.5 million) in highways and an additional 4,167, 576.60 colones

(approximately $2 million) in public works.[64] In particular, the building of two modern highways

spanning El Salvador's entire Atlantic coast, which connected San Salvador and the central zone

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[63] The phrase "política de caminos" was coined by a document published in 1942 by El Salvador's Ramo de Fomento entitled "Diez años en la historia de el Salvador." Oddly, this document's pages are not numbered. Thus, when quoting material I'll be referencing the relevant section in the document, but not page numbers.
[64] *Diez años en la historia de el Salvador*, Resumen. Ramo de Fomento, Gobierno de El Salvador, 1942.

with the country's western coffee growing zone and the rural eastern part of the country for the first time in Salvadoran history, were an extraordinary achievement. The highway linking San Salvador with the eastern zone (known as Oriente) was the single largest expenditure of the entire public works program under Martínez, costing an exorbitant 5.7 million colones.[65] Aside from these impressive highways and smaller thoroughfares that connected the cities with them, the Martínez regime undertook a vigorous program of public works that included the paving of the entire city of Santa Ana, a important *cabecera departamental* (provincial capital) whose history was closely intertwined with coffee production; the building of the *Estadio Nacional Flor Blanca* in San Salvador, El Salvador's first national coliseum; the refurbishing and beautification of the School of Medicine; the building of *Parque Cuscatlán*, modeled after the French formal gardens of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the building of *Edificio Direccion General de la Policia* (National Police Headquarters).[66]

These extraordinary accomplishments were trumpeted in a document published by the Martínez administration in 1942 entitled "*Diez años en la historia de El Salvador,*" and which seems to have escaped the attention of scholars. This statistical "album" is singular not only for its rich and detailed financial, statistical, and photographic documentation of the unwritten history of Martínez's public works projects, but also because it is framed around the dominant state rhetoric which casted Martínez as the benefactor of the Salvadoran fatherland. Among other things, the document's introduction is strongly framed around ideas of modernity and progress, claiming that each day that passes since the establishment of Martínez's rule, a new "luminous page in the History of our *Patria* is written."[67] Here, history is deliberately capitalized, a rhetorical strategy which in the context of the piece personifies the historical process itself by

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[65] *Diez años en la historia de el Salvador*, Carreteras. Ramo de Fomento, Gobierno de El Salvador, 1942.
[66] *Diez años en la historia de el Salvador*, Obras Publicas. Ramo de Fomento, Gobierno de El Salvador, 1942.
[67] *Diez años en la historia de el Salvador*, Introduccion. Ramo de Fomento, Gobierno de El Salvador, 1942.

adducing to it a consciousness of its own, and indeed identifying it with Martínez himself, whose image is also conflated with the state. Along with this motif, the document makes an unequivocal reference to notions of modernity, order, and progress, by stating that the passage of time cements El Salvador's greatness and prestige, and affirming that El Salvador lives a "life of peace, work, and glorious conquests."[68] Progress is thus casted as a glorious endeavor presumably typified by the surmounting of obstacles and the taming of nature, and certainly signified by the building of sophisticated highways across El Salvador's tropical wilderness. Therefore, the document gives the progress of modernity a heroic pretense, and casts Martínez in an equally heroic light, exalting the General for having personally undertaken a "titanic work…for the benefit of the People, whom entrusted their destinies to [him]."[69] The latter statement manages to assert, against much of the historical record, that Martínez and the military regime ruled through consent and bequeaths to the military a privileged role in the development of El Salvador's historical trajectory. Clearly, modernity, progress, and order were constitutive of the central logic of Martínez's populist building programs, which are thus exemplified by his regime's "veritable politics of roads"[70] and used as political currency to make a case for Martínez's induction into the annals of the founding fathers of El Salvador.

Aside from the economic policies and public works undertaken by the Martínez regime, Martínez also pursued a set of social policies aimed at ameliorating the condition of the poor peasantry, and particularly its indigenous sector. The Salvadoran military regime had to co-opt support from the working and peasant classes through a set of populist policies aimed at ameliorating the economic and social conditions in the aftermath of the massacre of 1932.[71]

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[68] *Diez años en la historia de el Salvador*, Introducción. Ramo de Fomento, Gobierno de El Salvador, 1942.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] See Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008) especially p. 243 and Ching (2014).

These policies were preceded by a set of public statements delivered by Martínez himself before

the public and the Salvadoran legislature over several months after the massacre, expressing a

concern for the working class and peasantry and suggesting a desire to preempt future

insurrections not through military force, but through social policy.

As Ching et. al point out, "…shortly after the massacre, the military government began,

in an informal fashion, to make public its intention to commence reforms in the countryside.

Martínez was the main spokesperson of the military regime before the people; his

speeches…reflect the public policy that the government took and shed light on some of the

issues that preoccupied the state."[72] A striking example of these preoccupations and the regime's

public policy stance comes from an interview with Martínez published in *Diario del Salvador* in

July 1932, some 7 months after the massacre, in which Martínez declared that "his greatest

concern at the moment was only to better the condition of all the proletariats."[73] Martínez's

"concern" for the proletariat took the form of his program of "*Mejoramiento Social"* that

centered upon the redistribution of lands that were sold to poor families at market price and at a

low interest rate; the banning of tokens, which had hitherto been used to pay workers for their

labor in large coffee estates instead of legal tender, and the building of low income housing.[74]

This program was unprecedented in its aims and its populist framing, and it did gain Martínez

opposition amongst the most recalcitrant elements of the Salvadoran economic elite. And yet,

while these programs complicate the dominant narrative of Martínez's military regime as an

insidiously repressive military dictatorship, the ultimate objectives were not only to address the

economic causes for dissent, but also, and perhaps principally, to coat the regime with a veneer

of benevolent protectionism and engender popular support. In its naked purpose, the policies and

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[72] Ching et al, (2011, 118)
[73] *Diario del Salvador*, 26 de Julio de 1932, p. 4.
[74] See Ching et al (2011), pg. 122.

programs that the Martínez regime would enact following the massacre were intended to nullify any criticisms and stymie any revolutionary fervor that may arise from peasant and working class malcontents.

But perhaps more important than the *Mejoramiento Social* programs in building consent, the regime focused on crafting a narrative, along the dominant variant of political liberalism espoused by previous regimes, that rationalized not only the political imperatives for the violence, but the social and even ontological necessities behind it. Although the state did not convene tribunals, hearings, talks, etc. that attempted to make all those involved in the violence, whether from the right or the left, accountable and face a due process of law, the Salvadoran state did address the violence before the public and the legislative assembly and provided a rationale for its draconian response to the insurrection. In effect, following the January massacre, much of the political activity by the state over the course of the year was devoted to making the sequence of events leading to the massacre intelligible according to the military elite's neo-liberal frame. It was the military intelligentsia, not the oligarchic elite's intellectuals, who were primarily responsible for rationalizing the violence and manufacturing a consensus for its expediency.

Indeed, as a careful reading of Martínez's speeches reveal, the matters that preoccupied the Salvadoran military state were social order, its preservation, and the linkage that their conception of this arrangement of society had to progress. These concepts, articulated in Martínez's statements and speeches following the massacre and voiced by other military officers, constituted the ideological framework of the military regime. On February 4, 1932, Martínez delivered a speech before the legislative assembly that the insurrection demonstrated that the "…the government and the leading social classes, united by the imperative and necessity to

secure for the country a peaceful and productive future for all, [needed] to study and resolve without delay the problems posed by the relationship between labor and capital. To that end…[I aim] to limit [my] focus upon a few lines in the duties of office, such as the improvement of the condition of the working classes; the just arrangement between relations of capital and labor; the creation of a minimum wage, [and] a reduction in price on the means of subsistence and housing."[75] This statement in particular reflects much of the central ideological and idiosyncratic tendencies in Martínez's political thought, and the political and ideological leanings of the elite Salvadoran military intelligentsia during Martínez's regime.

Ultimately Martínez's *Mejoramiento Social* did little to transform the quotidian reality and material conditions that defined the lives of common Salvadorans. During the Martinato, "the regime constructed only 253 houses and distributed lots amounting to 29,000 *manzanas*." (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 242). However, the *Mejoramiento Social* program was instrumental in forging a magnanimous view of the regime. It is important not to obviate, therefore, that Martínez's policies did away with some of the most exploitative aspects of agricultural production in El Salvador, most notoriously perhaps the *ficha* (token) system of worker pay which maintained the workers in a complete state of dependency vis-à-vis the wealthy *hacendados* for whom they worked. In addition, the regime did explicitly forge alliances and started building a support base amongst indigenous communities through a series of local policies aimed specifically at indigenous communities. Indeed,

> …In the months following the massacre of 1932, the military regime started offering food
> to the survivors and protecting them against the vengeance of the local ladinos…Pro-
> Indian policies included special schools for the orphans of the massacre, support for the

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[75] "Mensaje del Senor Presidente de la República, leido ante la Asamblea Nacional, en el acto de apertura de sus sesiones ordinarias, el dia 4 de febrero de 1932." Pgs.12, 14-16. In Ching et al (2011), pg 119.

Indians in land and water disputes, and official recognition of the civil and religious

hierarchies that the local ladinos attempted to abolish. (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008,

242).

These policies were instrumental in building popular consent for the regime, especially amongst

the peasantry who bore the brunt of the processes of Salvadoran economic and political

modernization, and who were specifically targeted by the military during *la matanza*.

Often seen as inconvenient facts for intellectuals of the Salvadoran Left, the variety of

economic and fiscal policies, public beneficence projects, and social policy programs enacted by

the Martínez regime have to be situated within any analysis of not only Salvadoran military

hegemony, but also within any examination of the process of Salvadoran modernity itself.[76]

Ironically Martínez's attempts at social reform earned him the enmity of the elite sectors of the

planting class, eventually leading to his ouster by a generalized strike orchestrated by the

oligarchic elite in 1944. As the events of 1932 demonstrated, for the oligarchic class the Faustian

bargain of economic power in exchange for military government lay precisely in their perception

that only a strong military regime was capable of defending their interests against the threat of

international socialism, while maintaining the prevailing labor and social relations of coffee

production. Yet, as illustrated by Martínez's reformist policies, which harkened back to the

social democracy of the reformist governments of Romero Bosque and Araujo, the aims of the

planting class did not always match up with the attempts of reform carried out by the military.[77]

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[76] For instance Dalton all but omits a discussion of Martinez's policies in his now classic historical monograph on El Salvador. Dalton

[77] See Ching (2014). See Also Stanley (1996), especially pages 61-63 for the reasons behind the fall of Martinez, including his aggressive move in 1943 to encroach upon the power of the oligarchy.

Conclusion: The Salvadoran Historic Bloc and the Dialectic of Modernity

As the preceding exposition shows, from the middle of the 19th-century to the end of the Martínez regime in 1944, the development of the productive forces along capitalist lines and the evolution of a liberal nation-state whose legislative, electoral, and military institutions and political processes were shaped by both the necessities and challenges articulated by the mode of production, defined the political and historical condition referred to as Salvadoran modernity. This condition was thus shaped by the intersecting axes of modes of economic and political modernization that emulated the economic and political trajectory of western European states. These processes were indeed intertwined and reciprocally related. It is thus the reciprocal relationship between the economic structure of Salvadoran society and its political superstructure that became the primary historical forces and the real dialectical movement that shaped Salvadoran modernity and the contours of power that endure to the present day.

The pursuit of economic modernization via coffee production for El Salvador created immense wealth for a landed elite, developed the country's infrastructure, technology, and civil institutions, while it increased the misery of common peasants and workers. The patterns in the organization of labor and social relations, and the inevitable social dislocations and ruptures created by the system of coffee planting led to the evolution of a state that was clientelistic at its core, and whose legislative and electoral system, as well as its repressive forces, developed according to the economic, social, and political expediencies of the agro-export economy.

El Salvador's decision to pursue modernization via coffee production, and the consequent development of clientelistic politics, cannot be simply characterized as myopic and dismissed as poor-decision making by the economic and the political elite. This path of economic and political

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modernization for El Salvador was based upon the availability of fertile land in a society whose economic activity had been defined by plantation labor and export-crop production since the colonial period. The subsequent development of the prevailing relations of production and their attendant system of social relations were thus shaped by the political and practical exigencies of a system of mono-export agrarian production that was fundamentally underlined by a colonial logic focused on exploitive and extractive patterns of labor. In turn, the political system developed in relation to the relations of labor and social relations established by the agro-export economy. In particular, the patron-client relations that defined the political process in El Salvador since the 19th-century were an extension of the balance of coercion and consent that the system of coffee production gestated. To the extent that El Salvador liberalized the state, particularly around electoral process, it did so in order to enact democratic-looking reforms that could stymie the tide of labor radicalization and organization in the midst of coffee production. Thus, political reforms were a response to the challenges posed by labor and the need to balance the system with consent and endow it with a veneer of legitimacy. The next chapter will examine the manner in which Salvadoran modernism as a cultural movement attempted to grapple with the experience of modernity.

Chapter 3

Mediating the Crisis of Modernity: Modernism, Indigenismo, and the Hegemonic Moment

in Salvadoran Arts and Letters

"One can say that not only the philosophy of praxis not exclude ethico-political history but that, indeed, in its most recent stage of development it consists precisely in asserting the moment of hegemony as essential to its conception of the state and to the 'accrediting' of the cultural fact, of cultural activity, of a cultural front as necessary alongside the merely economic and political ones."   -Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*[78]

"It is only understandable that the rational talents of [the West], exalted in the contemplation of their own cultures, should have found themselves without valid means to interpret us….The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to makes us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary."
                            -Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "The Solitude of Latin America" [79]

"Crazy little old man/ always about to strangle yourself with the loose threads of your Indian hair…Who knows if you had time to think about your moral role? You fell onto a country of fools of your stature…you built yourself an exclusive tunnel that leads to the bunker of poetic meter, and another to the air-raid shelter of the Olympians of Greece and Tlapallan/ while fire fell from the skies upon your countrymen…Today Pepe and Armijo say that you were a Hegelian/And Italo that you are a catechism for all of us/ As for me, I got nothing to thank you for/ because I don't care for what you have done…I say that Gavidia's year was not 1966/but 1932/ which was really the year for every single Salvadoran of this century/for now"
        -Roque Dalton, "Dos poemas sobre nuestro famoso escritor," *Historias Prohibidas del pulgarcito* (My translation)[80]

As a youth growing up in San Salvador during the 1980s, a favorite weekend pastime of

mine was to ask my mother to take me to "*el parque de los caballos,*" better know as El

Salvador's *Parque Cuscatlán*. Five decades after its inauguration on March 1, 1935 by none

other than General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, the park continued to be one of the most

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[78] Forgacs 200, 194.
[79] Garcia Marquez (1982).
[80] Dalton ([1974] 1999, 100-101). My translation.

beautiful public spaces of San Salvador. *Parque Cuscatlán* projected an air of European architectural sophistication coupled with a colonial nostalgia typified by the horse-drawn carriages and leisurely horseback rides that became emblematic of the park, and which enchanted me as a child. An architectural jewel beset in a residential part of San Salvador close to the city's historic center and bordered by the city's major thoroughfares, *Parque Cuscatlán* boasts a design and layout modeled after the French formal gardens of the 17th-century, amongst which the gardens of Versailles, Louis's XIV overwrought rococo palace, were the most exemplary. With a grand expositional hall for art and literary exhibits at its center constructed in an eclectic neo-classical design that is framed by facing, twisting double staircases, and with delicately manicured and symmetrical gardens radiating to its periphery, El Salvador's *Parque Cuscatlán* exuded the type of bourgeois sophistication and cultural refinement that came to signify the dominant trends that defined Salvadoran modernity along its cultural and intellectual axes. In particular, its carefully planned symmetrical layout signified control and the taming of nature, concepts that underlie so much of liberal positivist thought that buttressed the modernizing enterprise. At the same time, this sumptuous park, which continues to be a center of culture and leisure for San Salvador, stands as a monument not only to the Europhile currents that defined Salvadoran modernism, both in the development of its letters and visual arts and its attendant architecture, but also of the manner in which these currents and the political and economic projects that belonged to them were enmeshed with the search for national identity and thus placed in tension with the historical legacies of the colonial enterprise.

These ironies and contradictions are illustrated by the tendency of the Salvadoran state to give an indigenous veneer to the political and cultural projects it pursued during this time. Indeed, despite its heavy French and other European influences, the park is named "Cuscatlán,"

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after the pre-Columbian name for the nahua-pipil city-state situated in what is today San Salvador, which in the nahuatl language of San Salvador's indigenous inhabitants means "land of beautiful things." But the park's ironies extend far beyond its name. On December 6, 2003, thirteen years after the conclusion of El Salvador's bloody civil conflict, the city inaugurated a monument to the victims of the war carved in a colossal 3 meters by 85 meters slab of black granite engraved with the names of approximately 25,000 of the 75,000 victims claimed by the war.[81] Thus, the very same park inaugurated by the founder of the Salvadoran military regime, and the general after which some of the most ruthless death squads of the 1980s named themselves, now boasted a monument to the victims of a civil war whose roots laid in the historical process of Salvadoran modernity.

The architecture of *Parque Cuscatlán*, along with its complex political, economic, and cultural history crystalizes the tensions inherent in the cultural project that emerged as both a product and response to the modernization process that shaped the Salvadoran productive forces and the state. The park exemplifies the inherent contradictions that are indicative of the opposition between on the one hand modernization, as the dialectical process of the development of the capitalist mode of production and the evolution of liberal nation-state, and on the other modernism as its cultural counterpoint and mediator of modernity. Its architectural style and history congeals the contradiction of the historical development of Salvadoran national letters, art, and architecture, which despite seeking a preeminently national identity, modeled themselves heavily after Western Europe, and in particular France, whose political and cultural trajectory stood for European modernity since the late 18th-century. As a monument and public space, *Parque Cuscatlán* orders the spatial and material world of the cultural sphere that are strongly

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[81] Secretaría de Cultura de la Presidencia, Dirección Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural. "Monumento a la Memoria y la Verdad", January 2011.

identified with the West, as much of Salvadoran architecture did during the period of 1910-1940. More importantly, the park's architecture, and its cultural and historical nexus, demonstrates the dialectical relationship between the processes of economic and political modernization, and the mediation of this relationship by the sphere of intellectual and cultural production.

This chapter's central problematic thus lies in surveying the intellectual and cultural vectors of Salvadoran modernity from the late 19th-century to the end of the Martínez era. It posits the rise and prevalence of modernism in Salvadoran letters, art, and architecture, spanning roughly from the late 1870s through the end of the Martínez regime as the mode of cultural and intellectual production that sought to grapple with and make sense of the crises of identity and nationhood wrought by the processes of economic and political modernization through a vast range of artistic, literary, and intellectual projects that attempted to define both regional and national identity. Modernism in El Salvador, therefore, took the form of a range of cultural products that simultaneously adopted and deflected the central tenets of modernity, such as progress and order, and which underlined the political and economic evolution of El Salvador, while at the same time couching these cultural and intellectual projects in an indigenist aesthetic.

The tension between modernization and modernism, and the colonial embeddedness of these processes, is exemplified in the rise of the concept of "hispanidad," "lo hispano," and "hispanismo" within the modernist movement, as well as recurrent colonial duplicities of *indigenismo* in modernist letters, art, and architecture that later came to define the aesthetic dimensions of *mestizo* nationalism. Articulated as a discourse of regional cultural unity and distinctiveness, *hispanidad* as a literary and stylistic tradition was culturally tied to Western Europe, particularly Spain and France. Hence, while Salvadoran modernism was strongly associated with the petty bourgeois intelligentsia that often posed a challenge to the liberal

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regimes and economic system of the late 19th-century, the modernist movements and its luminaries never fully detached themselves from fundamentally western ideas of economic, political, and cultural progress, retaining intellectual moorings to a civilizational mission whose contours were defined by European colonialism and modernity. The intellectual and cultural work of the modernists ultimately reified the process of modernity in El Salvador along its intellectual and cultural vectors, while in themselves responding to political and economic changes.

Most importantly, whether consciously or not, these intellectuals, writers, and artists that comprised the diverse group of modernist thinkers in El Salvador were an instrumental class in consolidating the hegemonic configuration that defined the contours of power in the country. Using the Gramscian framework developed in Chapter One, I contend that intellectuals emerged as a recognizable class in the first decades of the 20th-century, and were almost entirely represented during this period by a petty-bourgeois intelligentsia that was increasingly at odds with the bourgeois liberal state. This intellectual class was ultimately instrumental, indeed indispensable, to the consolidation of military hegemony in El Salvador. This class articulated what I term the hegemonic moment in the Americas. This hegemonic moment consisted of legitimizing the dominant ideas that defined the political and economic development of El Salvador, such as progress, order, and liberal notions of citizenship, while identifying them with a duplicitous indigenous aesthetic that was at once national and European, and trading loyalty for position and influence in the military regime that emerged after 1932. This *indigenismo* ultimately reified the mestizo as the legitimate national subject, and coexisted with European aesthetic and intellectual currents, such as the primacy of French letters and primitivism, that affirmed European cultural superiority.

In the exposition that follows, I first sketch the crisis of the liberal nation-state during the last three decades of the 19th-century and the development of modernism in Salvadoran letters, particularly through the works of Francisco Gavidia. I place Gavidia within the intellectual context of the late 19th-century and discuss his work in dialectical relationship with the evolution and the inherent crises of the Salvadoran productive forces and the state. In particular, I read Gavidia's concern with the theme of "*lo indigena*" as exemplary of the search for national identity against the historical background of the development of the Salvadoran agro-export mode of production and the liberal nation-state that was reciprocally related to its development. The central problematic is thus the tension between the a system of labor that was premised on the perpetuation of racial and class hierarchies steeped in El Salvador's colonial history, and notions of abstract political equality and political rights, the abstract citizen, and the erasure of heterogeneity demanded by the nation-state's homogenizing impulse.

Second, I explore the visual narrative of the primitive and its temporal, spatial, and political relation to modernity in Salvadoran paintings, particularly the work of Jose Mejia Vides. I examine the manner in which Vides' work was heavily influenced by French primitivism, particularly the work of Paul Gauguin via the tutelage of Japanese master Tamiji Kitagawa and the circle of Mexican modernists during the 1930s. In doing so, I posit that Vides' primitivism was part and parcel of Salvadoran *indigenismo* and similar trends across the hemisphere, which emerged as part of the projects of nation-state building that sought to simultaneously rescue indigeneity as a preeminent marker of national identity while carrying out a process of racial homogenization of the liberal nation-state, most notably exemplified by *mestizaje*. This process situated indigeneity and its symbols spatially and temporally simultaneously at the centers and margins of the process of modernity. It was in essence the

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cultural and intellectual process that forged the imminently racial definitions of both the nation-state and citizenship, while obfuscating the conflation between race and citizenship. In carrying out this analysis, I also situate the relationship that Vides had to the Salvadoran military regime, particularly Martínez, and the manner in which the military under Martínez encouraged and patronized these art forms and institutionalized them as part of its cultural project of nation building in the aftermath of *la matanza*.

Third, I conduct a survey of Salvadoran architecture and discuss the prevailing architectural styles during the period of 1918-1945 in terms of their significance as bourgeois forms of modernism and as a response to the primitivist trend that was just as duplicitous as *indigenismo*. Additionally, I see the architecture of San Salvador during this period as a material record of the country's cultural life and its dialectical relationship with the state and the economic sphere of production. This period of architectural renaissance was defined by various architectural styles particularly classical, neo-classical, classical French, modernist, and a new form call "neo-colonial,"[82] all of which were tied to western European notions of civility, modernity, and progress, and which were imbued with colonial nostalgia and an exaltation of western, particularly neo-classical and French, civilization. These architectural trends and the proliferation of building during this period turned San Salvador into a "cultured city" as defined by a new Salvadoran professional architectural class trained in Western Europe and the United States, and their close collaboration with the bourgeoisie and the state.

In particular, the architectural renaissance of the era of Martínez heralded a new nationalistic period for El Salvador's building projects, since contrary to previous epochs of Salvadoran architecture where the design, planning, and building were carried out by foreign

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[82] See Oscar Manuel Monedero. [1970] 2011. *Historia de la arquitectura contemporanea de El Salvador*. San Salvador: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de El Salvador, pg 64.

architects, El Salvador could now boast its own architects trained in the West. Most notably, this period was defined by the work of Armando Sol and Ernesto de Sola, trained in the United States and Belgium, and whose work began during the Martínez era and spanned several decades after the Martínez regime.

Lastly, I conclude by discussing Athenaeums in El Salvador and Latin America as interstitial organizations that served as an interface between the state and civil society, and which served to forge networks of intellectuals and men of letters while distilling dominant cultural trends, in particular the Francophile influence over various components of the Salvadoran cultural sphere. This section sketches a brief history of Athenaeums in the Caribbean and Central American region and the nexus between intellectual societies and the military in El Salvador. This analysis thus takes into account modernism and its various articulations as a cultural trend that mediated the economic and political vectors of modernity.

Modernism and the Crisis of the Liberal State in the West

Contemporary scholars commonly define modernism as "a cosmopolitan movement in literature and the arts reflecting a crisis of representation, having arisen in Europe in the middle of the 19th-century and developing up to, even after the Second World War" (Lewis 2011, 1). As a vast cultural enterprise concerned with the problematic of "representation," modernism is politically situated within the historical nexus that defined the crisis of liberal nation-states and liberal nationalism in the late 19th-century. Although the problematic of representation in this context refers to the parameters that articulate a given subject in art and literature, this artistic and literary representation was in fact entangled with the problem of political representation and

belonging, and the economic dimensions that had structured the contours of that political system. For many writers who came to be regarded as luminaries of modernist letters in the West, such as James Joyce, the literary task demanded a new heroic narrator-protagonist that could "…reawaken the national consciousness centered on the awareness that individuals are both subjects and objects of the historical process" (Lewis 2000, 2). But this task was also centered on defining who actually constituted the liberal subject and abstract citizen of modern nation-states, a problematic that articulates the central contradictions of liberalism and the concepts of the nation-state and citizenship.

Since the French Revolution, nationalism had been largely associated with political liberalism with which it shared the principle of self-determination, collective and individual sovereignty, and liberty. However, the increasing association of imperialism with the "national interest" and debate over the political belonging of imperial subjects and increasingly vocal racial and ethnic minorities at the end of 19th-century accentuated the contradictions inherent in both the concepts of the nation-state and citizenship. As Pericles Lewis points out in his study on the relationship between liberal nationalism, the modernist movement, and the novel:

The crisis of liberal nationalism at the end of the 19th century revealed the extent to which liberal values depended on the shared assumptions of a national culture and in particular on the idea that the interests of the nation-state could be identified with the common good of all…in a given society. The idea of a sovereign nation, whose individual members all shared common interests and cultural assumptions, underlay much of the workings of liberal political systems. To the extent that some inhabitants of a given territory did not share, or were not seen to share, these common national interests and assumptions, liberalism increasingly came to reconciling their needs and interests with those of the

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national majority. This obstacle appeared even more insurmountable when such interests

came to be associated with biological inheritance. (Lewis 2000, 9)

The paradox of liberalism as a system of thought and its attendant political institutions thus

centered upon its particular conception of political equality; a political equality which

presupposed a political community that is at its core homogenous along racial, cultural, and even

class lines. The challenge posed to liberalism from organized labor, and the organization of racial

and cultural others that began to press for political rights at the end of the 19th-century illustrates

the manner in which under the liberal paradigm political equality requires the externalization of

heterogeneity and the building of consent through otherizing and homogenizing practices, all

while adhering to abstract principles of universal equality. But liberalism's overriding concern

with individual rights and the protection of private property also situates it historically as a

political project that articulated the interests of the bourgeoisie and the political institutions that

represented bourgeois interests.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the state of development of the capitalist mode of

production and the liberal state in Western Europe at the end of the 19th-century accentuated the

contradictions of liberalism and the liberal nation-state. Imperialism, which Lewis identifies as

one of the central catalysts of the crisis of liberalism in the late 19th-century, was indeed a logical

consequence of the development of the capitalist mode of production, particularly around its

need to expand and secure global markets, raw materials, and cheap labor, just as political

struggles over the organization of labor and the political belonging and representation of racial

and ethnic minorities were accentuated by the dislocations, ruptures, and increasing social

stratification created by capitalist development. As discussed in the previous chapter, the case of

El Salvador illustrates the manner in which political reforms constituted a method of addressing

these challenges within a liberal framework without transforming the prevailing contours of power. But the dialectical relationship of the historic bloc, that is its economic structure and political-ethical superstructure, shaped political, social, and cultural processes that often transcended their economic determinants.

Yet, Lewis's examination of crisis of liberalism and the liberal nation-state at the end of the 19th-century does not explicitly link these developments to the crises of capital, nor does he explicitly critique the fundamental presupposition about racial homogeneity that defined the very foundation of modern nation-states. Rather, Lewis posits that the centrality of the nation-state to the crisis of liberalism at the end of the 19th century was tied to the rise of a new nationalism, in which the traditional liberal concepts of individualism and the rational individual actor were displaced by the primacy of the group or collectivity signified by the concept of nation as a "cultural and ethnic unit." Thus, rather than being the autonomous, rational, and individual actor of liberalism, the "individual" become a projection of the collectivity whose interests, actions, and consciousness are shaped by their membership into the national community (Lewis 2000, 10). According to Lewis, the new and dominant forms of liberalism and nationalism that emerged at the end of the 19th century "…depended on a definition of the nation as ethnically and linguistically homogenous" (Lewis 2000, 7). Consequently, as Hannah Arendt has observed, the "…state transformed from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation" (Ibid).

While it is certainly the case that political developments in Western Europe during this period support this claim,[83] a close and comparative analysis of the historical trajectory of the

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[83] The Dreyfus affair in France and the consequent debate over Jews and the growth of French anti-Semitism,; the split of the Labor Party in Britain over the question of Ireland, and the Irish conception of nation that excluded protestants were all testaments of the crisis of liberal nation states and liberal nationalism in Europe over who in fact constituted the liberal subject to who was entitled to life, liberty, and fraternity. These conflicts exemplified the problem of "whether the nation-state should be understood as a legal and political unity, defined by voluntary membership in it of individual citizens, or as an ethnic and social unit, defined by a shared culture, history, and

development of the modern nation-state reveals that the principles of racial and cultural homogeneity were conflated with the concept of citizenship and legitimate political belonging from its point of inception in the late 18th-century. David Theo Goldberg's analysis of the historical development of modern states, and of political traditions like liberalism that develop alongside them, demonstrates that modern nation-states were linked to the growth of the colonial enterprise, which facilitated the exteriorization of heterogeneity to the colonies, while constructing the idea of a political community and its institutions around the concept of homogeneity at home. Heterogeneity, embodied by the Other and the exemplified by the colonial condition, thus represented a threat to this political project. As such, modern nation-states were intimately concerned with the management of difference, particularly racial otherness, from their point of inception. Such is the reason that Goldberg states that all modern states are racial because of the overriding political concern with the management of the dominant racial order, whether it be hierarchical or "democratic," and the crafting of political institutions which serve a majority posited as representative of the national community.[84]

Therefore, as Falguni Sheth has shown, the concept of race and its historical production and political regulation by the state through various bureaucratic and repressive apparatuses emerged as a technology to manage the threat of the unknown and the dissolution of civilization and order that heterogeneity represented.[85] The paradoxical coexistence of universality and particularity, of heterogeneity and homogeneity, and of equality and difference inherent in modern nation-states and the liberal political thought upon which they are founded, have to be

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perhaps biological inheritance that was thrust upon people not chosen by them " (Lewis 2000, 6). However, I interpret these developments as accentuating a set of contradictions and tensions over universality and particularity, homogeneity and heterogeneity present in the concept of the nation-state and political liberalism from their point of inception.

[84] See Goldberg 2002, especially pgs. 9-10, 15.
[85] See Sheth (2009).

therefore read against the colonial history of modern Europe and the consequent emergence of the concept of race.

Therefore, while modernism is indeed a cultural movement that emerged in Europe in response to a crisis of representation during the latter half of the 19th-century, this crisis of representation has to be situated not only within the nexus of capitalist development and the evolution of the liberal state that defined modernity in the West and its former colonies, but also within the imperial history of the West and the fundamental set of presuppositions of racial and cultural homogeneity that underlie modern nation-states. Especially for the political and cultural trajectory of former colonies, modernism as a vast cultural movement has to be understood in terms of its global coloniality, and the manner in which it adopted, deflected, and mediated in the cultural sphere the modernizing forces that were gestated by the colonial enterprise. One of the central projects of this mediating function, therefore, was the crafting of a discursive narrative and its attendant aesthetic projects that captured the "proper" character of national identity. The next sections are thus devoted to tracing the manner in which this narrative of the national, liberal subject emerged in El Salvador within the bosom of the modernist movement. The subsequent discussion pays particular attention to both indigenismo and mestizaje in modernist narratives of national identity, while unpacking some of the duplicities and contradictions inherent in a cultural project that attempted to grapple with the contradictions of both the legacies of El Salvador's colonial history and he subsequent westernization of its society through the historical forces that defined Salvadoran modernity.

<u>The Liberal State, Francophile Letters, and the Rise of Modernism in Latin America and El Salvador</u>

As we shall see in subsequent sections, modernist trends were not only literary, but also included innovative artistic styles that fashioned themselves in protest to the process of economic and political modernization as well as cutting-edge architectural trends that redefined urban space and which often entailed a mixing of stylistic elements from European neo-classical architecture with Spanish colonial architecture.

Modernism is often recognized as the first major cultural movement in Latin America that was at once Western and autochthonous. The crisis of cultural and political representation articulated largely through concerns over national and regional identity, constituted the cultural and historical context for the rise of Latin American modernism. In the wake of Latin American independence from Spanish colonialism, Latin American writers first began to develop a sense of regional identity and mutual recognition premised, if anything, on a shared colonial literary, political, and economic history. Of no small significance, the first encounters that brought together these men of letters were held in France in 1850, "when a group of exiles and diplomats from Latin American countries found each other in Paris" (Gonzales Echeverria 2012, 1). These mid-19th-century Parisian encounters shaped the contours of the principal trends that defined Latin American letters and which endure to the present day, including regional self-awareness and an enduring cultural gravitation towards the French capital (Ibid).

Indeed, through the course of the latter half of the 19th-century and the first decades of the 20th-century, Paris became the "global city" as the French capital came to signify cosmopolitanism, cultural sophistication, and intellectual refinement for much of the Western

world, and certainly for Latin American intellectuals, artists, and even scientists. The imprint of French cultural and intellectual life upon Latin America's cultural, intellectual, and scientific development is ubiquitous during this time. As I have demonstrated in the case of El Salvador, this period of the late 19th and early 20th-centuries is precisely the historical conjuncture at which liberal states throughout the Americas defined not only their projects of economic and political modernization, but also the aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual projects that buttressed them and legitimized them. In light of the modernizing vision that these projects represented and their emulation of the historical trajectory of Western European modernity, "the origins of the Spanish American intellectuals' subservience to the French literary and political fashion [have to be situated within] the Enlightenment (Henighan 1999, 28).

Since roughly the 1770s, France became increasingly associated with the beacon of civilization, and for the Iberian world France and French ideas occupied a privileged place in its political and intellectual development (Ibid). One needs to be careful, however, not to overplay the centrality of France over Germanic and English influences in the development of the Spanish Enlightenment (Ibid). Nevertheless, French models of political, intellectual, and scientific development were accorded special importance and authority in Spanish and Portuguese America, as evinced by "the wars of independence [which] consolidated this tendency" and resulted in the crafting of political projects filtered through the prism of the French Enlightenment (Henighan 1999, 28).

Part of the authority rendered to French thought by Latin American intellectuals during the post-colonial period stemmed from their French academic training and their view of France as representative of the "modern," which simultaneously signified a suppression and submission,

if not denial, of Latin America's non-western heritage.[86] As illustrated by the case of the

luminaries of Salvadoran letters and philosophy during the late 1870s through the 1920s, such as

Francisco Gavidia and Alberto Masferrer, this denial, which took the form of a celebration of

Western culture, would persist while paradoxically coexisting with a new intellectual and

cultural project that celebrated autochthonous cultures, and, in some cases, even the cultural

inheritance of the Iberian world. These tensions were prefigured by the contrast between the

conservatism of Spanish Catholicism and its social demands with the liberalism of French

Enlightenment ideals. The persistence of Iberian heritage, signified by Catholicism and its

continued importance to the social, cultural, and intellectual life of late 19th-century and turn-of-

the-20th-century Latin America, was indeed a constant source of tension between the manifestly

"liberating" and "modern" impulse of French Enlightenment ideals and "medieval" and

antiquated Catholic doctrine. This tension was by no means an exclusively Latin American

phenomenon, since the relationship between the historical process of modernity and the Catholic

Church was troublesome, if at times conflictive, since the French Revolution.[87]

Such a tension and the paradoxes of identity generated by it are a central point of

discussion in Stephen Henighan's study of the Parisian apprenticeship of celebrated Guatemalan

writer Miguel Angel Asturias, Latin America's first Nobel Laureate winner.[88] Indeed, as

Henighan points out, although "the ideals of the Enlightenment proved to be the first in a

succession of intellectual systems whose imposition filled the moral and intellectual vacuum left

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[86] Indeed, the celebrated Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes remarked in an interview in 1987 that Latin America "…entered the modern world with independence-we have to choose what is deemed to be the modern time, which is the time of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment, a linear, progressive time which will take us to happiness and progress and the perfectibility of human nature and human institutions […]. But this is a denial of half of our being, of our past, a denial of many things that define us as a polycultural and multiracial society in Latin America" (in Henighan 1999, 28).

[87] See Staf Heleman, 2001. "From 'Catholicism Against Modernity' to the Problematic 'Modernity of Catholicism.'" *Ethical Perspectives* 8:117-127.

[88] See Henighan, Stephen. 1999. *Assuming the Light: The Parisian Literary Apprenticeship of Miguel Angel Asturias*. Oxford: Legenda (Humanities Research Center University of Oxford).

by the revolutionary rupture with Spain…the Catholicism associated with the Spanish crown had not completely vanished" even by the late 19th and early 20th-century (Henighan 1999, 29). As Henighan's study illustrates, Miguel Angel Asturias embodied the tension and juxtaposition between French and Spanish intellectual and cultural systems; Asturias's pious devotion to Catholicism and its social and moral imperatives existed alongside an intellectual longing for French culture and thought. Despite Asturias' increasing concern over the course of his career with Guatemala's social misery, the cultural wealth of the Maya, and the question of what place Guatemala's indigenous peoples occupied in the political and cultural life of the modern Guatemalan nation-state, his early and intense commitment to French political idealism "…left him prey to an enduring paradox" of identity (Henighan 1999, 9). This paradox lay in the fact that,

> No matter how intensely Guatemalan his preoccupations became during his decades of expatriation and exile [in Paris and Europe], European-and particularly French-culture remained, sometimes covertly but almost always perceptibly, his source of ultimate authority and legitimation. In Paris, his Guatemalan identity would be forged in a European crucible. (Ibid)

Perhaps this makes Asturias' life an exemplar of the Francophilia that had come to define the intellectual and cultural aspirations of turn-of-the-20th-century Latin American writers and intellectuals. But more importantly, it illustrates the contradiction inherent in crafting national intellectual and cultural projects that attempted to grapple with the historical particularities of Latin America, while making recourse to the legacy of the French, and more generally Western European, Enlightenment as the paramount source of intellectual and cultural authority.

It is unsurprising that by the early 20th-century, these tensions and currents crystallized in a cultural and intellectual dominance of an intelligentsia termed *los afrancesados*, or the Frenchified Spanish American petty bourgeois intellectuals and bourgeoisie that looked to France as the ultimate source of civilization, cultural sophistication, and refinement. As Octavio Paz has remarked, although the phenomena of *afrancesados* emerged as early as the late 18th-century, particularly as a term that designated Spanish Americans who looked to the French Revolution for political inspiration and the promise of liberation from Spanish colonialism, "…the term continued to be used throughout the 19th century to designate [Latin American] liberals. By the end of the century, the term acquired an aesthetic connotation and being *afrancesado* signified being a symbolist or a decadent, a worshiper of Flaubert or of Zola and, in sum, as Ruben Dario says, being "strong with Hugo and ambiguous with Verlaine" (cited in Sanchez 1990, 17-18, my translation).

According to Octavio Paz, the historical evolution of the *afrancesado* culminated in the development of modernism in the Americas, a literary movement in which "the glorification of France entailed a neglect, sometimes amounting to denigration, of Spain" (Henighan 1999, 30). Part of this glorification lay in the fact that according to the *modernistas*, France represented "an enticingly different culture [than Spain], a more supple and refined literary language, and an ambiance favorable to intellectual and artistic ferment," so much so that the "*modernistas* elevated the myth of Paris to a veritable religion" (Ibid). Such a statement is not mere hyperbole, as Ruben Dario is recorded to have prayed every night to see Paris before he died (Ibid). In any event, the intellectual and cultural authority adduced to French letters and culture would indelibly shape the development of modernism in Latin America, and, as we shall see in subsequent sections, the writers enshrined as the luminaries of Salvadoran letters.

In Latin America, modernism as a recognizable style first appears in the work of writers, particularly poets and essayists, who sought a creative break with European literary modes, but who also affirmed a cultural cosmopolitanism couched in narcissistic and aristocratic pretensions. These tendencies coexisted with nationalist concerns over Latin American self-determination, as the work of some of the first influential modernist writers and thinkers was centered upon the dismantling of the last remnants of the Spanish colonial empire and the future of Latin American regional and national identities. These political preoccupations were articulated partly in an aesthetic renewal of language and meter, as many modernist sought to position letters in the Americas at an avant-garde of literary medium of political transformation.

The Cuban essayist and nationalist Jose Marti and the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario were prominent amongst these Latin American modernist literary and political thinkers. Dario, who spent considerable time in El Salvador, is specially regarded as the father of modernism in the Americas. While in El Salvador in 1882 and only 15 years old, Dario was introduced to prominent Salvadoran poets Joaquin Mendez and Francisco Gavidia, the latter who possessed a superlative erudition in French poetry and letters, and who mentored Dario in adapting the French Alexandrine verse to Castilian. The case of Dario is particularly important in tracing the historical origins of not only the modernist movement, but also of public intellectuals and their networks in the late 19th and early 20th-centuries, as Dario forged links with Honduran, Guatemalan, and Cuban writers and men of letters as the modernist movement grew in momentum and scope. Indeed, Jose Marti, the towering Cuban intellectual figure and one of the greats of Latin American letters, had a profound political influence upon Ruben Dario and other Latin American writers, such as the Chilean novelist Gabriela Mistral, both of whom occupy a privileged position in Salvadoran letters, so much so that they are virtually thought of as part of

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the Salvadoran literary canon. The political topics that Jose Marti developed in his writings, such as the questions of Latin American nationalism, freedom, liberty, and democracy as discussed in Marti's *Nuestra America*, were part of the themes advanced in Dario's and Mistral's poems and essays. As the essays and poems of these writers demonstrate, the modernist impulse was largely characterized by a break with outmoded, hyper-rational, and rigid systems of thought and representation that trumped or muted self-awareness and free literary and political expression. In the literary medium, it blurred the distinction between form and content, valuing the form and style just as much as its substantive matter. But perhaps most importantly, these thinkers and writers also gave literary expression, and other attendant cultural products, a profound and transcendent political value. As such, these writers began to prefigure and posit literature as the preeminent hermeneutic enterprise that could resolve the enigma of Latin American identity, as most powerfully illustrated by Jose Marti's literary, intellectual, and political career. This legacy is also evident in the work of celebrated Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, whose novel acceptance speech argues for the centrality of letters to the search for Latin-American identity and emancipation.[89]

As coffee growing was transforming Salvadoran society in the late 1870s, El Salvador also witnessed a transformation of letters that became increasingly Francophile. This period saw an intense proliferation of classics of French literature in translation. French classics like Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Rene Descartes's *Meditations* became available and widely read. In El Salvador, the *Petite Larousse* dictionary set the academic standard for the Spanish language. Magazines and periodicals, such as *La Quincena* (1903), were crucial in distilling ideas and important currents in French thought and culture.

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[89] See Garcia Marquez (1982).

It is against this backdrop that Salvadoran modernism filtered through Francophile letters arose, particularly in the work of Francisco Gavidia. Born to a well to do family in the department of San Miguel in the mid 1860s, Gavidia is considered the precursor of modernism not only in El Salvador, but also in Latin America. Scholarly consensus also hails Gavidia as the father of Salvadoran literature.[90] Spanning several decades over variety of different genres, Gavidia's prolific intellectual career and diverse interests was truly of encyclopedic proportions, making him one of the most distinguished Latin American men of letters of the 19th-century. Amongst his noted accomplishments, Gavidia is recognized for translating and adopting the French Alexandrine verse into Spanish and proliferating the use of this French meter in Spanish poetry. As noted above, the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario was most influenced by his collaboration with Gavidia in the late 1870s, and Dario would later credit the Salvadoran man of letters for introducing him to French poetry. This accomplishment is considered the cornerstone of the modernist restoration of Latin American poetic meter. Indeed, the influence of French letters in Gavidia was evident from his as early as 1876, while he was still only 16 years old, and a period of time in which he immersed himself in the work of Victor Hugo and which he avidly read for the rest of his life.

Aside from the fact that Gavidia's life-long engagement with francophone literature and his interest with French culture demonstrate the marked influence of Western European letters in the development of the Latin American literature at a time when the liberal state was expanding, Gavidia's work also epitomizes a central concern of the Latin American modernists: the search for a national and regional identity. Indeed, the most characteristic theme of Gavidia's work across his poems, plays, essays, and historical monographs is the theme of indigenismo and

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[90] See Melgar Brizuela (2007). "Cortes historicos del indigenismo en la narrativa Salvadoreña". Universidad de El Salvador, San Salvador, pg. 2.

Central American unity.[91] This theme is particularly prevalent in his work from the period of

1901-1931, and is particularly visible in *La Loba*, *El pastor y el rey*, *La vuelata del heroe*, y *El*

testamento de Kicab. These works sought to recapture and romanticize El Salvador's pre-

Columbian past, precisely at a time when populism and greater liberalization of the state and

electoral politics were growing in response to the challenges from organized labor and the crises

of capital, especially by the threat posed by the radicalization and mobilization of indigenous

peasants.

Gavidia's indigenismo as a basis for an imagined national identity, however, was

politically distanced from the quotidian reality and political movement of living Salvadoran

indigenous populations of his time. From afar his works romanticize pre-Columbian cultures,

exalting the greatness of a pre-Columbian past, and cast Mayan and Toltec heroes as pacifist,

noble, spiritually advanced.[92] But Gavidia completely ignores his contemporary Indians, who

since the middle of the 19th-century had been expropriated from their lands, stripped of their

culture, exploited in the coffee fields, and exterminated in a massacre that came just one year

after the publication of his now classic collection of short stories. Gavidia's works indeed work

against the background of the liberal political paradigm, in which the realities of subjection can

be obfuscated so long as you claim to exalt the culture of the very people who live under

subjection. And at the same time, Gavidia's indigenismo coexisted with his equally romanticized

and heroic portrayal of Pedro De Alvarado, Hernan Cortez's brutal lieutenant responsible for the

conquest of El Salvador, as evident in his poem "La batalla de Acajutla" published in his 1931

classic "Cuentos y narraciones."[93] These texts are thus exemplary of the duplicities of

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[91] See Barraza 1999, pg. 115.
[92] Melgar Brizuela. "Cortes historicos del indigenismo en la narrativa Salvadoreña". Universidad de El Salvador, San Salvador. June 2007, pg. 2.
[93] Barraza 1999, 119.

indigenismo and its abstraction from the reality of Salvadoran Indians and peasants. Ultimately, they reveal the manner in which indigenismo served as the aesthetic quality for reifying the mestizo subject and mestizo nationalism in El Salvador, as many other Latin American countries that undertook nation-building projects that were premised on mestizo nationalism and an indigenist aesthetic whose celebration of "lo indigena" was duplicitous and at best equivocal.

Gavidia's Legacy: The Masferrer Group, the Salvadoran Petty-Bourgeois Intelligentsia, and the Military.

Gavidia's long and multifaceted academic career left an indelible imprint upon the development of Salvadoran letters and shaped the contours of the central concerns that animated and organized the work of Salvadoran intellectuals and writers during the first half of the twentieth century. Questions regarding the nature of national and regional identity, indigenismo, mestizaje, and the articulation of aesthetic, political, and philosophical responses to the crisis of the liberal state continued to be central problems for Salvadoran and Central American writers and intellectuals for over six decades after Gavidia's important interventions in the late 1870s and 1880s and the consequent rise of Salvadoran modernism. Indeed, Gavidia is often credited with being the precursor of indigenismo in Central American literature, a theme that dominated not only Salvadoran letters, but also the visual arts well into the 1940s, and which was intimately connected with state-building projects across Latin America.[94] These literary and artistic projects, whose aesthetic framings were concerned with recapturing an autochthonous and "original" national character continued to be in tension with the modernizing and westernizing

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[94] Barraza Arriola, Marco Antoni. 1999. Antologia de escritores del istmo centroamericano. San Salvador, El Salvador; Classicos Roxill, pg. 115.

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impulse of Latin American nations during this period. This tension was in part symptomatic of

the fundamental problematic that orders modernity in the Americas; namely, the transplanting of

the European model of "progress" and its translation and interpretation according to the

historical particularities of the Americas, and in particular within the Central American context.[95]

In part it also demonstrates the contradictions inherent in the development of the very thinking of

Latin American authors who were not completely able to make a break with European modes of

thought in their quest to define Latin American nationalism and sovereignty.

Alberto Masferrer, perhaps El Salvador's most noted intellectual, emerged as a central

figure amongst thinkers for whom questions concerning the historical course of Salvadoran

political and economic development were of paramount importance. In contrast to Gavidia,

however, Masferrer became a central public intellectual principally associated with the

development of populism in El Salvador during the first decades of the 20th century, and

particularly during the 1920s. As explored in the previous chapter, Masferrer was a key

intellectual figure in the ideological development of Arturo Araujo's Labor Party, which became

the springboard for Martínez's ascendancy to power. An intellectually restless autodidact,

pedagogue, and journalist, Masferrer pioneered the development of El Salvador's public media

through the founding of the newspaper *Patria* in 1928 alongside the entrepreneur Jose Bernal.[96]

Western and Orientalist cultural and intellectual currents heavily influenced Masferrer's thought

during the early 1900s in El Salvador. Masferrer's thinking represents a hybridization of the

main intellectual currents of is time, including Henry George's Fabianism; Proudhon's socialism;

several theosophical, Orientalist, and esoteric currents, including the thought of Jiddu

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[95] See Valeria Grinberg Pla and Ricardo Roque Baldovinos, eds. 2009. *Hacia una historia de las literaturas centroamericanas. Tensiones de la modernidad: del modernismo al realismo*. F&G Editores: Guatemala, Guatemala, pg. xii.

[96] See Casaus Arzu, Marta. "El vitalismo de Alberto Masferrer y su impacto en el pensamiento de America Central" in Grinberg Pla and Baldovinos, eds. 2009, pg. 262.

Krishnamurti and Swami Vivekananda; and lastly, the thought of Latin American nationalists

and political thinkers like Jose Marti and Jose Enrique Rodo.

Most importantly, however, Masferrer became the central figure around which the

principal Salvadoran intellectuals of the period revolved. The luminaries of Salvadoran letters,

namely, Francisco Gavidia, the poet Claudia Lars, Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, and the celebrated

Salvadoran writer Salarrue constituted the core network of intellectuals that came to be known as

the "Grupo Masferrer." These intellectuals were courted by Martínez early after he assumed

power and they eventually collaborated with the military state's cultural and intellectual projects.

Aside from the fact that Masferrer went into exile after the 1931 coup that brought Martínez to

power, the rest of these intellectuals not only looked the other way after *La Matanza* in January

of 1932, but in fact served to promote the indigenist aesthetic of the Martínez regime amidst the

genocide conducted by the Salvadoran military forces. This phenomena is perhaps best

illustrated by the work of Salvadoran painters during the Martínez era, most notably Jose Mejia

Vides, whose close ties to the military regime paradoxically coexisted with a celebration of El

Salvador's autochthonous cultures. The next section thus turns to this examination.

The Coloniality of Salvadoran Modernist Primitivism

Methodologically and substantively, the importance of analyzing visual arts and their

historical role in the development of hegemony El Salvador lies in the fact that the visual arts

were an important dimension of the modernist movement and its linkage to the political

development of national identity, particularly when such projects were officially patronized by

the state. Indeed, indigenismo figures prominently in the work of Latin American modernist

painters, even if scholarly criticism on the nexus between modernism and the development of Latin American nation-states has almost completely ignored the discursive relationship and overlap between letters, the visual, arts, and politics. It is of no small importance, therefore, that some modernist writers in El Salvador were also painters, such as the celebrated Salarrué, and were very much in exchange with the state. In many ways, modernist painters "painted" texts that accompanied the prevailing discursive formations and thus participated in the development of the prevailing cultural forms. As Ivan A. Schulman has pointed out, "literary texts should no longer be studied in isolation from other artistic discourses…[for] we need to re-examine the work generated by the writers associated with Latin American modernism, whose textual production transcends the limits of language or visual imagery" (Schulman 2014, ix).

However, modernism was not solely confined to the literary endeavor, and its cultural and intellectual momentum continued well beyond the decade of the 1910s through a variety of cultural mediums. Indeed, modernism transformed stylistic trends in the visual arts that extended through the first half of the 20th-century and which exploded from the 1920s-1940s, most notably in the work of Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Henri Rousseau. These artists broke with traditional stylistic conventions that were dominant by the beginnings of the movement in the 1870s. As with the statesmen of the late 19th century, philosophers stemming from the Enlightenment through the 19th century, as well as the late 19th-century thinkers and writers termed "modern" discussed in previous sections, modernist artists shared a sense of temporal and spatial awareness that sought a break with tradition and considered themselves innovative (*avant-garde*). As such, in art, "the modern" shares similar concerns with temporal and substantive difference, as those in philosophy, science, and letters. Despite the initial rejection that some of these artist's works received amongst traditional critics, their pieces were

considered path breaking by a new growing intellectual and bourgeois class that valued its novel

aesthetic. As the movement became fashionable, its appreciation and collectability transformed

into a symbol of bourgeois refinement. As a result, many of these artists were in high demand

during the 1920s through the 1940s, and were patronized or by leading figures in industry,

finance, entertainment, and politics. What made these works innovative was that the range of

artistic pieces produced by modernists since the late 19th century demonstrated experimentation

in numerous aspects of composition, including color, light, and perspective. But in particular,

these innovations were also driven by a search of visual and stylistic forms in non-Western

cultures deemed "pre-modern." These stylistic innovations came to be known as primitivism.

The paradox, therefore, lay in that part of the modernists' "novelty" rested upon using previously

shunned artistic styles and subjects from a part of the world that continued to be regarded as

"pre-modern."

By the turn of the twentieth-century, primitivism became an important stylistic current

that defined modern art and influenced nearly all the major figures of the modernist movement.

The very term demonstrates the European sense of superiority over non-European peoples, who

were temporally situated before modernity and who, consequently, were located geographically

and intellectually at the margins of civilization and culture as had come to be defined since the

Enlightenment. These non-Europeans were as such "primitive," and the colonial and paternalistic

condescension of the designation of non-Western peoples as "primitive" cannot be assuaged or

masked by their manifest appreciation of the aesthetic value of "simplicity," or the claim that

"primitive peoples" were closer to the original, primal sources of artistic and poetic inspiration,

as had been contended by European philosophers since Vico. Primitivism was indeed a

thoroughly pastoral artistic genre, partaking in the bucolic sensibilities of the pastoral renewal in

art and literature in the late 19th-century, and its overall moralizing impulse exalting the virtues of the "simple" life over the vexations and claustrophobia of urban living in the industrial West, which had come to signify the "modern" condition.

Indeed, primitivism emerged from the anxieties surrounding the rapid industrial and urban changes of the 19th-century—a reaction to the very processes of modernization that I contend constituted the political-economic forces shaping the last phase of late modernity in El Salvador. As such, modernist artists working in the primitivist school idealized the non-Western world since they deemed most of its post-colonial and colonial societies temporally and spatially outside of the processes that "modernized" Europe, and therefore outside of the chaos of the bustling West. Hence, these artists began seeking artistic inspiration in both the style and substance for their painting in the non-European world. Africa, Polynesia, and Latin America, particularly Mesoamerica, thus became important geographical and cultural sources of inspiration for the modernist primitivist movement.

Modernist primitivism in art is exemplified, if not originated, by the work of Paul Gauguin, the French painter whose eroticized renditions of brown, nude Polynesian women were the prominent subject of his work. Gauguin is indeed the central figure of primitivist modernism and its artistic discourse. While contemporary art critics praise Gauguin for the beauty of his paintings and daring stylistic innovation, many fail to comment on Gauguin's "Otherizing" colonial gaze, and to fail to understand the eroticism and exoticism with which he rendered Polynesians as symptomatic of uneven structural power relations established by French colonial rule in Tahiti, in which Gauguin took-up residence and which served as the backdrop for many of his paintings after 1890. Under this set of uneven power relations, Gauguin could not only represent, but also materially and sexually possess the "Others" who constituted his artistic

subject matter. Indeed, Gauguin's colonial objectification of Tahitians went beyond the canvas, as the French painter took Tahitian women as mistresses, many of who were teenage girls as young as thirteen. It is no less striking that a systematic criticism of Gauguin's work within its broader political, cultural, and intellectual nexus, such as the one undertaken by Edward Said of the 19th-century French Orientalist tradition in painting, has yet to be conducted. Aside from some important pieces of criticism that point out Gauguin's colonial gaze, there is no systematic critique of primitivism as a cardinal Otherizing system of representation of late 19th and first half of the 20th-century art, as well as its broader cultural nexus and linkages to the process of modernization and the colonial condition that defines modernity.

One important missing link in the critical elaboration of primitivism as a central component of the modernist movement in the visual arts is a critical examination of the prevalence of primitivism in the art of Latin American modernists, and the connection such artists and their work had to the process of modernization in the political and economic spheres during the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, though some pieces of scholarship in Art History cursorily draw the connections between Gauguin, primitivism, and modernism in the Americas, there is as of yet no rigorous and sustained examination conducted from a critical perspective of Latin American and North American modernist painters whom Gauguin and the primitivist movement influenced stylistically and substantively. For instance, the work of Diego Rivera and the Mexican muralists exhibited the influence of Gauguin and primitivism, as indigenismo and the adoption of pre-Hispanic stylistic conventions drew heavily from the stylistic elements and motifs that defined the primitivist current in modernism. Most notably, Rivera celebrated indigenismo and Mesoamerican culture as part of the Mestizo nationalism sweeping Mexico during the 1930s. Yet, Rivera's celebration of "*lo indigena*" lay alongside his vision of social,

political, and economic development and modernization couched in a socialist vision of industrial expansion and wealth redistribution, in which the indigenous subject of his paintings is effectively replaced in the progression of history towards a socialist utopia by a new Mestizo proletariat.

Moreover, Rivera's ties to key political and industrial figures in Mexico and abroad reveal the centrality of primitivism to the phase of Latin American nationalism and the search for national identity during the first half of the twentieth century. Just as Rivera had utilized primitivism to advance a vision of socialist modernization and state-formation in the Americas, so too was the movement adopted as an artistic current that became emblematic of fascist regimes that championed indigenismo as a preeminently national aesthetic.

Perhaps no other case best illustrates this as that of El Salvador during the Martínez regime. During the era of Martínez in El Salvador, the famous Salvadoran painter Jose Mejia Vides, now recognized as El Salvador's preeminent artist in the 20th-century, was the clearest representative of the primitivist trend in Latin America. Indeed, Vides' style and subject matter bears an astonishing resemblance to the work of Gauguin. In particular, Vides nude indigenous subjects and his depictions of indigenous women bathing in natural springs against a lush tropical landscape, as well as pastoral scenes of indigenous people in idyllic settings happily picking coffee culture, are saturated by the dominant bucolic sensibilities of the European modernists and their Otherizing, paternalistic gaze. More strikingly, perhaps, is the manner in which Martínez actively patronized and lauded Vides' work, using it to promote the indigenista discourse that permeated the populist politics of his era and his preferred national aesthetic. In light of Martínez's brutal massacre of indigenous peoples in 1932, such patronage of arts whose subject was indigenous life was manifestly ironic if not paradoxical and hypocritical. But a

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closer look reveals that Martínez's patronage of Vides created for El Salvador a preeminently national aesthetic discursively couched in the indigenismo imaginary that promulgated a harmonious and industrious life amongst the peasantry.

Indeed, as the case of El Salvador demonstrates, liberal positivism was the dominant ideology in the country during the post-Central American Republic period and throughout the 19th-century. During this time, the emerging Salvadoran bourgeois intelligentsia was inextricably linked to the coffee-planting class, by providing the intellectual backing to their notion of economic progress couched in liberal and positivist philosophy. For instance, the prevalence of positivism in the historical development of Salvadoran science, letters, and the academy is notable in the case of Dr. Dario Gonzales, the Salvadoran positivist physician and intellectual who was named by famed Salvadoran statesman and president General Barrios as his personal physician, and also appointed by Barrios as Minister of the Interior and Public Instruction. Dario went on to serve in this post well after Barrios' execution, continuing to teach philosophy and physics through the 1860s at El Salvador's National University. Dario eventually became President of the National University in the 1870s, and went on to become an influential figure in the development of public instruction, curricula, and pedagogy in Central America during the late 19th and turn of the twentieth century. Ultimately, much of Dario's teachings and influence, particularly his notions of progress and nation, as the positivist racism of other celebrated Salvadoran intellectuals like the anthropologist David J. Guzman, buttressed the liberal-positivist project of the coffee-growing class.

Salvadoran Modernity and Architecture: Bourgeois Modernism and the Duplicities of Indigenismo

As discussed in previous sections, letters and the visual arts were important dimensions of modernism in the Americas, and were influential in developing and disseminating prevailing nationalist discourses about national identity and national culture, such as indigenismo, which was most exemplary of these in the Americas during the modernist period until the late 1940s. Another important component of the modernist trend, however, and one intimately tied to the modernizing impulse of the Salvadoran state and its productive forces, was the development of eclectic neo-classical and neo-colonial architectural styles in El Salvador since the late 19th-century until the period immediately after the Martínez regime, which were nonetheless couched in indigenist discourses or tropes. Aside from the fact that the analysis of the evolution of architecture has much to offer to an analysis of the cultural history of El Salvador, it also says much about the overlapping between the material forces that were building Salvadoran society, the development of the Salvadoran state, and the cultural processes that mediated these vectors. In particular, architecture leaves a physical record of the prevailing ideas, cultural, and artistic trends of any particular historical epoch, as well as the political forces that shaped them and the classes that were in positions of leadership to patronize and oversee the completion of such projects.

Indeed, part of the cultural hegemonic process was the creation of edifices that could aggrandize and proclaim both the cultural sophistication and western civility of El Salvador, while also signaling the magnanimity of the state as the patron of high art and culture. At the same time, the ever-pressing preoccupation over national identity that had been a defining

feature of both arts and letters was also a central concern for the development of the country's architecture, whose edifices and their aesthetics congealed the paradoxes of a search for the preeminently national while framing it in a western narrative of civilization and development. This was particularly the case for the Martínez regime, which as we have explored in the previous chapter conducted a whole program of public building unparalleled in Salvadoran history, and created a whole series of state bureaucracies and governmental institutions, such as the *Fondo de Mejoramiento Social*, to manage these building projects. As we shall see, emblematic edifices and parks of the Martínez regime celebrated Salvadoran cultural and political-economic modernity by crafting a narrative of civilizational development couched in both European and indigenous aesthetics.

During the late 19th-century, the Salvadoran state emulated the neo-classical stylistic trends that had become popular in Europe and the United States throughout the course of the century.[97] This was most evident in the construction of the *Antiguo Palacio Nacional* (1868) and the *Antiguo Teatro Nacional*, both of which were damaged by an earthquake in 1873.[98]

However, the neo-classical trend in Salvadoran architecture witnessed a revival in the 1930s, and drew heavily from eclectic neo-classicism and other architectural trends that had been in vogue in Western Europe, particularly France, since the late 18th-century. At the onset of and throughout the Martínez regime, several buildings were constructed or renovated which are now considered iconic and representative of the finest achievements in Salvadoran architecture including the *Palacio Nacional, Parque Cuscatlan, Estadio Flor Blanca*, and opulent residences of the elite residing in San Salvador erected during the first decades of the twentieth-century. From 1936-1950, the neo-classicism gave way to a new neo-colonial style particularly in the

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[97] Poizat, Gutierrez. 2013. "Arquitectura moderna en El Salvador", pg 4.
[98] *Ibid*.

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construction of the residences of the elite in San Salvador. These architectural trends, and the buildings that exemplify them, are a testament to the material investment in the westernized cultural project of Salvadoran modernity not only during the Martínez regime, but for much of the first half of the twentieth-century. In the search for the cultured city, these buildings and the modeling of San Salvador after the great capitals of Western Europe demonstrate the prevalence of westernization in the Salvadoran cultural sphere, and the heavy investment in this cultural project not only by the leading classes of the time, but also by the military-controlled Salvadoran state. An important component in this consensus for a westernized model of modernization, and the shared ideals and values that united the classes that espoused it, lies in the tracing of the key networks built between the state and civil society through interstitial organizations in that provided an interface between the political and civil spheres, and which were key in forging networks of key players across a wide range of sectors in Salvadoran society. The next section is thus devoted to an analysis of the Salvadoran Athenaeum as on of the cardinal institutions that facilitated this process.

Martínez and the Salvadoran Petty-Bourgeoisie Intelligentsia

In order to trace the process by which General Martínez and high-ranking officers in his military regime created a repertoire of symbolic cultural and intellectual capital utilized to generate consent for military rule through the active support of key civil actors, it is important to trace the cultural history of civil institutions in early 20th-century El Salvador that served as the intellectual hubs of the capital and as the interstitial sites between the state and civil society. It is in these organizations and spaces that the moment of hegemony was created. Two institutions

stand out on this respect: the Salvadoran Athenaeum (*Ateneo Salvadoreno*) and the Salvadoran chapter of the Theosophical Society, which in El Salvador was principally organized as the *Logia Teosofica Teotl*, and which we will turn to in the next chapter. In addition, it is important to note the cultural and intellectual civil institutions which were part of the intellectual and cultural network of the Martínez regime, in particular the Salvadoran National University (UES) and others that colluded with the cultural and intellectual authorities of the Martínez regime and were an ancillary part of the process of hegemonic consolidation.

The period from the last quarter of the 19th-century through the first decades of the 1900s witnessed the emergence of cultural and intellectual institutions and associations across Latin American countries that promoted scientific inquiry, research, philosophical study, arts, and letters, among other intellectual and cultural pursuits. Rising in the political, cultural, and ideological aftermath of the Liberal-Conservative wars of the latter half of the 19th-century, many of these associations and their members expressed an affinity towards liberal thought, declaring the need to disseminate liberal ideas opposed to autocratic rule and to cement a national identity as articulated in letters and expressed in the visual arts. Although in some cases across the continent loose associations that promoted intellectual exchange and debate existed since the mid 19th-century, there was no formal civil institution associated with sustained intellectual and artistic pursuits until the founding of Athenaeums (Ateneos) across Latin America.

Named after Hadrian's famous school, which borrowed it's name from the city of Athens, considered in ancient Rome as the seat of intellectual refinement, Athenaeums became some of the leading cultural centers in civil society from San Juan, to Santo Domingo, to San Salvador. Much in line with the renewed interest in neo-classicism across Latin America at the

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turn of the 20th-century, which included among other things a fascination with Greek and Latin names from classical antiquity, Athenaeums became centers of philosophical debate and exchange that included some of the leading intellectual, scientific, and artistic figures of the time.

El Salvador was one of the first Latin American countries to establish an Athenaeum. Founded, on September 22, 1912 by intellectuals who included Manuel Masferrer, noted biographer of Alberto Masferrer, the *Ateneo Salvadoreno* sought to create a scientific, literary, and artistic society. Its list of members included the leading Salvadoran intellectuals, scientists, and writers based in San Salvador. Yet, its networks of intellectuals were not confined to Salvadoran borders. As evident in the roster of associated members at the end of the 1910s, the Salvadoran Athenaeum was regional in scope, as many of the associated members across Latin America included Jose Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, two intellectuals heavily involved in the development of Mestizo Nationalism.[99] Luminaries of Salvadoran letters, including the illustrious anthropologist David J. Guzman, after whom El Salvador's natural history museum is named, were listed among the members.

But as early as 1923, the Athenaeum's magazine lists amongst its members General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez and his right hand man, Col. Tomas Calderon.[100] Thus, the two leading military officers that would institute the Salvadoran military state and lead the ruling classes into the consolidation of a hegemonic bloc in the 1930s were incorporated into the leading intellectual society in El Salvador nearly a decade before the events of 1932. By 1925, Calderon, the main architect of the massacre of 1932, occupied the vice presidency of the

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[99] Revista del Ateneo, April 1919.
[100] Revista del Ateneo, 1923. See Lara Martinez (2011), especially pg. 84.

Athenaeum, and by 1929 Martínez would rise to the presidency of the most important intellectual society in El Salvador, two years prior before even running for political office.[101]

Col. Tomas Calderon and General Martínez were thus the only two military men during the 1920s and early 1930s to be distinguished members in the Salvadoran Athenaeum. After the Martínez era, the Salvadoran Athenaeum would not have another military president until 1974 and 1975 under General Jose Maria Lopez Ayala. What is impossible to ignore is the significance of Martínez's ties to the Salvadoran Athenaeum and the links that such a relationship built between him and the leading petty-bourgeois intelligentsia in San Salvador, and even in the Central American and Caribbean region, well before his ascendancy to power. Further archival and historical research is needed to understand the nature, scope, and impact of Martínez's ties with Salvadoran petty-bourgeois intellectuals. However, as the analysis in Chapter Two demonstrated, the petty bourgeois class served as a crucial component in securing an electoral victory for Martínez and Araujo in 1931. Based on my current research, in the very least, Martínez's ties to the leading intellectuals of El Salvador at the time suggests that his cultivation of networks with these intellectual elites legitimized the military as a leader the classes that comprised the Salvadoran historic bloc and posited Martínez as an organic intellectual within this group. The next section is devoted to a further explication of this process.

The Military as Organic Intellectuals and the Moment of Hegemony for the Salvadoran Historic Bloc

As the preceding exposition has shown, General Martínez not only patronized Salvadoran arts and letters, enjoying a widespread support among celebrated Salvadoran writers and intellectuals that have since become part of the national canon, but he was also a member of the

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[101] See Lara Martinez (2011), pg. 85.

highest intellectual circles in El Salvador since the late 1910s, nearly two decades before his ascent to power. Also, less well known and never closely studied before, are Martínez's "Doctrinal Lectures,"—a series of talks that he delivered from El Salvador's National Palace from 1940-1943 and in which he articulated a vision of modernity for El Salvador based upon a unique intersection of Latin American political liberalism, Eastern philosophy, and Jiddu Krishnamurti's theosophical teachings. The intersection of these philosophical currents, as articulated by Martínez, would become the ideological basis for the Salvadoran military's belief in what I term the "Disciplined Society," in which there is a clear separation and vertical ordering of social classes according to duties and responsibilities, and in which any transgression is seen as antithetical to civility and progress and, consequently, brutally punished. These beliefs would not only form the core of the military's ideological defense of the order they sought to protect, but would also permeate the thought of the petty-bourgeoisie's intelligentsia, whose works, and the bourgeois values they enshrine, came to represent the pinnacle and standard of intellectual and cultural attainment in Salvadoran society, enduring well through the civil struggle of the 1980s and the post-war period.

As such, the preceding chapter examined the way in which the configuration of intellectual and cultural forces during the period of roughly 1870-to 1944 in El Salvador were intimately connected to the Salvadoran military's political objectives, and the oligarchic elite's economic imperatives. They were nestled in the crises of capital of the late 19th-century and late 1920s, and in the crises of liberalism and the liberal nation sate. But far from being merely a secondary product of military and oligarchic interests, the intellectual and cultural productions spanning from the late 19th-century through the Martinato were an organic component of Salvadoran modernity, seeking out the substance of national identity and the liberal subject in

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relation to the region, as well as stressing during the latter period in question the essential role that the military class had to play in the development of civilization and culture.

In particular, my analysis explores the manner in which members of the military class within the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc were deeply involved in Salvadoran letters and esoteric societies as a way to stake personal respectability within Salvadoran intellectual circles and generate the symbolic capital that high-ranking members of the military later utilized as a principal cultural component of their ascent to power. The generation and attainment of such cultural currency was paramount to the legitimation of the regime by presenting it as sophisticated and respectable, particularly in light of the fact that members of the military class that came to power under Martínez, and Martínez himself, were dark mestizos that hailed from families without social position, an aberration in the historical record for members of the military that came to political and social prominence. In addition, the military's sojourn with esoteric and exoteric intellectual currents, in vogue at the turn of the 20th-century in the Americas, was also a cultural/intellectual mode to legitimize and consolidate military rule by portraying the Salvadoran military as *the* vehemently revolutionary class within the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc that would herald a new age of civilization and modernity for Salvadoran society. Yet, as intimated above, I contend that the intellectual and cultural projects of the military and liberal regimes that preceded it were not merely a ruse to generate consent for the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc, but also constituted the principal ideological structure upon which the Salvadoran project of modernity and its corresponding vision for national civilization and progress rested.

Within the military class, perhaps no other figure personified and exemplified the intersection of military strength and power, alongside intellectual cultivation and occult insight

that served to articulate this vision of modernity as General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez. The Martínez period is crucial in that the Martinato represents the apex of El Salvador's modernist movement. The analysis, therefore, focused on the manner in which Martínez, as head of the Salvadoran state, posited the material interests of the oligarchic class and the military regime as the national interest, espousing a vision for Salvadoran modernity based on the fulfillment of duties and responsibilities through the preservation of order and discipline. Despite construing the military, oligarchic, and laboring classes as part of an organic whole, the Martínez regime stressed a vision of social order predicated on notions of duty and individual responsibility respective to each class, thereby underscoring the interdependent but fundamentally separate nature of each group. This ideology, which I trace to Latin American political liberalism and its intersection with the Salvadoran military's particular interpretations of theosophical tenets, became the central frame used by the hegemonic classes to understand and explain the proper ordering and functioning of Salvadoran society, and the Salvadoran state's basis for its vision of modernization and progress, for five decades since Martínez's rise to power.

The principal implication of this analysis is that the picture often painted of the Salvadoran military, and the panorama of political, economic, and social forces that frames this picture, is in fact a distorted portrait of the Salvadoran military and its historical development. The dominant portrayals and narratives of the Salvadoran military fail to underscore the institution's evolution and do not capture that force and brutal violence were only one part of the military's arsenal for maintaining discipline and control. Such narratives elide the fact that the military functioned as the leading institution and group that bonded together the disparate conglomerate of classes that constituted the Salvadoran historic bloc through their role as organic

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intellectuals. Indeed, while the maintenance of control and the manufacture of legitimacy

through intellectual/cultural means, what Martínez himself called " A Politics of Culture," was

an undeniably central and important component of military rule, and the operation of the

Salvadoran hegemonic bloc, most studies on the evolution and functioning of the Salvadoran

military state tend to underscore its coercive and exclusionary nature, emphasizing the

intersection between the state's repressive apparatus and the oligarchic elite's monopolistic agro-

industrial and agro-financial sectors.

Perhaps such a stilted representation of the Salvadoran military state owes much to the

preponderance and visibility of material extant on political violence in El Salvador since

Martínez, particularly the materials on the events of 1932, the political instability during the late

1940s and 1950s following his fall from power, and later the onset and evolution of the

Salvadoran Civil Conflict, especially from the period of 1979-1989. Yet, another explanation

also lies in the way in which this representation aligns well with the dominant and mainstream

construction of Latin American strongmen, like Martínez, as brutish and ruthless warlords—a

caricature that was in circulation since the Roosevelt administration and which remains one of

the principal ideological representations of Latin American revolutionaries and statesmen, both

from the right and the left. This tendency is most recently evinced by the construction of Hugo

Chavez as a superstitious, irrational, and dangerous dictator in the U.S. media.[102] Historically,

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[102] Whatever the specific political and historical context of the characters in question, these representations often elide the historical antecedents and conditions for military men assuming positions of political leadership and gaining a degree of political and social eminence in the Americas. Partly in response to the fragmented political landscape following the collapse of the Spanish colonial system, and partly as a result of the very revolutionary effort that overthrew the Spanish colonial yoke, a tradition of "strongmen" or *caudillo*s emerged in response of the military and political challenges posed by great territorial expanses, which were virtually ungovernable by even a strong federation, that were often fragmented not only geographically but politically along a wide-ranging set of questions, many of which concerned the status of former slaves, territorial sovereignty, and commerce. What is important to remark here is that caudillos were often called during a time of crisis to command large, semi-private militias. Usually men of position, caudillos marshaled wealth, military acumen, cultural and social sophistication, and charisma to win support and restore order.

Martínez has been represented in a similar fashion, whereby the brutality and violence of the repression of 1932, the point of inception for the modern Salvadoran military state, casts a shadow over the cultural and intellectual methods of control employed by the regime, as well as the personalism and clientelism that largely defined the contours of the political process under Martínez and well into the period of the Salvadoran Civil War.

Conclusion

While there can be little doubt that since its inception during the early 1930s, the Salvadoran military regime and its auxiliary security forces utilized various forms of political violence in order to quell dissent and maintain order during times of crisis, the Salvadoran state was a much more complex political entity that relied not only upon force to maintain power, but also upon the manipulation of cultural and intellectual artifacts that could manufacture and generate consent across a wide range of political and civil actors. The case of El Salvador exemplifies the manner in which notions of consent in classical political liberalism, generally circumscribed to the political sphere, are in fact only one aspect of a complex and multi-faceted process in the production of political legitimacy.

The generation of consent, particularly in the civil sphere, was a multi-level process that relied upon both the cultivation of a high-browed intellectualism that could appeal to men of letters that comprised the organic intellectuals of the right, and a set of populist politics and reforms that garnered support from the popular classes. As Chapter Two demonstrated, on one level the Salvadoran military regime had to co-opt support from the working and peasant classes through a set of populist policies aimed at ameliorating the deepening labor crisis that onset in

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1929, and which was a central grievance leading to the insurrection of 1932. On another level, key players within the military class functioned as organic intellectuals that posited a vision of national development underscored by both political order and the development of the productive forces. As the previous chapter demonstrated, this particular vision of economic development rested upon the evolution of a sophisticated and diversified agro-industrial sector and its attendant system of finance. But in the social and civil realm, the order espoused by the military classes rested upon a vision for the hierarchical ordering of Salvadoran society in which intellectual life, and the cultural sphere in which it was embedded, was controlled by the intellectual elite from the various classes that comprised the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc. Ultimately, the aim was for these groups to maintain control over the direction and trajectory of national development. Politically, the maintenance of this order depended upon the control of the state by the military class, which at the time monopolized violence and could intervene with appropriate force in a time of crisis. But the enduring nature of this order depended more on the extent to which a wide range of political and civil actors that were active participants in the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc could be intellectually persuaded on the sophistication and legitimacy of the Salvadoran military state. As shown later in the chapter, this would be partly accomplished by Martínez's pretensions to intellectual cultivation and spiritual insight, much of which he showcased in his largely esoteric "Doctrinal Lectures."

An often elided fact in extant analyses of the constitution and operation of the Salvadoran state is that the elite within the military classes that held control of the El Salvador's politics from 1932 to 1989 were often linked to the country's highest artistic, literary, and cultural circles through a web of relationships gradually established in Salvadoran intellectual clubs and esoteric organizations since the late1910s and early 1920s, well before the consolidation of military rule.

For instance, by the 1950s, various high-ranking members of the Salvadoran military belonged to Masonic temples and philosophical organizations, many of which stressed a syncretism between European and Eastern thought.

This study suggests that military men under the Martínez regime, in particular General Martínez himself and Col. Calderon, established the precedent to these patterns of intellectual and esoteric cultivation among the military elite. It is arguable that this form of cultivation was in part a way of Martínez and other high-ranking military officers to stake out social respectability as part of their ascension to military power. In a society with long-standing codes and norms of social decorum and sophistication that were often racially coded and that translated into social and political privilege, military men like Martínez, who were dark mestizos and did not come from distinguished or wealthy families, did not historically represent the social strata that had held control of the Salvadoran state since the independence period. Yet, their cultivation of relationships with the petty bourgeois intelligentsia through active patronage and membership into the leading intellectual organizations of the period served to not only offset the stigma of their dark skin color, lack of wealth, and position, but also to put them in a position of leadership amongst the petty bourgeois classes.

But the military was also able to exploit the historical conditions of the crises of knowledge that accompanied the process of modernity and turn what Max Weber has characterized as "the disenchantment of the world" in their favor. The military and the petty bourgeois intelligentsia turned to esotericism and the occult arts as a way of manipulating forms of knowledge outside of the purvey of bourgeois education that had been traditionally out of reach for mestizos. The following chapter thus explores the manner in which Martínez, and the military men like him that held power in the Salvadoran state, used esotericism as a way of not

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only building new forms of social capital and articulating their conception of power and nation, but also as another form of sociability that linked the networks of organic intellectuals and leaders amongst the somewhat marginal factions of the historic bloc. In addition this process gives a glimpse into the hemispheric scope of the historic bloc, as theosophy linked petty bourgeois intelligentsia and military men across borders in the Americas. Let us now turn to an examination of this process.

Chapter 4:

The Arcane Technology of Modernity: Esotericism, Theosophy, and Networks of Power in

El Salvador, 1910-1944

"It is important, therefore…that the Americas reflect intensively upon what is the path, what is the destiny that we're going to forge for our people. Are we going to allow democracy to be squashed and man to be turned into a slave to an alien will?...For me, the best destiny [for the Americas] is that it transforms into a leader for humanity, into the path of light that all the peoples upon earth could follow, because that path of light is love, liberty, and justice; that is the essence of democracy. If we could make the Americas the people whom direct humanity, then let's do it…let's find out the power of thought, passion, and will. In some phenomena we can know this power. The power of music, the power of art, we know the extraordinary power of [divine?] matter that manifests itself as art…Well then…those paths of art that show us the way of Divinity are parallel paths to the path of Man's will. Just as light, music, and art moves us, so too is Man's Thought an almighty path, because it is fire, because it is power…And when a people grab a hold of Thought…they are indestructible, they cannot be contained, and they give life to the world, and they open-up minds and hearts, and they shape the will of all beings upon this earth."

> --General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez
> February 4th, 1940. National Palace. San Salvador, El Salvador.

Introduction: Esotericism, Theosophy, and Modernism in El Salvador

One of the most enigmatic dimensions of General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez's

rule was his use of esoteric knowledge, especially a purported command of the occult arts, in the

service of power. But far from being a mere eccentricity, Martínez's bonds with Salvadoran

esoteric societies, whose networks and reach extended far beyond the borders of El Salvador,

were an essential technology of power that produced a lasting influence in Salvadoran society

and, in particular, the Salvadoran military as an institution. Indeed, Martínez's bonds with

esoteric societies, most notably the International Theosophical Society, represented a novel mode

of national and transnational networking and cultural flow for Latin American intellectual,

economic, and military elites that depended not on kinship ties, but on bonds of brotherhood and fraternity founded upon common material interests and a shared vision for the evolution of the region. Furthermore, Martínez's intimate connection with these societies placed the Salvadoran military within the bosom of a powerful hemispheric intellectual and cultural movement that facilitated the creation of the military's image as a special class called to a higher form of patriotism—a patriotism founded upon the belief that the military's mission was the protection of a necessary, even cosmically ordained, social and political order. As part of this process, Martínez's involvement with the Theosophical Society and his almost fanatical adherence to its tenets created a new venue for the political socialization of the Salvadoran military, framing a military tradition of ardent republicanism around neo-Platonic notions of a cosmic duty to impel and defend the evolution of mankind, while fostering a culture and ethos that stressed the philosophical and esoteric cultivation of its high-ranking officers.

The creation of the networks that brought together key players in the state and civil society, largely driven by the growth of esoteric societies in Latin America that proliferated rapidly from the 1890s to the 1930s, are culturally and historically situated within the growth of Latin American modernism and the development of regional, Francophile avant-garde intellectual circles—a dual process that stemmed as a reaction to liberal positivism during the last quarter of the 19th-century. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the intersection of esotericism, modernism, and politics did not achieve the early modernist ideal of free expression, a break with the ratiocinative modes of Enlightenment thought, and a rejection of economic imperatives, the profit motive, and the positivistic vision of human social and political organization espoused by liberal political thought in Latin America. Rather, the intersection of these esoteric cultural movements with Francophile intellectual currents, and their merging with military institutions

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and politics ultimately engendered a regime that unified apparently irreconcilable antinomies under a strong state: esoteric idealism with technological progress, indigeneity and primitivism with agro-industrialization, and a strong nationalism reconciled with the expansion of U.S. and European economic interests. Ultimately, this was a process of fascist unification around the overlapping of cultural, political and economic forces; in sum the merging of complex political and social processes.

Esoteric Networks, Cultural Power, and the Gramscian Theory of the State

The process by which esoteric networks facilitated points of intersection for political, financial, cultural, and intellectual forces is an under-studied and under-theorized component of the primacy of cultural institutions and forces in the establishment of the Salvadoran historic bloc. While Gramsci's theoretical concern with intellectuals stems from his rigorous engagement with the problematic of the functioning of hegemony and the formation of the historical bloc, there is no rigorous empirical and historical engagement with the problematic of how the petty bourgeois and bourgeois intelligentsia are able to generate the necessary networks that facilitate the exchange and creation of ideas, and which enable them to stay close to and maintain a hold upon power. Indeed, Gramsci understood that the consolidation of a historic bloc, as a set of forces unified by the interests of the dominant class, requires the building of alliances amongst groups/classes that represent each force. Here force can be understood as the movement, or activity, of a group in order to fulfill their interests. The concept therefore recognizes magnitude and direction over time. But the central political project of this historic bloc is the building of consent through the positing of bourgeois values, such as the cultural primacy of economic

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imperatives and capital, industriousness, respectability, signaling of status through materialism and conspicuous consumption, as universal. This is the essential social function of the historic bloc's intelligentsia, whether they are consciously aware of their historic role or not.

Yet, though Gramsci recognized the need to build these alliances, the process by which the alliances are built, and a rigorous historical treatment of it, is under-theorized in his work. Edward Said made an important intervention in Gramscian thought by demonstrating how this process had taken place, particularly in cultural representations in texts, linking cultural products to specific, interrelated institutions, such as the academy, the museum, and the art gallery. Using a Foucauldian analysis, Said further elaborated on the disciplinary nature of the process, through the creation of a discursive field and the establishment of a regime of truth that could limit what can be thought or said about any given subject. But what remains under-theorized in both analyses is the historical process by which intellectuals, writers, and artists, those that generate intellectual and cultural forces of a regime forge networks with other members that constitute the historical bloc in a given society. The following analysis serves as a corrective to this omission.

The legacy of Martínez's connections to esoteric societies is indelible and permeates many Salvadoran institutions, both in the political and civil sphere. Such a legacy is reflected in part in the aura of mystique that continues to surround General Martínez, and which continues to color the myths and legends contained in the many narratives told about his dictatorship; tales that often portray Martínez's manifestly eccentric nature as madness. Perhaps one of the most well known among these stories, and one recounted by Gabriel Garcia Marquez during his Nobel acceptance lecture, is that Martínez had the streetlamps of all of San Salvador covered in red cellophane paper in order to defat an outbreak of measles.[103] This event was recorded earlier in Dalton's *Historias prohibidas del pulgarcito* (1974), along with an account of Martínez's use of

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[103] See Garcia Marquez (1982).

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Aguas Azules (Blue Waters) to treat his son's ultimately fatal appendicitis. Martínez "blue"

potion consisted of water placed in colored receptacles along the courtyard of the Presidential

Palace and left under the blazing sun, in the belief that the sun's rays, filtered through the blue

glass containers, would transform the molecular structure of the water and endow it with curative

properties.[104] Although manifestly eccentric and idiosyncratic, such a practice was not

completely lost with the fall and demise of the General. Even as late as January 2009, while

sitting on the General's tomb in the Cemetery of the Illustrious in San Salvador, Graciela de

Martínez, Martínez's 96-year old sister-in-law, credited the curative blue waters with her long

life.[105]

But more important than creating an enduring mythical status for the General, esoteric

training and knowledge would become a form of intellectual and symbolic power wielded not

only by military men since Martínez—from Gen. Osorio, former president of El Salvador in the

1950s, to General Jose Maria Lopez Ayala in the 1970s, to even the infamous Maj. Roberto

D'Aubuisson himself—but also by men and women that rubbed shoulders in the highest circles

of power. Indeed, since the first decade of the 20th-century, belonging to an occult or esoteric

society would become emblematic not only of sophistication and cultivation, but also of social

standing and political power in El Salvador. In particular, Freemasonry, Theosophy, and

philosophical movements that syncretized Western and Easter philosophy, and often borrowed

heavily from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, would become the main esoteric societies that

attracted not only the Salvadoran intelligentsia, but military men, writers, and artists; central

players that comprised the Salvadoran hegemonic bloc. My contention is that the hybridity of

theosophy emerges as a characteristic imminently connected to both the colonial encounter

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[104] Dalton ([1974] 1999)

[105] El Salvador.com (2009). "El brujo de las aguas azules." Retrieved July 18, 2014.

between East and West, and the development of hybrid and creolized forms of spirituality that became cardinal features of hemispheric cultural currents during the modernist period.

Indeed, the vast amount of speeches, interviews, an publications that comprise some of the extant documents from Martínez's presidency point that the General's political thought, and his vision for a hierarchically ordered society led by an intellectual-military elite, was most profoundly shaped by the Theosophical Society, perhaps more than any other esoteric organization operating in early 20th-century El Salvador.

The Spanish-American War: Consolidation of U.S. Hemispheric Hegemony and New Venues for Transnational Cultural Flows

Although the first Theosophical Lodge in San Salvador was founded on June 5, 1910, the history of the Theosophical Society's chapter in El Salvador and the proliferation of theosophy in the Central American region can be traced to the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1899. On one hand, excavating the history of the International Theosophical Society in El Salvador, Central America, and the Caribbean sheds light upon the nexus of power and esoteric societies at the turn of the 20th-century in the Americas and its hemispheric reach. Indeed, the historiography of the Theosophical Society in the region reveals a vast network of central players at both the level of civil society and the state linked by a common, albeit variegated, vision for the political, economic, and cultural development of the region. An analysis of the origin and nature of these hemispheric networks is, therefore, of particular interest in elucidating the manner in which civil society interpenetrated into the state. On the other hand, at a larger transnational level, an examination of the particular historical conjuncture at which these

societies and their correspondent networks arose demonstrates that far from being confined to economic and political imperatives, U.S. influence reached far into the cultural and intellectual sphere of Latin American nations, leaving an indelible imprint even when such cultural exchanges were not explicitly imperialistic or directly linked to U.S. foreign policy. In turn, this historical conjuncture is defined by the Spanish-American war, the subsequent demise of the Spanish empire, and the consolidation of U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere.

Ostensibly fought to support the Cuban independence movement and aid its revolutionaries out of a sense of duty to protect democratic ideals of self-governance and representative government, the Spanish-American war was an imminently imperial venture that heralded the dawn of the U.S. Empire. Although recent scholarship on the Spanish-American war, as well as recent biographical work on William McKinley, points to a certain degree of ambivalence in the U.S. stance towards territorial expansion before and during the war, it is incontestable that the war's conclusion expanded the sphere of U.S. economic and political influence, encompassing not only the western hemisphere, but also Southeast Asia.

In particular, the U.S. retained Puerto Rico as a "protectorate," while its foothold in the Philippines opened up a previously unexploited market in the East. U.S. occupation of the Philippines also granted the U.S. a favorable strategic position in the South Pacific. This expansion is not merely incidental, and it in fact speaks of a strong imperialist impulse in circulation through various political, economic, and cultural channels at the close of the twentieth-century. Indeed, even if the McKinley administration initially sought to pursue "a firm and dignified foreign policy, which [aimed to] be just and impartial," and that McKinley officially endorsed the position that "[the U.S. need to] avoid the temptation of territorial aggression," there can be little doubt that influential groups in civil society, members of his

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cabinet, and sectors of the U.S. military, such as Roosevelt and his Rough Riders, openly favored expansion.[106] These factions "…preached a new doctrine of expansion, artfully linking it with the slogans of Manifest Destiny that had captured the allegiance of prior generations of Americans…It was America's destiny, these men said, to command continents and seas with actual as well as moral force."[107]

As discussed above, on one hand, the demise of the Spanish empire at the hands of the United States not only consolidated U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere, but also gave U.S. corporations greater access to Latin American and Asian markets. On the other hand, as part of its "civilizational" mission, the capture of these territories allowed the U.S. to send, and in some instances even officially patronize, missionaries of various Protestant denominations, as well as U.S. civil and cultural organizations, which had hitherto limited or no access to Spain's former colonies in the Caribbean and South Asia. This process also opened up the possibilities for transnational cultural flows that were not directly overseen by the U.S. government or explicitly linked to its foreign policy.

It is precisely this historical nexus of U.S. military, political, economic, and cultural influence during the post-Spanish-American war period that aided the proliferation of theosophy into Latin America. Although theosophical currents from Spain had been introduced in the region during the latter half of the 19th-century during a period of heavy Spanish immigration to Cuba and Spain's former colonies in Central America, it was not until the conclusion of the Spanish-American War that theosophical lodges mushroomed in the region from approximately 1905-1930. In particular, the intersection of the military and cultural vectors of this configuration facilitated the growth of the International Theosophical Society in the region. This process began

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[106] Morgan (2003), pg. 252.
[107] Morgan (2003), pp. 252-253.

with the founding of Katherine Tingley's "Raja Yoga Academy" in Santiago de Cuba during the war's immediate aftermath in 1899. From Havana and Santiago, the Theosophical Society (TS) would travel to Costa Rica during the early 20th-century, eventually reaching El Salvador by 1910. But in order to appreciate this historical trajectory, and its linkage to the U.S. imperial project at the turn of the 20th-century, it is necessary to first provide a brief account of the origins and aims of the Theosophical Society within its proper political and cultural context.

Liberal Positivism, Social Change, and Modernist Spirituality: Origins of the Theosophical Society in the United States

The International Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Helena Blavatsky, a Russian occultist that hailed from both German and Russian nobility, and Henry S. Olcott, an attorney and Civil War veteran that became interested in the occult and the growing Spiritualist movement in the U.S. during the period of Reconstruction.[108] Under Blavatsky and Olcott, a "small group of people banded together in New York City to form a society concerned with ancient wisdom and Oriental religions."[109] Indeed, the system of thought espoused by the Theosophical Society represented a syncretism of Western and Eastern religious and philosophical traditions that reach far back into antiquity. Most significantly, Western esotericism, which originated from the intersection of neoplatonism and hermeticism during the

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[108] Campbell (1980), 2, 6-7. Biographical sources point to the fact that Blavatsky was influenced in her early years by spiritualism, psychic phenomena and the occult. Blavatsky also travelled widely throughout Europe, the Middle East, North America, and perhaps even the Far East during the mid 19th century. She would later claim that it was during these travels to the Far East that underwent rigorous occult training in Tibet. By contrast, Olcott's life was one characterized by "worldly achievement" and his involvement with the occult was gradual. Campbell 1980, 4, 7.
[109] Campbell (1980), pg. 1.

early modern period, constituted the basis for the development of early theosophical thought.[110]

The influence of neoplatonic and hermetic ideas is in part reflected in the Theosophical Society's desire to obtain knowledge of the "Supreme Power" and its concern with apprehending the "unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man" beyond what was possible with dominant scientific methods, as well as a paramount belief in the universal brotherhood of humanity.[111] But in addition, as Blavatsky's own biography demonstrates, the Theosophical Society was also influenced by Western occultism, primarily based on 19th-century Spiritualism, as well as new knowledge of "Oriental" religions disseminated through Christian missionaries and the translation of ancient Eastern scriptures into Western languages.[112]

Placed in the context of late 19th-century U.S. society, the growth of theosophy and the birth of the Theosophical Society were part of larger cultural and social processes that posed a challenge to orthodox Christianity, while remaining largely conservative towards social transformation. In many ways, the growth and appeal of the Theosophical Society reflected late Victorian anxieties over rapid social change and religious faith. While in European societies theosophy, as a system of thought, attracted people who generally adhered to liberal and reformist principles, in the U.S. the theosophical movement attracted a niche of middle-class groups who were religiously liberal but culturally conservative.[113] These groups favored "reformist causes that many middle-class Americans from antebellum times to the late 19th-century found attractive, but veered away from radical ideologies like socialism. They were

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[110] Neoplatonism "posited a monistic Platonism, that is, a view of the world that pointed to a Source of all being that extended into lower levels of being, each lower level being a weaker expression of the great Source." Ashcraft 2002, pp. 1-2. In addition, "Plotinus argued, and later neoplatonist affirmed, that the universe is good, for all things participate in one absolutely good, absolutely free, divine Source of being."[110] Given these ontological premises, according to neoplatonists "the form of knowing best suited for apprehending the Source [of all being] is intellectual intuition rather than knowledge based on empirical observation, since divine Mind is the first stage of outflowing of the great Source." (Ibid.).

[111] See Ashcraft (2002), pg. 24.

[112] Campbell (1980), pg. 19.

[113] Ashcraft (2002), 23.

'status-inconsistent,' whose outward lives seemed comfortable, even prosperous, for the standards of the day, but on their inward journeys to spiritual wholeness they cried out for something more satisfying than the popular religious messages. The first organization of the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875 reflected this need. "[114]

Many of the movements and intellectual currents of the period, such as anti-clericalism, shared similar ideas about progress unfettered by antiquated institutions like the church and placed ideas about individual effort and merit at the core of a secular, civilizational impulse. Nevertheless, these impulses remained culturally and socially conservative at their core. Yet, perhaps paradoxically, just as Western esotericism developed as a counterpoint to the mechanistic ratiocination of scientific inquiry during the early modern period, so too theosophy developed during the latter quarter of the 19th-century as a response to the Industrial Revolution and the prevalence of liberal positivism. As we shall see shortly, these influences allowed the Theosophical Society (TS) to find a home within U.S. and Latin American modernist circles, many of whom were implicated in the cultural and ideological struggle between a spiritual and a scientific worldview.

Although relatively small during its early period, the theosophical movement and the TS attracted a "cultured New York lady busily engaged in philanthropic activities" by the name of Katherine Tingley. Tingley, by all accounts a charismatic woman, was most directly responsible for the introduction of the Raja Yoga Academy in Cuba and the expansion of theosophical ideas, which already circulated during the last quarter of the 19th-century. She drew the attention of William Q. Judge, a prominent member of the TS, while conducting philanthropic work in New York. Judge revitalized the theosophical movement at a time when its impulse seemed to wane, and Tingley eventually came under Judge's tutelage. After the passing of Blavatsky and Judge,

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[114] Ashcraft (2002), 23.

Tingley rose to prominence in the TS, becoming Blavatsky's successor in the U.S. after a break with Annie Bessant in a schism that led to the rupture of the TS into an American and Indian headquarters.

By the late 1890s, Katherine Tingley headed the theosophical movement in the United States, wielding a great deal of influence amongst its adherents. As scholars like Ashcraft point out, part of this influence stemmed from Tingley's innate charisma. However, Tingley's charisma was also institutional in nature, drawing largely from her relationship with the TS as an organization. Her position of prominence commanded both respect from its members and reinforced the belief in her superior leadership and intellectual abilities. Shrewd in equal measure, Tingley seized upon the conservative, middle-class sensibilities of the theosophical movement's followers and the milieu of consumerist values that began to be firmly entrenched within this class. Indeed, under her leadership, the TS would often hold meetings that included musical entertainment and educational lectures, and the society often trumpeted the events in the local media.

This late 19th century, middle-class ethos would resonate well with the eventual followers of theosophy in Central America, whose meetings resembled those being held by the TS in the United States. For instance, it is notable to say that once Martínez became a member of the Teotl Theosophical Lodge in San Salvador, the society's meetings were held in the presidential palace, surrounded by the splendor of its neo-classical architecture. But the establishment of the TS in Central America came after Tingley forged ties with the McKinley administration at an opportune movement that opened up Cuba and Central America not only to U.S. corporations, but also to the Theosophical Society.

Already a well-seasoned opportunist, as evinced by her shrewd use of the media to promote the Theosophical Society's activities, Katherine Tingley seized the conjuncture presented by the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in order to launch the TS into the national and international arenas. As U.S. troops returning from the Cuban campaign disembarked enfeebled from the ravages of yellow fever and war upon the shores of Long Island, the U.S. State Department encountered a situation for which it was catastrophically unprepared. It became clear that the State Department lacked adequate shelter, mobile medical facilities, an ample supply of antidotes to the combat tropical disease, or sufficient medical staff to care for the troops. Soldiers were so utterly debilitated that it was impossible for many to even disembark from the ships, let alone carry supplies. Fearing that the sick troops would spread the malaise amongst the general population, the US State Department chose an isolated area in the easternmost tip of Long Island for the soldiers to disembark. When troops finally arrived from Cuba and Tampa on August 9 of 1898, the site was completely barren.[115] The disaster facing veterans returning home from the war seemed as a symptom of the U.S.'s unpreparedness for its first conflict of global magnitude.

Upon learning of the drama unfolding in New York, Tingley mobilized the resources of the TS across the nation from her headquarters in Point Loma, California—a decision which would grant the TS exposure, credibility and prominence at a national scale. Under Tingley's leadership, the TS provided tents, supplies, and medical aid to the troops in Long Island, setting up camps at various disembarkation points along the shore. Tingley herself and other women at

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[115] Ashcraft 2002, 166.

Point Loma "sewed bandages and garments for long hours at the headquarters building."[116] Her efforts, and those of the TS, greatly assisted the Red Cross, which was also setting up camps, dispensing supplies, and overseeing the work of volunteer Catholic nuns.

By late August of 1898, Tingley personally wrote a letter to William McKinley detailing the TS and IBL activities at the relief camps. Although McKinley himself never toured the IBL's camps at Long Island, Tingley's letter, which included copious information on the camps and the aid rendered to more than 9,000 soldiers, provided McKinley with an exhaustive report of the TS's relief work.[117] According to a supplement of *Century Path*, an official publication of the Theosophical Society at Point Loma, General Wheeler, the U.S. officer in command of the camps at Montauk, Long Island, "…brought to the attention of President McKinley a most favorable report of the great work Mrs. Tingley and her staff had accomplished in caring for the sick at that time, when so many brave soldiers were ill and needed help."[118]

The IBL relief work in New York, as detailed in Tingley's letter and Wheeler's report, did not go unnoticed by McKinley. According to the *Century Path's* report, Tingley set sail for Santiago de Cuba in a relief expedition less than a week after completing her work in New York. Most strikingly, McKinley financed and endorsed the Cuban expedition and provided all manner of protection for Tingley in Cuba, making her trip an incursion of cultural dissemination with humanitarian pretensions that was officially sanctioned by the U.S. government. So close a nexus was discerned in the island between Tingley and McKinley, that many rumors on the founding of the Theosophical Society in Cuba aver that it was McKinley's wife, Ida McKinley, herself that founded the first theosophical lodges in Santiago and Havana. Reputable sources extant point to the fact that Ida McKinley never undertook a trip to Cuba.

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[116] Ashcraft 2002l, 165.
[117] In Young and Moore, 1898, Pp. 477-479.
[118] *Newburyport Daily News*, May 29, 1909.

However, the McKinley's close ties and sympathetic leaning towards some central tenets of Blavatsky's theosophy, namely spiritualism and reincarnation, merit close attention because of the influence they would later have on U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, despite the fact that Ida and William McKinley were raised in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches respectively, both were attracted to esoteric and spiritualist ideas that circulated in American society since the 1870s. In particular, the McKinleys gravitated towards spiritualism and the idea of reincarnation after the tragic death of their 3-year old daughter Katie in 1875, only two years after the death of a younger child shortly after birth. The story was widely disseminated and exploited by the media, couching the parents' loss and unending devotion to their deceased daughters in the values and Romantic language of the late Victorian period, and, consequently, appealing widely to the sensibilities of a middle-class Victorian audience. In particular, Ida McKinley's devotion to little Katie, exemplified by her preservation and display of Katie's personal effects, most notably Katie's rocking chair and an elegant child's Victorian dress affectionately draped over it, suggested to many that the McKinley's believed that their daughters' spirits endured after death and remained with them, aging with the passage of time, even by the time that McKinley arrived at the White House in 1897.

In addition, a recent biography of Ida Mckinley by Carl Sferrazza Anthony suggests that Ida McKinley's exposure to the idea of reincarnation during a lecture given by a Presbyterian missionary in 1878 may have not only influenced the McKinley's openness to spiritualism and other esoteric ideas of the late 19th-century, but may have also influenced some of the most important foreign policy decisions made in Washington during the McKinley administration.[119] Anthony points to the possibility that Ida McKinley's belief in reincarnation, and her belief that Katie may have been reborn in the Philippines, was a powerful personal motivation behind

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[119] See Anthony (2013), especially pgs. 164-175, 178.

William McKinley's eventual decision to occupy and retain the Philippine Islands. Drawing from previously unstudied documents, Anthony highlights the subtle but powerful influence of Ida McKinley's over her husband's decision-making, as well as the rationale that if their daughters' spirits had indeed reincarnated in the Philippines, that it was therefore imperative that the islands be converted from the Catholic to the Presbyterian faith. Although it is impossible to conclusively state whether the McKinleys' beliefs in these esoteric ideas, so closely linked to the Katherine Tingley's theosophy, also influenced William McKinley's decision to officially place her and the TS under U.S. protection in Cuba aside from her commendable relief work in Long Island after the war's conclusion. However, their connection and significance is impossible to ignore.

Indeed, though theosophy and esoteric ideas in general are never included as important influences on McKinley's thought and decision-making by his major biographers, it would be narrow to jettison the possibility that McKinley was, in the very least, sympathetic to such ideas, given that he provided Tingley and the TS official support while in Cuba, and also given that members of his inner circle belonged the Tingley's Theosophical Society. Most notably, his Secretary of the Treasury, Lyman J. Gage, who also served under the Roosevelt administration, and who had a long-time interest in spiritualism and astrology, was an active member of Tingley's Theosophical Society. Indeed, shortly his retirement as Secretary of the Treasury in 1902, Gage purchased property in Point Loma, California, and lived close to Tingley's Theosophical compound.[120] Of no small relevance is the fact that Gage exerted a great deal of influence over U.S. finance, being a key figure in securing the passage of the Gold Standard Act and laying the groundwork for the creation of the Federal Reserve.

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[120] See Greenwalt (1955), pg. 171. See also *The Washington Magazine*, July 16, 1906.

But perhaps more importantly to the development of esotericism and its linkage to ideas about race, progress, and civilization, Gage served as an important figure in the finance sector connected to some of the most important cultural developments of the U.S. within the nexus of its expanding world influence. In particular, Gage was the president of the Board of Directors for the 1890 Chicago World's Fair, and is credited as being the most central figure behind the financing of the Fair, which in itself was one of the most influential cultural events in America during the last decade of the 19th-century. Notably, the fair put on display "native villages" alongside Wild Bill's Wild West Show; displays on locomotives and the new technological innovation—electricity—were focal points and complemented lectures on the closing of the American Western Frontier, while corporations, which would later become household names such as Quaker Oats, displayed their products. The fair's exhibits trumpeted U.S. technological superiority; its civility and triumph over the savagery of the western frontier and its native inhabitants, as well as the juxtaposition of U.S. civilization and progress to "other" and "savage" areas of the globe, thereby exalting hegemonic notions about U.S. exceptionalism. If Gage, therefore, is an important figure in the history of theosophy and esotericism in the U.S. as well as Latin America, it is precisely because Gage's life illustrates the manner in which theosophy and theosophical ideas, as well as its networks, became linked to some of the highest and powerful political, financial/economic, and cultural circles during the late 19th-century, as well as the relation of theosophy and its adherents to some of the most pivotal cultural and intellectual developments of the late 19th-century and turn of the 20th-century.

Gage's close connection to the theosophical society and his influence across a wide array of political, cultural, and banking sectors, demonstrates the degree of penetration that theosophy had within the state. Whether William McKinley was actually influenced by theosophical ideas

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in either his foreign policy making or his decision to endorse Katherine Tingley's Cuba trip, and whether this susceptibility came from the personal loss of his daughters and his wife's influence, remains highly speculative. Yet, it is undoubtedly clear that theosophical circles were close to power at both the level of the state and civil society. This was not solely a phenomenon of the development of theosophy in the United States and the manner in which theosophical societies made it possible for political, cultural, financial, and intellectual vectors of power to intersect. Indeed, many of the patterns in the development of theosophy in the Caribbean and Central America, as exemplified by the founding of the first Theosophical lodge in El Salvador, mirror this process and reveal a close regional nexus between theosophists and circles of power across various sectors.

Raja Yoga in Cuba: Katherine Tingley's Theosophical Schools in Santiago and Havana

Katherine Tingley's ties to the McKinley administration exemplify the reach and influence of theosophists and theosophical networks among elite political and cultural circles and are also pivotal in the cultural dissemination of theosophical ideas in the Caribbean, and eventually El Salvador. Tingley's Cuba expedition proved to be one of the most decisive points in the development of Latin American esotericism at the turn of the 20th-century. Indeed, Tingley's trip to Cuba led to the founding of the first formal theosophical organization on the island, the Raja Yoga Academy in Santiago de Cuba on June 4, 1905. In less than a decade, Cuba would become the beacon of theosophical activity for the Caribbean and Central American region.[121] In addition, the introduction of the theosophical society in Cuba in the aftermath of the war led to the proliferation of theosophical tenets through a series of networks that brought

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[121] See International Theosophical Society (1928), especially the Cuba and Central America section of the report.

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together a conglomerate of intellectuals, military men, bankers, financiers, and revolutionaries, all of whom would adopt and transform theosophical ideas in such a way that it served not only to make sense of their particular reality, but also serve specific goals in their respective political and intellectual projects. Such an adaptation often created apparently antithetical and paradoxical trends, as evinced by the historical development of modernism in El Salvador.

Although the new venues for transnational cultural and intellectual flows opened up by the conclusion of the Spanish American war facilitated the proliferation of the International Theosophical Society and esoteric ideas in Cuba, the island's intellectual and cultural atmosphere welcomed esoteric ideas and Eastern philosophy since at least the mid 19th-century. In particular, the translation of Hindu Gita from Latin into Spanish in Havana by Francisco Mateo Acosta y Zepeda in 1848, as well as the influence of Spanish Theosophy in Cuba prior to the Revolutionary period, made the island receptive to the founding of Tingley's Raja Yoga academies. By the end of the first decade of the 20th-century, Cuba would become the focal point of theosophical thought and esotericism in the Caribbean and Central America, evinced by the Cuban lodges official authority as the administrative seat of Latin America's theosophical chapters and lodges under the aegis of the International Theosophical Society.

Indeed, as the International Theosophical Society's world reports demonstrate, as well as the official founding documents of lodges across Central America, Havana occupied a privileged position of authority within Latin American theosophical networks.[122] It is not coincidental that the Cuban lodges had been established by Tingley herself, or that Cuban children, orphaned by the war of 1898, had been brought to the U.S. to reside in Tingley's Point Loma compound to be

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[122] See International Theosophical Society (1928) "General report of the Theosophical Society", especially the Cuba and Central America sections.

trained and steeped in theosophical traditions.[123] By 1920, theosophy and the Raja Yoga

academies founded by Tingley would be firmly established in Cuba. Archival records on the

Cuban lodges indicate that Tingley was honored as the founder of the academies in February 22,

1920 on San Juan Hill in Santiago de Cuba.[124] Only a year after the founding of the first Raja

Yoga school in Santiago de Cuba in 1903, the first theosophical lodge in Central America

emerged in San Jose, Costa Rica. It is therefore incumbent upon this inquiry to now turn to an

examination of the development of theosophy in Central America.

The Establishment of Theosophical Lodges in Central America: 1904-1910

Although the history of theosophy and esotericism in Cuba, and its consequent influence

over the development of theosophy in Central American region, begins in earnest after

Blavatsky's death and Katherine Tingley's expedition, the presence of theosophy in Central

American can be traced to the immigration of southern Spaniards conversant with esotericism

during the latter half of the 19th-century to Costa Rica. Among these, Tomas Povedano de Arco,

a Spanish immigrant that hailed from Andalucia in southern Spain, founded the first official

theosophical institution in Central America, the Rama Virya Theosophical lodge, on March 27,

1904, though the exact date is contested.[125] Another possible date for the funding of the lodge is

June 10, 1904. Whatever the exact date of its founding, the Rama Virya Theosophical lodge

would play an important role in the development in theosophy in Central America, particularly

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[123] See *The Washington Times Magazine* "The Community of Reincarnated Souls for which Lyman J. Gage has Abandoned the World", July 16, 1906. See also
[124] See *The Theosophical Path*, Vol 18, pgs. 390-403. First reported in *El Cubano Libre*, February 25, 1920.
[125] See International Theosophical Society (1928) "General report of the Theosophical Society", especially the Central America section.

since Costa Rican members of this lodge were influential in the establishment of theosophical

lodges in other Central American countries, as we shall see in the case of El Salvador.

Tomas Povedano de Arco is also credited with introducing theosophical thought to Costa

Rica during the late 19th-century and mentoring anyone interested in theosophical ideas.

Although most documents and scholarly sources do not point to the dissemination of theosophy

directly from Cuba to Costa Rica, it is clear that the Cuban lodge located in Havana became the

seat of theosophical authority for the Caribbean and Central American region. Indeed, the first

Costa Rican lodge quickly came under the aegis of the Cuban lodges. Without exception, all the

founding documents for the Central American lodges denote the Cuban Section of the

International Theosophical Society based in Havana as the main administrative center for

theosophical activity in the Isthmus and the Caribbean islands. And yet, while it is more likely

that the branch of theosophy introduced to Central America was Spanish in origin, whereas the

most prominent branch in Cuba was tied to Blavatsky's organization, most myths of foundations

for the theosophical loges across the isthmus, including Costa Rica and El Salvador, claim that

Cubans figured prominently among the founding members. Whether fact or myth, the prevalence

of Cubans in the lore of theosophical lodges speaks to the influence of Cuban section of the

International Theosophical Society. In the case of Costa Rica, for example, a Cuban family by

the name of Bertod was reputedly among the original members despite the unverifiable nature of

this information by any reliable source.

It is thus important to underscore that the founding of the Costa Rican lodge is of special

significance to the historiography of Central American intellectual and cultural history, as well as

to the analysis in the early development of theosophical lodges for two important reasons. These

lodges functioned not only as a new form of "modern" socialization in the Central American

region that brought together members of an emerging intelligentsia and petty-bourgeoisie at the margins of oligarchic society and power, but also as focal centers of intellectual and cultural exchange that promoted modernist and populist ideas couched in a particular brand of Latin American Orientalism. These ideas were thus juxtaposed to liberal positivism and hyper rationality that became the creed of the oligarchic class during the last quarter of the 19th-century. At the same time, these societies and networks allowed for the development of a new class of public intellectuals, artists, bankers, financiers, military men, politicians, and other key players in the state and civil society who shared a vision of Latin American nationalism buttressed by anticlericalism, anti-US imperialism, and modernization. These players would effectively challenge the old regime and establish a new historic bloc based on modernist ideas, while reconciling some of the tenets of the old oligarchic class—namely, notions of modernization and civilization based on technological progress and industrialization that were identified with an aesthetic that was posited as preeminently national, such as *indigenismo*. This process, and its resultant class conglomerate, is what I term the reactionary-modernist historic bloc in Latin America.

For instance, part of the reason for rejecting the old system of racial classifications and embracing *mestizaje* lay precisely in ideas circulated by these theosophical and modernist groups who rejected the notion of a racially differentiated and hierarchically ordered society. Yet, this should not lead to the facile conclusion, as many scholars working on late 19th-century and early 20th-century esoteric and intellectual networks have reached, that such leanings automatically meant that the members of this new historic bloc were radical reformers. In fact, the intellectual, cultural, and state projects that they promoted and supported sustained fascist, military regimes throughout the region, most notably in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica during the first

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decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, perhaps no other example best illustrates this process than the complicity of intellectual and modernist writers linked to theosophical societies and the state that El Salvador during the Martínez era. Therefore, we now turn our attention to this chapter of esoteric history and the politics of reactionary modernism in the Americas.

El Salvador's Theosophical Society: The Founding of the Teotl Lodge

The Teotl Theosophical Lodge, now housed in a modest building in the heart of San Salvador, was once one of the most prestigious societies in El Salvador during the first decades of the twentieth-century. During its golden age under the Martínez regime the lodge celebrated its weekly meetings, attended by its illustrious members, in the Salvadoran National Palace. But its history begins over two decades before Martínez's ascent to power. Founded on June 5, 1910 as the first theosophical lodge in the country, the Teotl Lodge brought together an impressive, albeit small, array of seven founding members that included burgeoning statesmen, intellectuals, and economists. Also figured prominently in the lore surrounding its founding lies an American ex-patriate of Irish ancestry residing in El Salvador since the late 19th-century by the name of Patrick Brannon, who came to be known as "Don Patricio." Brannon, a leading industrialist and engineer who was a key figure in the construction of the Salvadoran railroad system that linked the country's western coffee growing regions with the capital for the first time in its history during the late 19th-century, was also the father of a young woman who would become one of El Salvador's most celebrated writers and a future member of the Teotl Lodge: Claudia Lars.

Although the Teotl Theosophical lodge's membership would expand over the years to include some of the most notable intellectuals, writers, and statesmen, like Lars and perhaps

most notably General Martínez, the lodge had since its inception and impressive array of key players in the political and civil sphere. Indeed, among the theosophical lodge's *acta de fundacion*'s seven signing members appears Dr. Don Maximiliano Olano, who was also named president of the lodge. At the turn of the twentieth-century, Olano was one of El Salvador's preeminent physicians and perhaps the country's leading psychiatrist. Named Sub-Secretary of Education under President Dr. Don Pio Romero Bosque, Olano was also co-founder of the *Junta Directiva de Quimica y Farmacia*, El Salvador's first regulatory body for pharmaceuticals, the Salvadoran equivalent of the FDA. A faculty member of the *Universidad Nacional* and eventual Chancellor of El Salvador's then-sole university, Olano delivered a series of ten lectures on criminal psychology during 1926 that were hailed as path-breaking at a time when carceral institutions and interest in the "scientific" study of criminality were expanding in the country. Not coincidentally perhaps these interests in ascertaining a psychological link between racial types and criminality was also developing within the bosoms of fascist regimes in Europe, perhaps most famously Lombroso's criminal psychology in fascist Italy. That same year, as chancellor of the university, Olano presented an award to Lisandro Villalobos, a writer who would be one of El Salvador's most celebrated men of letters in the age of Martínez.

Also in the civil sphere, Dr. Olano co-founded El Salvador's first sanitarium and is credited with being an innovator in sanitary standards for hospitals and similar institutions. Of no small significance is also the fact that Dr. Olano's son Maximiliano Olano, would become one of the country's leading industrialists by partnering with Pablo Tesak, a Czech-Jewish immigrant fleeing the post WWII soviet bloc. Together, Olano and Tesak founded Diana Industries, the country's first and most prosperous manufacturer of bagged snacks—El Salvador's equivalent of Frito-Lay. This was an important development in Salvadoran industry and the emerging middle

classes in the capital, as Olano and Tesak's company introduced highly mechanized, and assembly-line methods of production using sophisticated machines that revolutionized the nature of production in a country whose economy had been hitherto defined by its agro-industry. The development of Olano and Tesak's snack industry thus led to the demand for mechanical engineers specializing in rotary mechanics and who were trained in industrial centers in Mexico, such as Monterrey.

Along with Olano, another prominent figure in the theosophical lodge's first roster was Dr. Don Reyes Arrieta Rossi. The lodge's founding document lists Rossi as its acting secretary. At the time of the lodge's founding, Rossi was an upcoming statesman and intellectual. Appointed *charge d'affaires* to Costa Rica on June 17, 1909, Rossi would eventually go on to become El Salvador's Minister of Foreign Affairs to the League of Nations in the late 1910s. This post would be followed by Rossi's tenure as Assistant Secretary of State in the 1920s. Perhaps most importantly, General Martínez appointed Rossi as Chancellor to the National University for the entire duration of his dictatorship—the same post that Olano occupied years prior. It is thus clear that esoteric links bound Olano, Rossi, and Martínez together.

Of particular interest is the fact that out of seven founding members, two were Costa Rican nationals that rose to prominence in Costa Rican politics and finance during the 1920s. Perhaps the most notable was Don Julio Acosta Garcia, who was appointed as Consul General in El Salvador by Costa Rican president Gonzales Viquez in 1907 and took-up permanent residence in San Salvador shortly after his appointment. On April 16, 1910, nearly three years later and just a couple of months prior to the founding of the Teotl Theosophical lodge, Don Julio Acosta married Elena Gallegos Rosales, a young Salvadoran socialite educated in Paris who was the daughter of Don Salvador Gallegos Valdez, a prominent *capitaleño*.

Acosta Garcia's career in the ensuing years exhibits a meteoric rise, as Acosta received a series of promotions, manifestly in rapid succession, through the 1910s. For instance, he is quickly promoted from *Consul General*, which was a diplomatic position, to the post of *Encargado de Negocios y Ministro Plenipotenciario*, which roughly translates to Minister of Business. By 1915, he is named *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, roughly Secretary of the Foreign Relations, by the Costa Rican government. However, Acosta Garcia lost this post in 1917 due to Federico Alberto Tionoco's military coup in Costa Rica. At the margins it is interesting to note that Costa Rica's turbulent history at the turn of the twentieth-century, evinced by the Tinoco dictatorship, is often elided or all together jettisoned in the analysis of Costa Rican political and economic development. Indeed, in the aftermath of Tinoco's coup, Acosta Garcia fled to exile in Nicaragua where he became one of the leaders of the armed insurgency movement against the Tinoco regime.

Ultimately, after Tinoco's dictatorship was successfully deposed by the insurgency, Acosta Garcia became Costa Rica's 24th president in May 1920 and remained in office until the end of his term in 1924. Thus, Elena Gallegos, the Salvadoran society girl that Acosta married 10 years prior, became Dona Elena Gallegos Rosales de Acosta Garcia, first lady of Costa Rica—the first Salvadoran woman to become so. What is thus remarkable about Acosta's story is that he was a well-known and respected figure in Costa Rica's theosophical circles before becoming the most powerful man in the country and before becoming one of the founding members of the Salvadoran theosophical lodge. Indeed, Costa Rica's *Virya* magazine, the official publication of the *Sociedad Teosofica Virya*, published a piece in 1912 that identifies Don Julio Acosta Garcia as one of the earliest members of the lodge. His story, perhaps more than any of the early founding members of the Teotl Lodge in San Salvador demonstrates the far-reaching influence

of theosophical circles across borders in the Central American region during the early decades of the 20th-century. In addition, Acosta's rise to power illustrates that esoteric circles cultivated powerful networks of key players in the political and civil spheres of Central American nations that were hitherto considered marginal to the halls of power.

Yet Don Julio Acosta Garcia was not the only Costa Rican theosophist among the founding members of the Teotl Lodge. Another prominent figure was Don Tomas Soley Guell, a prominent Costa Rican economist and historian. Born to Tomas Soley and Magdalene Guell Perez on January 17, 1875 in San Jose, Tomas Soley hailed from Spanish ancestry. His father, born in Barcelona, was like other Spanish immigrants, such as Tomas de Povedano, thoroughly conversant with esotericism and theosophy. Soley even published a book entitled *"El ABC de la Teosofia."* On June 15, 1900, Soley married Carolina Carrasco Escobar, an Andalucian immigrant. He would eventually become Costa Rica's Secretary of Finance and Commerce. Soley, a theosophist and economist, is credited with being a brilliant banker and one of the most influential figures in the establishment of the Costa Rican National Bank. Reverence for his financial savvy is evinced by the fact that his likeness is now reproduced in Costa Rican banknotes. Yet, Soley's legacy is not solely confined to his accomplishments during his lifetime. His grandson, Tomas Soley Perez is a noted Costa Rican economist and holds the post of Superintendent of Securities in San Jose, Costa Rica.

But amongst these notable personages, one enigmatic figure that reappears in the lore surrounding the founding of the Teotl Theosophical lodge is the civil engineer and American ex-patriate Peter Patrick Brannon.[126] In one biographical source on notable Latin American women writers, the Salvadoran historian Ricardo Roque Baldovinos remarks that Patrick Brannon was

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[126] An entrepreneurial man, Peter Patrick Brannon even had a patent for a cattle-guard registered through the U.S. patent office in February 3, 1904.

"…an engineer who had travelled through several Latin American countries and established himself in El Salvador, perhaps attracted by the golden years of coffee."[127] While it is indeed plausible that Brannon, or "Don Patricio" as he came to be known, travelled to El Salvador attracted by the coffee boom, it is perhaps more probable that Brannon settled in El Salvador during the last quarter of the 19th-century due to the demand in civil engineers created by the construction of the first railroad in the country. Indeed, on an editorial piece published in *El Diario de Hoy* on July 15th, 2001, Teresa Guevara de Lopez claims that Brannon was one of the civil engineers contracted by Cornelius Vanderbilt to El Salvador in order to construct the country's first railroad as part of the expansion of the indigo trade between El Salvador, Mexico, and the U.S. during the last quarter of the 19th-century.[128] While the demand for indigo in the U.S. was largely driven by the increased in popularity of Levi's jeans, the rudimentary method of transportation of indigo production from the coastal zones in El Salvador to processing centers in Mexico made the construction of a railroad that would facilitate transport an expedient enterprise. The railroad, which connected the capital with the western agricultural zone, became a focal point of Salvadoran industrial progress in the late 19th-century. Inaugurated with much fanfare on June 4, 1882 by President Rafael Zaldivar, the new railroad connected the port of Acajutla with San Salvador and boasted locomotives imported from England.[129] From the extant documentary evidence that I have been able to survey, it is not clear that Brannon played a part in the construction of the railroad at all, or that he was a civil engineer.

But most importantly, recent historical sketches regarding the massacre of 1932 and the complicity of Salvadoran intellectuals with the Martínez regime, single out Patrick Brannon as

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[127] Roque Baldovinos in Tompkins and Foster 2001, 160. CF. Amanda Plumbee's entry on Claudia Lars in *Spanish American Women Writers: A bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, Dianne Martin, ed. 1990, pg. 282.
[128] *El Diario de Hoy*, Julio 15, 2001.
[129] FENADESAL (Ferrocarriles Nacionales de El Salvador) webpage. www.fenadesal.gob.sv

the person most directly responsible for the introduction of theosophy in the country.[130] This is in fact recorded by current members of the Teotl Lodge, who claim that Brannon was responsible for the introduction of theosophy in El Salvador. What is therefore perplexing is that the Teotl's Lodge *acta de fundacion* does not name Brannon as a founding member. What it is certain is that Brannon had close ties to the key members of the Teotl Lodge, in particular J. Max Olano, as evinced by a patent registry submitted to the U.S. patent office in 1903. In this document, Patrick Brannon registered a patent for a padlock he designed while already residing in Armenia, El Salvador. The witness listed in the submission of the patent was J. Max Olano, who, as the *acta de fundacion* of the lodge demonstrates, was its acting president. It is worth noting that this document predates the establishing of the Teotl Lodge by nearly a decade. I find it, however, compelling evidence that Brannon had close ties to the principal founding members of the lodge.

As the preceding network analysis demonstrates, the study of Salvadoran cultural historiography needs to be recast in order to account for the role played by theosophy and the International Theosophical society in the consolidation of Salvadoran military hegemony. For one, the theosophical lodge played an important role in the development of Salvadoran politics because of Martínez's close connection to its members and affinity towards theosophy. As of yet, I have not been able to locate reliable sources for information and the dates of Martínez incorporation into the lodge, as opposed to the documentary evidence presented on his membership into the Salvadoran Athenaeum in the previous chapter. However, an archive of Martínez's speeches does survive. These speeches demonstrate Martínez's close affinity to theosophical ideas and the way in which theosophical tenets shaped his political thought. In addition, testimony of some of the early members of the Teotl Lodge during the Martínez era cite that the lodge's meetings were moved to the National Palace after Martínez rose to the

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[130] Lara Martinez in Swier and Riordan-Gonzalves 2013, 313.

presidency. These documentary fragments point to the importance of the theosophical lodge to the cultural, intellectual, and political life of El Salvador during the Martínez regime and the decades immediately preceding it.

Conclusion

The importance and extent of the networks built by the Teotl Lodge not only in El Salvador but across Central America and the Caribbean provide a compelling case for understanding the functioning of theosophical lodges as an interstitial sites between the state and civil society. As discussed in this chapter, the spread of theosophy across the Americas during the last decades of the 19th-century and the first quarter of the 20th-century can be explained by situating it within the cultural and intellectual crises of the liberal state. Indeed, I see theosophy as part of the milieu of cultural and intellectual transformations that comprised the modernist movement, which was in itself a response to the political and cultural crises of liberalism. In particular, the rise of theosophy, as well as other forms of esoteric knowledge such as spiritism, grew partly out of the crisis of faith, and what Max Weber has termed the disenchantment of the world. This crisis of faith was catalyzed by the processes of economic and political modernization and increased secularization at the turn of the twentieth century. This was especially true of Salvadoran society during the first half of the twentieth century, and its transformations seemed to have been accentuated during the period of 1900-1930, as discussed in Chapter Two. Indeed, the growth and proliferation of theosophical lodges across Central American and the Caribbean corresponds to this period.

Hence, theosophy emerged at a time when the heavy ratiocination of liberal positivism, and the manifest collusion of Roman Catholicism with the ruling elite, created ideal conditions for the development of secular forms of spirituality that could accommodate the modernist intellectual iconoclasm, while not completely rejecting the spiritual plane. In addition, the spread of theosophy also occupied the historical conjuncture at which intellectuals arose a recognizable social and political class in El Salvador and much of Latin America. Yet, aside from representing important cultural transformations in spirituality, the theosophical lodges had the perhaps unintended consequence of creating new modes of sociability that brought together leading figures from across various sectors of society. Theosophical ideas, and the organizations that disseminated them, thus functioned as an agglutinating force behind the creation of far reaching national and regional networks that brought together this new petty bourgeois intelligentsia with leading figures in politics, science, and industry. Indeed, the roster of the founding members of El Salvador's Teotl Lodge illustrates the importance of lodges as both new modes of sociability that brought together leading figures across sectors of Salvadoran society and the ties they forged between the political and social spheres.

Perhaps above all, I contend that the proximity between these figures and the shared values of civilizational progress according to a western model promoted by theosophical lodges was an important component in the process of hegemonic unification. Similarly to the agglutinating and legitimizing intellectual force created by Athenaeums, theosophical lodges aided the process of hegemonic unification under the Martínez regime by establishing a network that the military regime could drawn from for support.

Martínez's high standing and esteem amongst the members of theosophical lodges further legitimized him as an organic intellectual within the leading constellation of leading classes of

the Salvadoran historic bloc. In particular, my research as of yet reveals that the members of the lodges tended to come from the petty bourgeois and emerging industrial and professional classes, not the old aristocratic elite or the elite Salvadoran planting classes. This class composition of theosophical lodges sheds light into the importance for new forms of education and the manipulation of knowledge for groups that had been historically at the margins of bourgeois education. Theosophy and esotericism thus seemed to afford an opportunity for these groups to lay claims to respectability, sophistication, and power within the urban elite, while adding a aura of mystique to their influence, as evinced by the enduring lore of Martínez's command of the hidden arts and magical powers as part of the explanation behind his power.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have sought to examine the historical process of Salvadoran modernity by analyzing the composition, relationship, and intersection of the economic-political and cultural-intellectual axes that defined it and thus offer a new interpretative modality for approaching the problematic of petty-bourgeois-military-oligarchic hegemony in El Salvador. The choice of analyzing the relationship between these axes rests upon a reframing of prevailing studies of Salvadoran political and economic development by positing a dynamic and reciprocal interplay between El Salvador's economic forces and the state, and the mediation of economic and political processes by cultural and intellectual work in the civil sphere. This reframing also centered on excavating the process by which power was constituted in El Salvador along its economic, political, intellectual, and cultural vectors during the formative period of the productive forces and the state. In particular, I sought to excavate the manner in which the leading classes that represented the forces of economic and political modernization, as well as the cultural movement of modernism that mediated them, were able to amalgamate into a coherent group that dominated Salvadoran politics for sixty years and shaped an enduring nexus of power in El Salvador. In doing so, I utilized a Gramscian framework to explicate the development of the Salvadoran historic bloc and the process and the manner by which the military was able to consolidate hegemony and thus complicate facile interpretations of coercion and consent in Salvadoran politics.

My framing, however, should not be understood as jettisoning the importance of state-sponsored violence in both the development of the Salvadoran state and society and the consolidation of the Salvadoran military regime. As evinced by the massacre of 1932, one of the

most brutal events of political repression in 20th-century Latin American history, and by the state-sponsored terror of the civil war in the 1980s, violence and coercion were part of the technologies of power marshaled by the Salvadoran military regime. Yet, the emphasis upon these mechanisms of rule obfuscates the layered complexity behind the constitution and functioning of power in Salvadoran politics and society.

In contrast, my framing and central argument make a deliberate gesture towards decentering the prevailing paradigms based on coercion and political violence that dominate scholarship on Salvadoran politics.[131] In particular, this decentering emphasizes the role that the generation of consent, and its careful balancing with coercive mechanisms and apparatuses, played in the hegemonic configuration that emerged in El Salvador during the 1930s. In the course of developing this explanation, it became evident that contrary to prevailing wisdom regarding military rule in El Salvador, the military regime at its point of inception in 1932 actually enjoyed a high degree of support, particularly amongst the urban professional classes and the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in San Salvador. Complicating the dominant portrait of military repression was the fact that after the brutal massacre of 1932, the Salvadoran military under General Martínez's leadership actually embarked upon a political project of populist reforms, many of which were aimed directly at ameliorating the dire economic and social conditions faced by the working poor in the countryside.[132] Although limited in their impact and scope, some of these reforms, such as the banning of tokens used to pay *colonos* instead of legal currency, appear to have offset the negative view of the military in the coffee growing zones, if not generated active support for the military regime amongst the working poor.[133] It should be noted that the cooperation between poor *campesinos* and the repressive forces of the state is well

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[131] See for instance Stanley (1997) and Wood (2000).
[132] See Anderson ([1997] 1992), Ching eat al (2012), and Ching (2014).
[133] See Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008).

documented, particularly during the period of the civil war.[134] More recent studies on the development of these "auxiliary forces" point to the fact that such collaboration has a long historical precedent that even predates the military regime.[135] Although the evidence remains inconclusive and more research is needed, the generation of consent through populist practices promulgated by the military regime may in fact help to explain the reasons why the FMLN was not able to consolidate support in western El Salvador during the period of the civil war, and also explain why western El Salvador continues to be a stronghold for the far-right.[136]

Part of the argument that I have advanced for the development of populism as a political idiom and practice rests upon my analysis of the dialectical relationship between the state and the mode of production. As I interpret it, populist discourses and the expansion of the political arena through electoral reforms emerged in El Salvador during a period of economic crises in the 1920s that accentuated the tensions inherent within the patron-client networks that characterized Salvadoran politics. These crises in turn led to the radicalization of labor in the countryside and the urban centers. For these reasons, populism became the focal point of the labor movement and party that emerged in the 1920s and became a central discourse of the Salvadoran petty bourgeois intelligentsia in San Salvador. These ideological and intellectual currents shaped much of the social and economic policy of the military regime that came to power partly as a result of the electoral reforms of the late 1920s.

However, populist thought in El Salvador, such as Masferrer's *vitalismo*, was a Salvadoran rendition of Fabianism that espoused ideas of gradual reform and progress and was opposed to the radical transformation of labor and social relations espoused by revolutionary praxis. Thus, populism functioned as a reformist practice that on the surface promised social and

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[134] See Stanley (1997).
[135] See Alvarenga (1998) and (2005).
[136] See Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008).

economic improvement without securing significant results on the ground. Such reformism did not fundamentally upset the equilibrium of power in El Salvador, but in fact preserved and strengthened it. Moreover, the prevalence and dissemination of populism by intellectuals like Masferrer points to the pivotal role played by the petty bourgeois intelligentsia and the professional classes in the consolidation of military rule and the political and economic trajectory of El Salvador after 1932. A careful analysis of the function and role played by this class in the consolidation of military hegemony is lacking in most of the scholarship on Salvadoran political development. I have thus endeavored to demonstrate the importance of this class to the legitimation of the military regime, and the manner in which intellectuals, writers, artists, and important figures across Salvadoran society that belonged to the petty bourgeoisie had links to the military regime and supported its leadership role.

Part of the explanation that I have developed for the central function played by the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in the process of hegemonic unification lies in situating the intellectual activity of the petty bourgeoisie in El Salvador from approximately 1870 to the 1930s precisely within the crises wrought by the expansion of the coffee system of production and the consequent crises of capital, labor, and the political crises of the liberal state during this period. This allows me to explain the prevalence of Latin American modernist currents, such as *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*, amongst Salvadoran intellectuals who were driven by concerns over national and regional identity, sovereignty, and development during this time. At the same time, I posit that these modernist currents were in tension with a Westernizing impulse and self-identification that most of the intellectual and petty bourgeois class had cultivated since the late 19th-century and which they never completely disavowed.

The petty bourgeois intelligentsia ultimately lent the military regimes since Martínez a large degree of support, as evinced by Martínez's courting of the Masferrer group in the 1930s. I have advanced the claim that such support stemmed from the fact that military officers like Martínez presented the military as a republican and nationalist institution that espoused the leading intellectual currents of the period. General Martínez in particular embraced *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* as the central discourses for national identity on the one hand, while promoting a project of political and economic development on the other.

In addition, my research and the argument I have developed posit the emergence and growth of Athenaeums and theosophical lodges as a key part of the process by which the Salvadoran military positioned itself as a leader amongst the petty bourgeois and professional classes in San Salvador. The cultural history of these organizations and their intersections with the state is virtually unknown in the U.S. academy and is generally understudied or glossed over even in Salvadoran scholarship that only until recently have begun to pay attention to these organizations.[137] An innovative approach that I have taken to excavating the linkages of these societies with the state is tracing the biographies of the founding members or key members of these organizations and fleshing out the networks that they were part of. Such an approach allowed me to discern the nexus of organizations and institutions that these individuals and their organizations were linked to. However, many questions remain and more research is needed to understand the national and regional scope of these organizations and the central role they had to play in the consolidation of hegemony across the Americas.

Some of the central questions that linger in this analysis pertain to the regional scope of theosophy and its broader cultural context, its vectors of introduction into the Central American

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[137] See Lara Martinez (2011) for an overview of the Salvadoran Athenaeum and its linkage to the Martinez regime. See also Casaus Arzu and Gacia Giraldez (2005) for an introductory discussion of the nexus between Central American intellectuals and theosophical currents.

region in the late 19th-century and early 20th-centuries, and the linkage that the spread of theosophy had to the U.S. imperial project after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War. I have posited that theosophy was introduced into Central America via Cuba after the establishment of lodges in the island and the spread of theosophy circa 1898. This situates the spread of theosophy within the nexus of U.S. imperialism after 1898. I should remark, however, that I am not suggesting that the dissemination of theosophy was a deliberate part of U.S. imperialism. Rather, I would like to suggest that the aftermath of 1898 opened up new vectors and venues for transnational cultural flows that were not opened before. This process is evident, for instance, in the heavy evangelization of the Philippines after 1898.[138] But some of my findings also indicate that theosophy may have been introduced to Costa Rica by southern Spanish immigrants that came to Costa Rica during the late 19th-century and turn of the 20th century. As demonstrated by the founding member of the theosophical Teotl Lodge in San Salvador in 1910, Costa Ricans played an important role in the dissemination of theosophy in Central America. It is important to note, however, that Henry S. Olcott, the cofounder of the International Theosophical society along with Madame Blavatsky, introduced theosophy to Spain in 1895 during a tour of the country.[139] Thus, it my have well been that the vector of introduction of theosophy into Central America was mediated by Spain, but theosophical ideas nevertheless found their origin in the United States. Yet, questions surrounding the origins of theosophy in Central America and the connection to Spain continue to be important points for future research and are currently beyond the scope of this project.

In turn, questions remain pertaining to the broader cultural context, impact, and linkage between theosophy and politics on a hemispheric and global scale. For instance, Isaac

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[138] See Anthony (2013), especially pages 164-175.
[139] See Chavez (2008), pg. 628 in *Romantic Prose Fiction*, Gillespie et al, eds.

Lubelsky's *Celestial India: Madame Blavatsky and the Birth of Indian Nationalism*, examines the contributions of theosophical thought to the development of counter-colonial discourses in the late 19th-century that began re-casting India as a spiritually superior society, with a much older spiritual tradition than the West, and contested the colonial image of India as primitive and inferior to Western Europe.[140] Lubelsky's study provides an excellent example of the linkage between theosophical esotericism and politics and opens up a whole area of research of the nexus between esotericism and counter-colonial discourse.

Such an analysis, of course, emphasizes the paradoxical use of what was a westernized and whitened conception of Eastern spirituality through its amalgamation with Western esotericism for the purposes of de-colonial struggles. Such a use of theosophy against imperial powers in India despite its embeddedness in Western thought is parallel to General Martínez's use of theosophical ideas to frame his particular conceptions of Latin American nationalism and *arielismo*. A study framed around the problematic of theosophy as both a western, or in the very least westernized, form of secular spirituality and anti-colonial discourse in the Americas has as of yet to be written. Thus my research represents a stepping stone in the analysis of the centrality of theosophy to politics in the Americas and the manner in which theosophical thought shaped both political thought and practice during an era of heightened U.S. imperialism that highlighted vexing questions regarding sovereignty and national and regional identity for Latin America.

For example, my study preliminarily explores some of the linkages between esoteric thought and the development of mestizo nationalism, as exemplified by the manifest influence of Blavatsky's thought on Vasconcelos' conception of *mestizaje* and the cosmic race.[141] Despite the

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[140] Lubelsky 2012, 1.
[141] See for instance Miller's (2004) discussion of Vasconcelo's notion of *mestizaje* leading to a mystical transformation of a universal subject through race mixture (especially pgs. 39-40). I have previously suggested that

fact that Marilyn Grace Miller's *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race* is perhaps the most rigorous and sustained study of *mestizaje* in the Americas that I am aware of, more research is still needed on the intellectual sources behind the development of mestizo nationalism and similar cultural and intellectual currents in the Americas during the formative period of modern Latin American states.[142]

In addition, the association of theosophy with magic and esotericism in the Americas, as exemplified by Martínez's sobriquet *el brujo* and *el brujo de las aguas azules*, may well give a glimpse into the manner in which theosophy functioned as a way of whitening and westernizing idioms of magic and their relationship to power. A possible interpretation is that theosophy was a way of legitimizing "hidden powers" that were part of a magical and spiritual dimension in Salvadoran political and social practice and other post-colonial societies in the Americas that remain understudied.

More recent studies reveal that magic was a central idiom of political power and practice in El Salvador and the Caribbean.[143] For instance, there is evidence for the prevalence of magic as a part of the discourses used to frame the strategies of *campesino* resistance in the aftermath of *la matanza* of 1932 and also to explain their survival in the face of the brutal repression. But there is also evidence that the military and the repressive forces cited the apparition and intercession of saints on their behalf against the peasant insurgents. Gould's and Lauria-Santiago's ethnographic work and oral histories on *la matanza* of 1932 compiled in western El Salvador (2008) point out that "various accounts relate that insurgents about to be executed transformed themselves into animals" such as monkeys or transformed themselves into a bunch

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such ideas bear striking resemblance to Blavatsky's conception of human evolution through an esoteric cosmology, and her discussion of shared biological points of origin but different "essences." See Blavatsky.
[142] See Miller (2004).
[143] See Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008) and Derby (2009).

of bananas (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 251). Furthermore, several informants on the

events of 1932 related that they had to learn the black arts in order to defend themselves from the

military (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 252). Magic, therefore, seems to have been an

important part of rural life and gave the survivors of 1932 a language for explaining their

remarkable tales of survival. In a similar vein, the military and the forces that opposed the

insurgents provide accounts that averred that the patron saints of towns in the path of the

revolutionary forces appeared mounted on horseback to halt their advance.[144] As Gould and

Lauria-Santiago point out, this imagery fits well within the emerging military discourse of the

1930s.[145] Given the ubiquity of magic in the narratives of 1932, the prevalence of theosophy

amongst the military regime and the petty bourgeoisie during this period was perhaps

symptomatic of an effort to westernize and whiten the magical and religious dimensions of

politics and daily life that manifestly permeated all sectors of Salvadoran society in early 20th-

century El Salvador.

It is also worth pointing out that my approach to theosophy as a technology of power and

the state represents an effort to resituate the centrality of ideas and spirituality to the practice of

politics, while also restoring theosophy to its proper place within the history of ideas in regards

to both its ancient sources and the modern spiritual movements to which it gave rise. More

research is needed on this topic, but what I have done in this study is to sketch-out the

importance of theosophical thought to the various intellectual and cultural currents that defined

modernism in the Americas.

At a theoretical level, the framing of the process of hegemonic unification in El Salvador

as a historical product of western modernity complicates the arguments and frameworks

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[144] For instance, "…in Tepecoyo the patron saint, San Esteban, appeared on an usually white horse and halted the advancing insurrectionary forces." See Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 249.
[145] See Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, 249.

commonly used to discuss Salvadoran economic and political modernization. In particular, my framing complicates prevailing paradigms of economic development and democratization, and dominant ideas about underdevelopment and dictatorship that dominate studies in comparative politics. This is because I discuss modernity from the critical perspective of coloniality and develop a critique of the legacies and continuities of colonialism in post-colonial societies like El Salvador. By contrast, prevailing discussions of Salvadoran political and economic development rarely discuss the centrality of these legacies to the historical trajectory of El Salvador. This dissertation represents an effort to reframe the study of political and economic development that seriously takes into account the critique of modernity within the geographical region condescendingly referred to as the "Third World."

Lastly, my theoretical elaboration opens up new possibilities for the application of Gramscian theory to the analysis of power and the consolidation of hegemony. I have endeavored to historicize an important component in Gramsci's theoretical elaboration for the resilience of capitalist societies and fascist regimes—namely, the process by which the leading classes and groups representative of the political and economic forces comprising the historic bloc amalgamate into a coherent group and choose a class in a position of leadership capable of legitimizing it. An important step in this theoretical elaboration not fleshed out by Gramsci is precisely how these classes manage to agglutinate and legitimize their position of authority, values, and ideas as the leading ideas of society. My contribution to this theoretical elaboration posits the emergence and development of key interstitial organizations within civil society capable of forging networks across social classes and key civil sectors, and between the state and civil society, as a paramount part of the process of hegemonic consolidation. A careful study of

the manner in which this process took place in El Salvador can thus serve as an important

comparative case to the analysis of similar processes.

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