Redeeming: Cultural Negotiations and their Remains in [De]Colonial Costa Rica

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Abstract

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"Redeeming: Cultural Negotiations and their Remains in [De]colonial Costa Rica" is a dissertation project that studies and analyzes religious performance traditions in Central America, specifically the performances concerning the worship of *Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles* in Cartago, Costa Rica. This is a project that reviews the manifestations of race, religion, political and economic relations, with the purpose of a clear understanding of the formation of national identity. This work is theoretically grounded in the concept of *Decoloniality* and the decolonial perspectives on the analysis of cultural phenomena proposed by Mignolo and Walsh. Additionally, a practical approach combining fieldwork and an ethnographic perspective drawing on methodologies like Madison's *Critical*

Ethnography, and analytical approaches and concepts such as Diana Taylor's *Archive and Repertoire*, and Roach's *Effigy* and *Genealogies of Performance*, serves as the cornerstone upon which the thesis of this work is built.

The study brings to the academic conversation the concept of *Redeeming*. The combination of a *Cultural Landscape* (a place, tradition, or event where a meaningful cultural representation takes place) and a *Cultural Negotiation* (the complex cultural process where relations of identity, power, and dominance intersect and re-shape themselves) can create a *Redeeming*, which is a moment when, through a participatory performance (usually a public one), societies negotiate and redefine their history, power relations, and identity.

This dissertation finds that different performance traditions related to the worship of *Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles*, like *La Romería*, the *Mass of August 2nd*, and *La Pasada*, are clear examples of *Redeeming*. Each one of these performances are linked to previous cultural negotiations, which used the Catholic Church's traditions to develop relations of race, class, economic and political power, a sense of belonging, and finally a national identity, or as this study calls it *Costarricanness*. The present work illuminates a way in which religious performances in the Americas can be understand and studied as repositories of previous cultural negotiations, which performatively activate new negotiations and relations of belonging and identity.

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DEDICATION

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PREFACE

As a little kid, I was always close to my two grandmothers, Gladys Forero and Blanca Rosa Mora, and my great-grandmother María Suárez Mayorga. If there is something I vividly remember, it is the devotion they had not only to Catholic faith, but mainly to the rituals and enactments proper to Catholicism in Costa Rica. From “el rezo del niño” at abuelita Blanca’s, to “el rosario de Sor María Romero” with Maruja and Gladys. From the festivities of Our Lady of Guadalupe with my father’s family, to the journey to El Señor de los Milagros’ shrine in Colombia with my mother’s family. The years of education at a Catholic school were never as powerful as the experiences with my grannies, and later the college years brought me the knowledge to run away from the Church and the dogma. No matter how radical I could be in my critique of religions as hegemonic institutions, I always maintained a deep respect for the rituals and enactments where people demonstrate their faith, because as a little kid, I understood how powerful they are in creating identity and belonging.

While I was searching for a specific theme for the dissertation, I dived through different representations of national identity in my country Costa Rica. Always fascinated by folk performances and representations of belonging, I went through the bullfights, traditional masquerade, carnivals, and other popular performances. However, it was the simplicity and deeply rooted tradition of the festivities of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles which captured my attention. I could no longer

avoid the evident: it is in the performance tradition related to the worship of Our Lady, where complex cultural interactions (present and past ones) can be found and analyzed to unveil the palimpsest that is the Costa Rican identity. I realized that the privilege I had as a kid who had full access to meaningful local Catholic enactments, as well as my formal Catholic education, gave me the benefit of being considered an *insider* in the events related to Our Lady. On the other hand, all the scholarly education I have gone through in the last years have granted me with amazing tools to approach the study as an *outsider.*

After a three-year journey, where field research and archival work mixed with interviews, remote collaborations, and critical analysis; I finally completed the present study, which unveils (some of) the layers of national identity contained in the performance traditions in relation to Our Lady. An approach that blended decoloniality, reflexivity, critical ethnography, archive, repertoire, scenarios, surrogation, effigies, performance analysis, among other theoretical and methodological ideas; enlighten some new ways to understand a particular case study in a different perspective. Original ways to explain folk and religious public representations and their link to national identity, nation-state, and citizenship; can be find all over this project. Concepts as *cultural landscape, cultural negotiations,* or *costarricanness,* appears as a contribution to explain the process of *redeeminization,* which dwells within the culture's symbolic realm of Costa Ricans.

INTRODUCTION: Cultural Negotiations and their Remains.

To perform is to make visible a power relation. In a given case, the Performance activates for its participants and spectators the power relations within the culture. Every performance tradition marks cultural negotiations concerning power structures over previous historical moments. Such performances can work as an effective way to negotiate in a social sphere, to remind spectators of a prior struggle over specific claims of power, or as a social contract that guarantees a peaceful social interchange by the consolidation of different rules of engagement. To perform can be a way to countersign a social agreement that happened in the past, to activate a new cultural negotiation in the present, or to rehearse for a revolution in the public sphere for the future. In that regard, Performance Traditions become a space and a mode for allowing the socio-cultural interchanges above to happen.

A case in point is the cult of *Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles* in the city of Cartago in Costa Rica. The cult comprises Performance Traditions from Indigenous and Black Caribbean cultures, from Roman Catholicism, and from Spanish tradition, each of which is interrelated. These performance traditions create an attractive cultural location where different cultural negotiations have taken place through the years to create the cult and festivities known today.

The present research project employs approaches from a decolonial perspective and uses performance studies to analyze and understand Religious Performance Traditions in the Americas like the worship of *Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles* described above, with a specific emphasis on the Central America / Caribbean region. This study is intended neither as an extensive analysis of the region as a whole, nor as an inquiry into performance traditions all over the place, but instead seeks to analyze and unfold the historical and cultural relations between these territories and how they affected specific locations and religious manifestations. By studying the practices associated with this one particular site, it is possible to understand how they, in turn, apply to previous social, cultural, and economic interactions between the whole region (and others) concerning negotiations of race, class, beliefs, identity, belonging, and citizenship.

This dissertation poses the central question: How do Religious Performance Traditions work as a repository (archive) of previous cultural negotiations? How have those negotiations taken place in the Public Performances related to the religious traditions? In other words, could it be possible to discern a history of cultural negotiations in the Central America/Caribbean region by analyzing the particular cultural manifestations practiced by the Catholic faith in its rituals, holidays, and other regularly offered performances? If so, where does one find evidence, and how does one discern these histories? Moreover, what historiographic practices of the church and state authorities have thrown up

obstacles or red herrings that must be identified and reconciled with older or competing narratives?

OBJECT OF INQUIRY

At a certain point, one is able to sense that Religious Performance Traditions in contemporary Costa Rica are discussing both the cultural process that have taken place historically in the Costa Rican society and the Latin American perspective today. It is possible to read the marks of capitalism, neo-liberalism, or globalization in the different elements that compose them. However, if they are talking (and sometimes yelling) about contemporary cultural process at one level, at another, they are whispering about previous moments of cultural negotiation through the very same features: the marks of history and previous historical moments can be there too. To inquire more precisely about these ideas, it is essential to formulate questions adequate for the search.

To do so, however, it is capital to understand the site, the moment, the Object, and the Subject of those inquiries. The Object of Inquiry here are the Religious Performance Traditions; in concrete terms, the ones related to the worship to *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* in the town of Cartago, in Costa Rica. To be more specific, this study will analyze:

1) the pilgrimage to the sanctuary of *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* that takes place every year on August 1st,

2) the public mass that takes place on the square in front of the Basilica of *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* every August 2nd morning[1],
3) The *Pasada* (or pass-over), which is a procession (the locals' Performance) that takes place immediately after the main festivities end (August 3rd).

SUBJECT OF INQUIRY

On the other hand, the Subject of Inquiry in this project are the *Cultural Negotiations* that occur in the Performance Traditions this study concerns. That is to say, I will discuss how people perform both their own identity and their national identity and how both representations can live together and be part of a public enactment through August the 1st pilgrimage. I will also discuss the way the *Mass of August 2nd* works as a device to negotiate power and agency between the different groups that compose the social apparatus (Church, Government, Unions, Chambers, Diplomatic Body, among others), and how the liturgy becomes a political mechanism in the public sphere.

It is essential to clarify how the Object and the Subject of Inquiry relate in this research since one contains the other, and they share a symbiotic relationship.

[1] As it would be explaining later, the public mass is not a traditional event, since it represents the principal celebration of the festivities to "Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles." It is also a moment where all the power structures of power in Costa Rican society come together (Catholic Church, Political Parties, Government, Congress, Court authorities, the Business World, and others).

The Object of Inquiry works like a container, an archive, a site of memory where the marks of previous cultural negotiations can be seen. At the same time, these sites allow the Subject of Inquiry to happen, since they work as the device where the *cultural negotiations* can occur. The symbiotic relationship is clear since the Subject (Cultural Negotiations) cannot exist without the Object (Religious Performance Traditions). Still, the Object can be no more than a dead form devoid of meaning (or risking misreading) if we try to understand it without the Subject's cultural process.

How was it, though, that I arrived at the definitions present in the object of inquiry (cultural landscape), and the subject of inquiry (cultural negotiations)? These terms and others that appear throughout the dissertation such as *redeeming* or *costarricanness*, have a similar genealogy. They all stem from a necessity to create a particular terminology that dwells in the cracks of the actual discourse of the performance theory. For several years I have been "diving" into particular approaches to scholarship related to performance studies, wherein the theoretical approaches of several scholars were capital. In that group I should mention Marvin Carlson (ghosting), Joseph Roach (genealogies of performance, vortex, effigy), Victor Turner (liminality), Diana Taylor (repertoire, scenarios), and Pierre Nora (lieux de mémoire, mileux de mémoire). Some of these scholars, as well as many of their terms, are part of this project. However, no matter how much I used them and navigated through my particular research with them; there was always something else, something those terms did not cover, or just an idea that

moved beyond the borders of the understanding of that scholarship. I came to understand that, since my interests were very personal and particular, my terminology and my theoretical and methodological approach should follow that subjective element. That is why the present work presents the possibility of new understandings of performance studies by proposing new terminology. It is not at any time a rejection or a revolution from the scholars and the terms mentioned above, but a way to expand the genealogy of their work, and link it to my personal approach to the performance studies.

The Religious Performance Traditions in the Americas are embodied documents of previous cultural processes where negotiations of power related to class, race, gender, and identity took place. They are the *repositories* of multiple *cultural negotiations* that have taken place through the years. The different social groups, ethnicities, races, classes, traditions, and beliefs that passed through them have left their marks. The study of those traditions from performance studies perspectives offers an approach to unfold hidden meanings present in the processions, pilgrimages, masses, masquerades, and other Religious Performance Traditions.

To perform, as I argue above, is to show a power relation. Every social activity that congregates human beings in Performance is an *activation* of the power relations in the culture. This means that the performance traditions regarding cultural engagement are continually reshaping the power relations, becoming a

device were cultural negotiations take place. Religious Performance Traditions can show us how those power relations and cultural negotiations manifest today, but at the same time how they evolved through history, or how they developed in different socio-cultural contexts.

Religious Performance Traditions are the ideal place for deep social engagement and cultural negotiations to happen since they are a way to contain the struggles and differences in each historical moment. Religious Performance Traditions are a device to keep and hold, to allow cultural elements as diverse as dances, masks, rhythms, praise poems, colors, and other symbolic representations to come together. Each element *fights* for relevance and meaning, becoming a mixture that tries to give sense to the previous event. Religious Performance Traditions allow the chaos and the madness of a cultural negotiation to take place but always look for the containment and assimilation of the elements of chaos and madness in a *cultural landscape*. They are the ideal *public archives* since each cultural negotiation has left its marks on them, like the inclusion of characters, routes, colors, or movements. The knowledge and elements present in these historical *repositories* can be unpacked and analyzed by studying those marks.

This project can be considered Performance Studies research since the Object of Inquiry is different Religious Performance Traditions, their relationship with concepts of identity, belonging and citizenship, and the cultural negotiations that

can occur during a public performance. Moreover, since the whole of the Religious Festivities will be studied using Performance Studies theory (mainly that of Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor), the idea is to indicate how Religious Festivities perform in the public sphere the types of relations of power and identity within the culture and the society in which they are involved. Finally, this research understands that performance traditions are repositories of knowledge and information. Different human groups develop through performance their rules of engagement in society and their sets of beliefs. In this regard, this work is grounded in Diana Taylor's concepts of *archive* and *repertoire,* the performance traditions becoming the place where Latin American countries have negotiated race, ethnicity, and beliefs through the years. Moreover, by the same token, these performance traditions work as live documents or evidence of those cultural processes.

This study is based on an auto-ethnographic work that helps understand how and why all those cultural processes took place through the years, since some of them still happen today. I understand auto-ethnography as an individual working in the spaces where these Performance Traditions occur, and where the researcher becomes part of the event and works as an *outsider* trying to understand how to be an *insider*. I believe that can only happen when one knows the culture and the tradition in which the Performance Traditions are grounded. Still, one can also develop a methodology that allows a critical approach to it. As a Costa-Rican-born and raised in the Catholic tradition of the country and their

conservative traditions, I can understand these phenomena as an insider and value the importance of the symbols, performances, and places. At the same time, as a scholar, I can add to this work a type of an outsider perspective of someone who wants to analyze these phenomena with a critical perspective and an academic approach. I believe the duality of the researcher embodied in me in this work is an exciting opportunity to apply different strategies or ways to approach the inquiry from more than one site. From an anthropological perspective, these are cultural processes that are alive and in constant change. At the same time, they are the repository of a similar process that has been at work for decades or even centuries.

THEORY & METHODOLOGY

The present work is theoretically and methodologically grounded in three different discursive genealogies. The first is concerning the Decolonial condition, a Latin American perspective of post-colonial critical theory, which works as the philosophical perspective to understand the research. The second, based in Performance Studies, is the methodological approach to the analysis of the case studies selected for this research and in which the teleology of this research dwells. The third comprises the concepts and paradigms taken from Anthropology and Ethnography, since the auto-ethnography is the methodology through which I have conducted the field research in this study.

In his essay “DissemiNation," Homi Bhabha develops the ways in which a Post-colonial perspective brings the *Subject of cultural discourse* into the possibility of a real agency for unrepresented communities. To do so, he proposes the concept of *hybridization* to understand the social interactions between the colonial world and these new perspectives. A few years after Bhabha's publication, Aníbal Quijano introduced *Coloniality of power*. Instead of looking for agency, Quijano’s work seems to break down the power relations (at least in the symbolic elements) that created categories during modernity, such as the “unrepresented communities.” Together, these evolved into the concept of *Decoloniality* proposed by Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh in their 2018 book *On Decoloniality*.

Decoloniality, a concept and philosophical approach that defies and redefines modernity (also early-modern era, and the idea of post-modernity), is a theory developed by scholars and philosophers from South America, with an explicit acknowledgment of the concept of the Global South, not only from political and economic perspectives but also cultural and sociological. *Decoloniality* is a theory that differs from Decolonial (or post-colonial) criticism since they have different approaches to the concept of modernity. While decolonial theory accepts the categories, ideas, and analyses proposed by modernity (colonial perspective), and tries to create a more inclusive frame to examine social and cultural processes, Decoloniality understands modernity as an incomplete and (at a certain point) vicious perspective on human relations, and looks to analyze society through

different concepts, categories, and cosmologies. *Decoloniality* is a conscious fight to break the *Colonial Matrix of Power* (CMP)[2] and create a new understanding of each social and cultural phenomenon in regards to their particular conditions.

Mignolo, an Argentinean scholar who works in the United States, develops the concept of Decoloniality concerning Coloniality (modernism) and post-colonial (decolonial) as an epistemic evolution:

> The concept of Coloniality opened up two trajectories at once: on the one hand, it brought to light the darker side of modernity and, on the other, it mutated decolonization into Decoloniality and decolonial thinking. It means that, paradoxically, decolonization during the Cold War was still articulated in terms and sensibility of modern thinking: it aimed at changing the contents rather than the principles in which modernity/coloniality was established. Decolonization focused on specific colonization; the overall logic of Coloniality was not yet available. Coloniality is a consequence of decolonial thinking, and decolonial thinking came into being through the concept of Coloniality. For all these reasons Coloniality is already a decolonial concept: thinking decolonially made it possible to *see* Coloniality and seeing

[2] Colonial Matrix of Power is the version in English proposed by Walter Mignolo of the concept of "Patrón Colonial de Poder" introduced by the Ecuadorian sociologist Aníbal Quijano in 1990 and refers to the powers structures and relations created to understand the world from a colonial (modern) perspective.

> Coloniality materialized decolonial thinking. The implications of *seeing* two sides of the story, modernity/coloniality, instead of only one side (modernity) are immense. [3]

The idea of *thinking decolonially* is capital to this project since it establishes a way to re-read and re-analyze historical events concerning the case studies selected. At the same time, it allows analysis through praxis to solidify theoretical claims which lack archival references. This type of approach will be evident in the chapters to come.

For Performance Studies, I draw upon the work of Dwight Conquergood. His emphasis on the popular manifestations of performance traditions allows the possibility to study the displacement of communities and populations. This is a way to understand participation in *public discussion* since their sites are the streets, the markets, the shrines, and the squares. I also draw upon Joseph Roach and the theories of memory, surrogation, and embodied traditions he articulates in *Cities of the Dead*. For Roach, the process of surrogation and the creation of effigies present in the embodied performances are ways to communicate and re-connect with the forgotten, the dead, the displaced. His theory is at the core of the approach to the case studies in this work since I

[3] Mignolo & Walsh, 112-113.

understand them as a space of displacement and popular manifestation of surrogation.

I employ Diana Taylor's concepts of the archive and the repertoire present in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, as well as her idea of the scenarios as spaces of cultural negotiation. This work is deeply committed to continuing Taylor's proposals of the understanding of Latin America as a physical space where embodied performance traditions contain the remains of their complex cultural and historical surveys.

In her book *Critical Ethnography* (2005), D. Soyini Madison argues that ethnography (and ethnography in a critical prerogative) contributes to *emancipating knowledge* in order to illuminate different social discourse processes. Critical ethnography is not an objective method of analysis, but rather a tool that addresses the researcher's condition (subjectivity) and the particular characteristics of the phenomenon to research. The assumption of subjectivity in relation to the *Other* transforms the Object of study into a subject, and at the same time, turns the researcher into the *Other* of that Subject. The dialectic between both issues is full of biases, cultural conditions, misrepresentations, and relations of power that make an objective relationship impossible. That is why *new ethnography* needs to clarify all these differential elements simultaneously as it addresses a point of view and a goal with the conviction that the consequence of that goal will be a disruption in the status quo.

Madison's claims work as a *methodological frame* that allows the creation of a sense of proportion of the case studies, where they begin and where they finish, and how to work with them and to understand them. Her concept of *positionality* as a means "…to acknowledge our power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects" (Madison, 8) is essential to acknowledge not only my view as the researcher but also the position of the performance traditions this research studies concerning the cultural landscape and the society in which they take place.

I have used Madison's Research Design techniques to develop a critical ethnography approach to each case study in this dissertation. More than a tool, I consider this approach as a device to unwrap the cultural processes involved in each performance/case study. Madison's proposals summarize previous works on ethnography and elaborate a methodological procedure that draws together theory and practice, or content and form, in a way that can be applied in the field of Performance Studies.

There is another concept that intersects continuously with Madison's methodologies of *critical ethnography* as an alternative methodological approach, given how clearly Madison herself was influenced by it: Charlott Aull Davies's *Reflexive Ethnography* (1999). Davies's idea that *reflexivity* "means a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference" (Davies, 4) once again positions the

researcher as a conscious element of the ethnographic research. She continues: "[i]n the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (Davies 4).

The idea of r*eflexivity* in ethnographic research is capital to this work since it reshapes the role of the researcher. As I said above, it acknowledges a duality in the researcher that includes both the role of external observer and the possibility of analyzing the case study from the inside (being part of it), in effect extending the traditional limits of the researcher in the social spectrum. By acknowledging relations of power, it makes them more comfortable to work with, and recognizing the impossibility of the *objective gaze*, counting instead on its *reflexivity*, creates a type of *interested gaze*. That is the site where a conscious auto-ethnography can be possible and useful for the present study.

For my dissertation fieldwork, I traveled to Cartago, Costa Rica, and spent the summer of 2019 engaging in participant observation, which was informed by my autoethnographic approach described above. I participated in and conducted close readings of the following events: The Pilgrimage to the Shrine of *Our Lady*, The Public Mass in celebration of *Our Lady*, and the *La Pasada* Procession. The idea was to be an active participant in the worship's performance traditions, instead of an external viewer of these phenomena. I believe it is capital for this study, since its primary approach is from Performance Studies, to be a performer,

to be involved in the performances of identity and belonging that take place in August of each year, and to try to understand and analyze the whole event from that perspective.

There is something special for a researcher of these events to be an anonymous element in the worship's performances, which gives the possibility to "break" the cultural landscape's resistance to analysis. It is different from being acknowledged and treated as a researcher by the performers, since different elements could be "specifically performed" for you, as a way of the participants showing you their perspective. Instead, by being an anonymous participant, it became possible to understand the causalities and spontaneous reactions of other participants. It was possible (at a certain point) to be closer to an authentic interchange of cultural negotiations.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Pierre Nora, in his editorial work *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984),[4] uses two terms that are capital for understanding the socio/cultural relations between the space and the human manifestations of it: *lieux de mémoire* and *milieux de mémoire.* The *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory) are "the artificial sites of the modern production of national and ethnic memory," while the *milieux de mémoire* (environments of memory) are "the largely oral and corporeal retentions of

[4] For this study, I used the English version *Rethinking France: Lieux de Mémoire*, translated by Mary Trouille and published by The University of Chicago Press.

traditional cultures." Nora created these two categories to understand social processes in relation to space, processes which Joseph Roach simplified as "the replacement of environments of memory by places of memory, such as archives, monuments, and theme parks" (Roach, 26). According to Roach, this type of process is a phenomenon of modernity. Still, I will add that *lieux de mémoire* has been created to contain, reduce, or minimize different *milieux de mémoire* on behalf of the power structure of the dominant groups in different historical contexts.

I would like to propose two metaphors related to these spatial effects: one is space itself and the other is the actions that take place in that space and their repercussions. Nora has innumerable references in his work to the landscape and its relation with memory and how to remember (or re-imagine a memory). For example: "There remains the landscape, another typical form of the *lieux de mémoire,* an idea that stands out from the evidence and yet is not so simple, developed by the combined forces of nature, man, and time, a piece of space carved up and constructed" (Nora, xii). I believe in the concept of *the cultural landscape* as the place (real and metaphoric) where the interactions and transformations in the sphere of the culture can occur. Like the natural landscape, the *cultural landscape* has a look today that is not the same as it had yesterday and is not the same it will have tomorrow. Just as in the natural landscape in which things grow, the elements can have an impact subtly or violently, seasons will come and go and change everything temporally, and the human being can

affect it consciously or unconsciously. So it is with the *cultural landscape*: the traditions and behaviors can change, as well as the values and rules of engagement between people. Migrations or commercial interchanges could affect it subtly. Exodus, wars, and revolutions could do so in a more violent way. And different human groups can develop agendas that can reshape everything the landscape comprises.

CULTURAL NEGOTIATION

The other concept/metaphor that I want to bring to the conversation, and this is in direct relationship with the *cultural landscape*, is the *cultural negotiation.* By this, I would like to address the social process wherein different cultural agents clash and have to negotiate their power structures, their symbolic worlds, their beliefs, and their behaviors, as well as negotiate and modify the scale of values and the rules of engagement. This *cultural negotiation* could be subtle and happen over a gradual period that helps with the assimilation of the new rules. Or it could be violent and happen by coercion, the use of the force, or the annihilation of a whole population. *Cultural negotiation* is a liminal space and time and refers to an *in-betweenness* where the *cultural landscape* is being reshaped. *Cultural negotiation* sounds close to the concept of *scenarios* proposed by Diana Taylor, since "…scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries – sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution – activated with more or less theatricality" (Taylor, 13). Also, maybe that last element, "theatricality," links both concepts. A *cultural negotiation* must be performed, and the memory of that

social process dwells in the performance tradition that remains. This study looks for those performances and performance traditions that contain the remains of previous *cultural negotiations,* which have regularly changed the *cultural landscape*.

REDEEMING

What is the focus of this research? Which type of performances or performance traditions is it analyzing? What precisely are the elements that can offer analysis and input to the field of performance studies? This study is about religious performance traditions in Central America, taking as a case study the worship and festivities attending to *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* in Costa Rica. It includes pilgrimage, procession, public mass, carnivalesque masquerades, and other non-binary performances of self. Because of the geographical territory and the history and culture in that territory, since traditions out of their place origin had to cohabitate and be connected with other traditions in similar circumstances (western Africans, displaced Natives, Ladinos, Creoles, Sambos, Pardos), this study points toward a way to surf this *cultural landscape* and the idea of making connections to survive and to reconfigure one's identity through the process of *cultural negotiation.*

I will call this process *redeeming.* By *redeeming,* I refer to some memory, idea, or behavior from the past. It could be from a previous tradition, religion, or political structure. The *redeeming* takes a cultural unity (ritual, enactment,

celebration) that is incomplete, maybe because of a process of trauma (like a migration, a war, or a genocide), and which can only survive in the new *cultural landscape* by a blend. Through praxis (Performance), this cultural unity can insert or attach (to be completed) elements, ideas, or behaviors from different traditions. In the beginning, these attachments can make it look like a collage. Still, the repetition (performance/praxis) allows those elements to blend, as if they were original parts of a complete whole. The time-lapse, the initial collage look, the blend, and the idea of repetition, contribute to and shape the redeeminization.

This cultural process must get in contact with a symbolic language, a set of beliefs or behaviors that allow it to complete the gaps, to fill its missing parts with external elements that enable it to re-signify in the new social apparatus. The easiest way to understand it comes from ethnic cuisine. When a group of people has to emigrate to a new country or territory, they will try to replicate the recipes of their traditional cuisine. At the moment they lack any product, they will substitute for it with a similar product from the new location. The dish that comes out of that process is a *redeeming*; it references the original recipe but is something different, something that has been adjusted to the new conditions.

Initially, the concept of *redeeming* in performance traditions sounds similar to *ghosting* in the theatre, proposed by Marvin Carlson. Carlson writes:

> I propose to begin with the functioning of ghosting in the dramatic text, the widely accepted ground of theatre in many cultures, including our own. Although recent writings on intertextuality have called our attention to the fact that all literary texts are involved in the process of recycling and memory, weaving together elements of preexisting and previously read other texts, the dramatic text seems particularly self-conscious of this process, particularly haunted by its predecessors. Drama, more than any other literary form, seems to be associated in all cultures with the retelling again and again of stories that bear a particular religious, social, or political significance for their public. There seems to be something like a dramatic presentation that makes it a particularly attractive repository for the storage and mechanism for the continued recirculation of cultural memory. [5]

There are two elements in Carlson's explanation above that differentiate the concepts of *ghosting* and *redeeming.* In *ghosting,* there is the idea of recycling in theatrical tradition, in *redeeming,* there is the idea of surviving out of remains. Secondly, *ghosting* enriches the dramatic or the theatrical tradition with different layers of meanings, making the theatrical process more complicated when it comes to the audience and the artistic tradition. By contrast, with *redeeming*, the performance tradition has already accepted the inclusion of other voices, other

[5] Carlson, 8.

discourses, or other traditions that help to complete the *cultural unity.* These are two different cultural processes, though they share one crucial element: the capacity that each has of being a repository of the cultural memory of their society. In this manner, they are both instances of what Diana Taylor calls *the repertoire*, since they "require presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by being there, being a part of the transmission" (Taylor, 20).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This work claims a genealogy from the Performance Studies tradition of cultural intersections, Circum-Atlantic scholarship, Latin American studies, and Coloniality. In that regard, the research that comes out of this work is in direct relationship with Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead* and Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire*, as I mentioned above. One of the goals of this research is to add to these conversations elements present in the Religious Traditions, especially in the formation of a Catholic identity in Latin America that includes suppression or syncretism, aspects of other traditions, or sets of beliefs. The concepts of *the cultural landscape, cultural negotiation, and redeeminization* look for a way to move forward and are (sometimes) more rooted in the analysis of the cultural processes that created the Latin American society today, and by that, the concept of Dec*oloniality*.

As mentioned above, *Decoloniality* as a theory and as praxis comes out of Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E Walsh's 2018 book *On Decoloniality*, and, as they clarify in their Introduction, the idea of *Decoloniality* evolves from the work of Ecuadorian sociologist Aníbal Quijano in the 1990s. Quijano's ideas came right after the end of the Cold War and tried to reshape the conversation with the Decolonial perspective. Quijano's work informed the arguments of different scholars: Enrique Dussel (Argentina-Mexico), Arturo Escobar (Colombia-United States), and Gloria Anzaldúa (Mexico-United States), which contributed to the formation of theory and praxis of *Decoloniality*, a concept by Mignolo (Argentina-United States) and Walsh (United States-Ecuador). The genealogy of this philosophical thinking can be traced as far back as 17th century Perú with Guaman Poma de Ayala and to Jamaica with Ottobah Cugoano. Their acknowledgement of the *otherness* concerning the Colonial Matrix of Power can be understood as a proto-decoloniality. The contributions of people like the 19th-century abolitionist Sojurner Truth, 20th-century thinkers such as W.E.B. Dubois, Anna Julia Cooper, Aimé Césaire, and Franz Fanon, or feminist activists like Audre Lorde and Dolores Cacuango, fill the ancestry of a philosophical perspective that can reshape the modern thinking.

The Performance Studies genealogy proceeds from the works of Dwight Conquergood and his ideas of cultural processes as a way to perform identity and to concentrate social anxieties into structures that allow the social groups to contain, understand, and manipulate them. For Conquergood, societal interaction

is full of a particular type of theatricality. Human groups reinforce that theatricality by creating enactments that allow them to negotiate and define the rules of engagement of that interaction. Conquergood takes the concept of *cultural performances* from Victor Turner. By relocating research sites in the body and the cultural and social aspects embodied in ritual, performances, carnivals, and other popular manifestations, new social interactions and meanings can contribute to a cultural conversation. As Conquergood argues:

> The linguistic and textualist bias of speech communication has blinded many scholars to the preeminently rhetorical nature of cultural performance –ritual, ceremony, celebration, festival, parade, pageant, feast, and so forth. It is not just in non-western cultures, but in many so-called "modern" communities that cultural performance functions as a special address, rhetorical agency. Through cultural performances many people both construct and participate in "public" life. Particularly for poor and marginalized people denied access to middle-class "public" forums, cultural Performance becomes the venue for "public discussion" of vital issues central to their communities, as well as an arena for gaining visibility and staging their identity. [6]

[6] Conquergood 188, 189.

Conquergood's idea is an invitation to discover a whole new set of beliefs and practices through embodied performances, outside of the archives, traditional records, and official discourses. Conquergood opens up the Anthropology and Cultural Studies fields by using performance and performance studies as other possible approaches to the socio-cultural phenomenon.

In his book *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach creates a complex case for the analysis of the displacement, the memory, the already gone elements of social interchange, and cultural negotiation. He understands the different ways embodied practices can allow social groups, ethnicities, and beliefs displaced by the official discourse, by the migration or by the colonial authority, to stay alive through acts of surrogation. He looks for this type of performance as a way to re-enact the dead, the already gone, the forgotten: "…selective memory requires public enactments of forgetting, either to blur the obvious discontinuities, misalliances, and ruptures or, more desperately, to exaggerate them in order to mystify a previous Golden Age, now lapsed" (Roach,3).

Roach gives these performance traditions the capacity to reflect a knowledge that only exists in the embodied representation, the ability to communicate something that is not in a written historical account but in a cultural memory that can be traced through these cultural devices. Roach is linked to Conquergood's idea of the body as a place of memory and information and embodied performances as the repository of the displaced, the forgotten, and the ones

erased from history. Roach believes there is a *genealogy* that can be traced through those performances:

> Genealogies of Performance attend not only to "the body," as Foucault suggests, but also to bodies – to the reciprocal reflections they make on one another's surfaces as they foreground their capacities for interaction. Genealogies of Performance also attend to "counter-memories," or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences. [7]

The idea of a *counter-memory* is capital, as is a *counter-discourse*, since this work is based on the theoretical assumption that these elements can be found in performance traditions. Those marks can be traced for decades or even centuries. The *counter-memory* present in an embodied performance is a powerful element that survives within the culture and offers a new perspective through which to understand social interactions.

By theorizing not only the practice of Performance Studies but Performance Studies in the scope of Latin America and its particular historical and cultural development, this genealogy is grounded in Diana Taylor's work in her book *The*

[7] Roach, 26.

Archive and the Repertoire, Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas. Taylor is clear how this approach can be capital to understand the site. Taylor "proposes that performance studies can contribute to our understanding of Latin America – and hemispheric – performance traditions by rethinking nineteenth-century disciplinary and national boundaries and by focusing on embodies behaviors" (Taylor, 2). She also proposes a cultural analysis of different situations concerning social interactions: "scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries –sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution –activated with more or less theatricality" (Taylor, 13).

Taylor is going back to the possibility of understanding cultural phenomena as *social dramas,* like Conquergood, and to analyze those social interactions with a theatrical perspective. She understands that Performance, as an *embodied practice,* can create a different episteme from the literacy tradition imposed by Conquest and solidified by the Colonial period. She talks about the *archive* as the records related to that Colonial way of thinking and understanding the world. She advocates understanding performance traditions as a way to obtain meaning and knowledge from the perspective of what is not in the archives. As Taylor argues:

> The repertoire enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing –in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically "a treasury, an inventory," also allows for individual

> agency, referring also to "the finder, discoverer," and meaning "to find out." The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there," being part of the transmission. [8]

The present study understands the Religious Performance Traditions as the repertoire where an *inventory* of previous cultural negotiations can be found, a place whereby through participating, by *being there*, societies negotiate identity, race, ethnicity, class, belonging, citizenship, religion, and popular beliefs. The archival information from colonial chronicles, judiciary processes, and press reviews will always be incomplete, and sometimes incoherent. The only way to try to understand them is by using information from the *repertoire* as a manifold that can give a broader perspective to the historical events and cultural interactions.

There are different types of research present in books and articles about the site itself, the worship of *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles,* the shrine, and the performance traditions. Mainly these works have a historical approach, and, usually, they have a direct relation with the official narrative of the Catholic Church of Costa Rica in regards to the historical survey of the tradition of Our Lady. Interestingly, there are only two positions from which to study and analyze the tradition: one supporting the official narrative of the Church and contributing to

[8] Taylor, 20.

that narrative with new material; the other criticizing or polemicizing over certain specific elements of the official narrative, while still accepting it as a whole. At its core, the approach to the study of *Our Lady of Los Angeles* is a binary relation between tradition and scholarship.

The article "Las Fiestas a la Virgen de Los Ángeles, La Negrita, Patrona de los Costarricenses" by María Carmela Velázquez Bonilla (2010), is a clear example of the first position. Her article gives some key historical facts about the early worship of *Nuestra Señora*. It acknowledges the presence of black Africans (and their descendants) and Indigenous populations in the labor of that initial movement. Later her study analyses how the Religious Festivity and all the attached traditions became more and more popular in the people of the city of Cartago, eventually becoming part of the life of Mestizos, Creoles, and white Europeans. Velázquez Bonilla argues that *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* evolved from an outcast and displaced population's effigy to the Saint Patron of a whole country. She also offers a historical perspective regarding how the social and cultural processes of assimilation of the image and the tradition took place in colonial Costa Rica.

Along with the same inquiry is the work of Manuel de Jesús Benavides, *Los Negros y la Virgen de Los Ángeles* (2010), which acknowledges the capital role the black population had in the development of the tradition of *Our Lady of Los Angeles*, especially in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

There is something remarkable in that affirmation since Benavides is both a Catholic priest and a historian. It is therefore clear that his book represents the view of the official Catholic narrative. The idea that the Church is finally acknowledging the racial and diasporic elements in the early history of *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* would have been inconceivable a few years ago. On the other hand, Benavides' *religious perspective* is (obviously) taking into account such concepts as *the true God*, *true faith*, and a vision of African and Indigenous traditions and beliefs as *impious* or *pagan.* This lack of a broader perspective over the Object of study makes the work superficial and a missed opportunity (an excellent one) to reconcile racial themes within Religious tradition in Costa Rica.

On the side of scholarship critical of the official narrative of the history of *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* is José Daniel Gil's *El Culto a la Virgen de los Ángeles (1824-1935), Una Aproximación a la Mentalidad Religiosa en Costa Rica* (2010). Gil's book offers a particular type of eclectic approach and the study of the traditions and its representations, trying to provide a more elaborated discourse from the one the official narrative offers. The historical approach to the site and tradition, as well as the work's openness to anthropological analysis and some methods from cultural studies, is evident. Gil shows how the Catholic Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century used the image and the worship of *Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* to establish a strategy to defend herself against the *liberal laws* enacted in the country during that period. Gil

demonstrates how *Our Lady was* a political weapon in periods of struggle between the Church, the Government, and the Intelligentsia in Costa Rica.

It is interesting to note that Benavides' book mentions and disagrees with some of Gil's statements, and even takes issue with Gil's interpretation of a specific type of evidence and archival material. These two monographs represent elements of a more meaningful discussion (even a controversy) between the official narrative and the academic scholarship in Costa Rica. My dissertation is not looking to endorse or contradict either perspective since I do not believe the study and analysis of complex cultural processes can happen from a binary understanding of society. This aligns with Mignolo and Walsh's decolonial concept of *the pluriversal*: "it connects and brings together in relation -as both pluri-and interversals- local histories, subjectivities knowledges, narratives, and struggles against the modern/colonial order and for an *otherwise."*[9]

This work, instead, is undertaken with a belief in the necessity of including, to the extent possible, all the different discourses that have shaped and reshaped the tradition of *Our lady* and its enactments and representations. A complex historical and social phenomenon like this should be addressed from an inclusive approach, where rigid frames that enclose sets of thinking should be avoided.

[9] Mignolo & Walsh, 3.

It is also important to situate this study within research concerning Virgins, Saints, and popular representations in the region so that it might make also make some substantive contributions to the field in this regard. Most of the studies related to other Virgins and Saints can be placed either in the category of Religious Studies or Cultural Studies, both of which also concern a practical approach to contemporary diasporas and narratives of migration and identity in the twenty-first century. Here, it is important to mention *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora; Knowledge, Power, and Performance*, edited by R. Marie Griffith and Barbara Diane Savage (2006), which uses the images of Virgins and Saints to explain the socio-cultural process that populations of immigrants from Central America and the Caribbean faced every day in the United States and Canada. Another anthology that follows a similar line is *Religion as Art, Guadalupe, Orishas, and Sufi* edited by Steven Loza (2009). Loza's collection studies religious manifestations from an artistic perspective. It is interested in the syncretic processes with which the sacred cultures in the Americas (Indigenous, African, and Catholic) experimented and how art can be a repository of those processes. Furthermore, the book *Caribbean Religious History: an Introduction* by Ennis Edmonds and Michelle González (2010) shows how the religions became a device by which different social and cultural interactions take place, and how the Caribbean region became a place where various syncretic encounters happened regularly.

In between all these works, there is a monograph that addresses some of the questions and interests of this dissertation, namely, *Cachita's Streets, the Virgin of Charity, Race, and Revolution in Cuba* by Jalane D. Smith (2015). This book analyzes the signification and different meanings *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad* had in Cuba during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the same time, it articulates how the effigy and the tradition became a way to negotiate race, class, and politics in Cuba (especially in the second half of the twentieth century). Finally, it tries to understand the role of *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad* in the national identity of the Cubans, developing such terms out of *cultural negotiations* as *Cubanía* (Cubanness) and *Cuba profunda* (Deep Cuba). It is impossible not to find links between the goals of both of our projects and their sites since Latin American cultural processes share some similar histories and ideas at the core. My dissertation is related to Smith's since it seeks to explain how the Religious Performance Traditions can be a place and a device to negotiate the identity and the sense of belonging to the people, sites of counter-discourses of counter-hegemonic approaches. However, I also endeavor to show how the official powers of every country recognize this and constantly try to influence and reshape these traditions.

Other studies explore how Religions perform in different contexts, and look to an ethnographic approach to understand those contemporary phenomena. *Guadalupe in New York: Devotion and the Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants* by Alyshia Galvez (2010) and *Our Lady of Everyday Life: La*

Virgen de Guadalupe and the Catholic Imagination of Mexican Women in America by María del Socorro Castañeda-Liles (2018) are outstanding examples of auto-ethnography projects treating Religious Performance Traditions in the present moment. Both studies work with the element of diaspora and immigration of Latin Americans to the United States today. Jaime O. Bofill Calero, in his 2014 article "Bomba, Danza, Calypso y Merengue: Creación del Espacio Social en Las Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol de Loíza," analyzes the Afro-Puerto Rican tradition that takes place on the festivities of Saint James in the town of Loíza in Puerto Rico. Bofill Calero's article understands the cultural analysis of the Religious Performance Traditions from Performance Studies and looks for theatricality and the carnivalesque as signs of identity. These examples of ethnography and auto-ethnography concerning Cultural Studies approaches to contemporary Religious phenomena are close to this work since their main goal is to understand how Religious Performance Traditions can be used as a cultural device to perform identity and belonging.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The first chapter of this dissertation will discuss a new historiographic approach to different events in the tradition and worship of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, with a particular focus on its performative elements. This historiography concentrates on three specific moments: the first starts in 1635 and goes until the second half of the 17th century (the emergence and rise of the colonial worship tradition). The second takes place in 1782 when the first *Pasada* (Passover) took

place (the establishment of a tradition on top of a previous tradition). The third moment takes place in 1926 with the coronation of the image (supra dimension). The three historical moments selected are necessary not because of the performance traditions each one of them re-creates, but because they are ultimate moments in the historical development of the tradition of Our Lady. The main idea of this first chapter is to analyze and explain the evolution of the cultural negotiations that took place with regard to the worship of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles as a way to understand the solidification of the tradition and its performances, concerning the construction of national identity.

The second chapter examines the first and maybe most crucial performance tradition surrounding the worship of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, which includes critical examples of how people can perform their faith, religiosity, identity, and sense of citizenship in the public context. *La Romería* (pilgrimage) will be explored in detail. Because I consider it the more complex performative phenomenon in this study, several key concepts and elements will be discussed throughout. This chapter will incorporate a traditional ethnographic approach to the pilgrimage's participants, as well as an autoethnographic approach that takes into account my own positions as insider and outsider. Also, it provides the first approach in the present study to the concept of costarricanness.

Chapter three treats the Mass of August 2nd. I analyze the Mass in different contexts, not only as Performance, but as a representation of religion in the public

sphere and as a political performance, or a performance of power, in contemporary society. This chapter continues with the auto-ethnographic work in which this project is based, in addition to an in-depth analysis of the whole event from a performance studies perspective. The Mass of August 2nd also develops the concept of the cultural landscape as a repository or a facilitator of profound changes, or cultural negotiations, in the societal interchange. Once again, the narrative will return to the concept of costarricanness as a way to explain complex relations of national identity, belonging and citizenship in the particular context of Costa Rica.

The last chapter concerns what may be the most fascinating performance tradition of this study because La Pasada (Passover) is a clear example of the different cultural and performative elements in which this work is grounded. This part of the festivities is crucial for understanding the cultural landscape, cultural negotiation, and finally, redeeming, since these three phenomena have a capital weight in the formation and conception of the performance tradition of La Pasada. This last chapter links the study of the performance traditions with the historiographic project in the first chapter since it analyzes the cultural changes that took place through the years. This chapter explains how La Pasada is probably the clearest example of how performance studies may be employed in the analysis of popular, folk, or (in this case) religious traditions as a way to understand the core relations between these traditions and people's

idiosyncrasy—or, as I call it in this study with regard the specificity of the country: costarricanness.

The Conclusion goes back to the ideas, questions, and stakes arising in the Introduction, and address them with the findings and evidence of each one of the other chapters of this study. Central to this concluding chapter will be the defense of the original claims and the analysis of how my methodological approach helped to obtain answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the research. In other words, it shows how Decoloniality opens up new perspectives on the study of socio-cultural interactions in the public sphere. In addition, the conclusion assesses how performance studies constitute a vital tool for the study of Latin America and the praxis of their people, represented in embodiment and Performance of their history. Finally, it becomes the consolidation of one of the foundational statements of Decoloniality: the possibility of creating theoretical findings as a result of the analysis of the praxis, which is a reverse conception of the statements of modernity. I will close with a critical analysis that invites continued research into these inquiries.

The ultimate goal of this project is to create a consciousness about how several cultural representations can represent the spine of our social interactions in modern societies. That is to say: how some Performance Traditions and other ancient ways of social interaction are at the core of the concept of a social group, civilization, country or kinship, and how those traditions condition the present and

the future of the contemporary societies. The criteria for this dissertation's success will be whether it shows how the Objects of Inquiry work as sites of memory and repositories of social history. And how the Subjects of Inquiry work as sites of cultural negotiation that create, change, or reinforce a social contract that validates the rules of engagement in the Costa Rican society (as well as others

CHAPTER 1: HISTORIC CRITICAL REVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents a historiographical review of the birth, development, consolidation, and re-formulation of the worship of (and related to) Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in Costa Rica. I intend with this review to intersect elements related to the history of religious, political, economic, sociological, and anthropological interests, which have been part of the worship of Our Lady through the centuries. Since the Object of Study of this Dissertation is the performance traditions concerning the worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, and the Subject of Study regards the cultural negotiations that take place in those performances, and how they work as a social phenomenon in the construction, consolidation, and re-formulation of national identity in Costa Rica, the historiographic analysis in this Chapter will touch on elements of the shrine, cult, and tradition; the performances, and their relevance to the evolution of the cultural processes.

I have selected the historic elements in this Chapter in order to consistently and accurately reflect how the worship of Our Lady has evolved through the centuries, and to demonstrate the manner in which the performances attending to the cult have shaped and re-shaped themselves. Throughout this process, these performances have become a crucial factor in constructing national identity, a

sense of belonging, and the concept of costarricanness for their participants (each of which will be developed in the next Chapters).

In the Introduction to this Dissertation, I explained how the philosophical and theoretical approach to the present study is rooted in the Decolonial Theory proposed by Mignolo and Walsh in their last work *Decoloniality.* In keeping with this approach, this Chapter, while it primarily elaborates on a historiographic review of the study cases, will draw upon traditional sources from what Mignolo and Walsh term the Colonial Matrix of Power, while at the same time assigning the same relevance to other material outside of these official sources. In other words, elements of what Diana Taylor calls "the repertoire" will intersect with the traditional archival information. It is indeed possible to draw alternative, non-traditional understandings of several assertions from the traditional official sources. The lack of evidence supporting the assertions, in some cases, should at the very least open the discussion to all the possible interpretations.

The material evidence used for this Chapter essentially comes from archival sources. In these cases, it is evident how the collection and classification of the available materials have been conducted by the Catholic Church of Costa Rica and secular people with direct relation to the Church at different levels. There is, therefore, a bias present in those pieces of evidence, since the affiliations and politics of the archivists have informed the selections and assignations of each piece's quality and importance. However, it is essential to clarify that in some

particular moments of the history of Costa Rica, the Church was the *only* institution that tried to keep a record of the history of the country. A historiographic approach that understands and considers the multiple possible readings of these materials in their *raw* form, then, will open them up to new perspectives, as the following pages will verify.

The first section of this Chapter, called "The Early Years," attempts to explain and understand the years in which the cult and proto-performances related to it were formed. The historical scope ranges from 1630 to 1645, with particular attention to 1635 (considered by official narratives as the year in which the image of Our Lady appeared) and 1639 (the year of the first official document about Our Lady, which mentions the construction of a hermitage in the outskirts of Cartago). The period is characterized by a lack of official documents testifying to what happened and how the Tradition of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles started, but at the same time is full of a rich oral tradition related to those events, which was collected and published by the 19th century. This last element is paramount to the understanding of the evolution of the legend of Our Lady since most of the compilers of those oral traditions were members of Cartago's families who could trace their ancestry to the 17th century. On the one hand, they publicly share family traditions and stories, which convey vital information related to national history and identity. On the other hand, however, by using these stories, the compilers continued a narrative of power and domination their families had participated in since early colonial times.

An especially important performance tradition that emerged out of these early years, and one that will be the focus of more in-depth analysis in this Dissertation's second chapter, is *La Romería* or pilgrimage. In this chapter I explain how and why the first pilgrimages took place, since these early events are quite different in form and content from the contemporary *Romería*. This performance tradition has been subjected to constant change over the decades and centuries since its distant beginnings. The present study's efforts to map its evolution with regard to local and national identities, then, is imperative if we are to understand and evaluate the possibilities related to its origin.

The second section, called "The Coloniality," takes a more significantly analytical approach to the period it covers, namely, events in 1782, the year the Catholic authorities established another performance tradition, *La Pasada* (Passover). References to *La Pasada* can be traced to a series of earthquakes around 1756 and the relevance of the Church and worship of Our Lady for Cartago's inhabitants. Also, by 1824, we can see the influence and importance of *La Pasada* regarding identities that passed from local to national in the country's first Constitution after the independence, and in which Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as a symbol was capital. I will return to *La Pasada* for a more in-depth investigation in the last chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, the historical formation of the performance(s) around La Pasada is germane to an understanding of how cultural negotiations took place repeatedly in Costa Rican

history and how *costarricanness* was created through performing identity and belonging.

The third and last section of this Chapter is "The Consolidation." As the title suggests, this section is directly related to the consolidation of the worship of Our Lady and the performance traditions related to it, on behalf of Costa Rican national identity and power relations. The period studied in this section ranges from 1880 to 1935, which happens to be the same period referred to as the *liberal state* by Costa Rican scholars. This section studies the clash between the Church and the liberal reforms of the period. The Church developed a campaign exalting Our Lady into a national symbol, which was crucial during the *Coronation* moment of 1926. The establishment of the year 1935 as the celebration of 300 years of the Tradition of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles reflects the consolidation found in modern worship. Indeed, the performance traditions we know today are the product of a significant labor of re-shaping and re-signifying during this period. An understanding of the events of this period is also capital to an understanding of the Mass of August 2nd as a religious performance, where political, economic, and social power structures collude every year.

1.2 THE EARLY YEARS

In his 1945 text “Documenta Historica: Beatae Mariae Virginis Angelorum, Reipublicae de Costa Rica Principalis Patronae,” Mons. Víctor Manuel Sanabria collects a significant amount of archival material related to Nuestra Señora de Los

Ángeles, including different historical, economic, cultural, and sociological aspects of the worship and other traditions related to her icon. Beyond the historiographical importance of that publication, it is crucial to understand the motives behind the text. Sanabria intended "Documenta Historica" to be a consolidation, and in particular an understanding, of the historical references about Our Lady from the *official narrative's* perspective. The compilation and explanation of the material was meant to support the Costa Rican Church's understanding of everything related to this worship.

It is quite compelling how Sanabria divided his study into the different sections that provided the logical development to his thesis about Our Lady. Especially remarkable is the section called *La Tradición* (the Tradition). In that section, Sanabria encompasses the different oral traditions related to the early years of the *apparition* and development of worship to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in Cartago. Further, he briefly addresses and explains the contradictions between the few archival sources available from those early years (17th century), reconciling and consolidating them into what I am calling the *official narrative* about those early years' events (I will speak more to this idea later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters). In his own words, Sanabria justified his claims as: "la tradición popular, suministra en todas ellas las mismas noticias, con muy escasas variantes, bien podremos concluir, sin nota de temeridad, que el contenido

esencial de la Tradición es no sólo probablemente seguro y auténtico, sino también moralmente cierto"[10] (Sanabria, 17).

The quote above could be confusing for several reasons. On the one hand, it demonstrates Sanabria's process of trying to explain a confusing and almost impossibly uncertain historical moment from a series of unconnected and unclear sources. Moreover, his rhetorical strategy for proving the authenticity of the elements shared across several narratives consists merely of the claim that the material continuously repeats itself, thereby earning the benefit of being considered authentic. By the same token, then, those elements unique to particular oral traditions he dismissed as errors or misreading that happened to survive through the decades. Furthermore, Sanabria confers the status of authenticity to *la Tradición* by assigning it the category of a *moral truth,* which on the face of it is quite powerful, but a simplistic explanation after all.

The performance traditions that are part of the worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, however, tell a different history than the official narrative. In other words, the evidence present in the performances (rituals, processions, mass, pilgrimage) offers different and alternative readings, which in some cases differ entirely from the official narratives. Understanding the official narrative's *spirit*, and

[10] Translation: "As the popular Tradition supplies the same news in all of them, with very few variants, we may conclude, without a note of recklessness, that the actual content of the Tradition is not only probably safe and authentic, but also morally true."

how different groups in power have portrayed the history of Our Lady, is the first step to analyzing the cultural negotiations in those performance traditions.

La Tradición, as Mons. Víctor Manuel Sanabria called it, says that the icon[11] of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was found on August 2nd of 1635 on the outskirts of Cartago's city (capital of the colonial province of Costa Rica) by Juana Pereira[12], a mulatto young woman[13] from La Gotera, a settlement of the Black population east of the city's borders. The image, a volcanic stone sculpture of a woman with a baby[14], was on the top of a rock in the middle of a forest undergrowth. The girl thought it was some kind of doll, so she took it to her house and kept it in a wooden box. The next day, she passed in front of the same

[11] At this point in the study, I refer to the image of Our Lady as *the icon*, with the understanding that, for critical purposes that will become clear, I will hereafter call it an *effigy*. In the period studied in this section, however, the image is just an icon, not an effigy yet.

[12]. Sanabria invented the name Juana Pereira. By taking the records of baptism in Cartago's churches in the 17th century, he realized Juana and the last name Pereira were the most popular among non-Europeans. His method was pretty biased but useful; today, the name Juana Pereira has been wholly adopted across in the country concerning the character who "discovered" the icon, and even academic scholarship use that name as an apparent reference in their texts.

[13] This character's identity has changed through the centuries, from a young mulatto girl to an aged black slave and even a native girl. Because of the location (east of Cartago), the idea of a mulatto girl or aged woman is more plausible. During the years, her identity has been modified in direct relation to the source from which it comes and the political identity of the storyteller. Because of the direct relation with the city's leading ecclesiastic authority, some scholars talk about Juana Pereira as a slave servant in the service of the main Priest of the city.

[14] The sculpture is 148.55 mm tall and weighs 1085 grams; the actual color is green but is has remains of chemicals on it (probably for painting and cleaning it, that in certain areas make it appear white and gold).

rock and found a sculpture like a day before. Thinking she had now two dolls, she took it to the wooden box at her house. However, then she realized the box was empty. She kept the sculpture in the same box, but the next day the box was empty, and the sculpture was again on the top of the same rock in the middle of the undergrowth.

Juana thought there was something evil involved in all the disappearances of the little doll she found[15], so she decided to bring the image to the Priest in charge of the city's central parish, Saint James church. The Priest[16] decided to keep the image in the Church facilities to avoid or cancel any evil power. The next day, when he was ready to examine the image, he realized it was gone. Juana Pereira, though, arrived at the church with the sculpture, having found again on the same rock. The Priest interpreted all of this as a divine signal. He realized the image was a powerful icon of Our Lady and desired that she be placed for worship in the undergrowth area on the city's outskirts. That same day a procession came out of Saint James church to La Gotera, where the image was placed, and an improvised structure was created to protect it. By the next year, the construction of a hermitage was already in process. After that first procession from Cartago to

[15] Several scholars whose works are related to the early colonial times in Costa Rica refer to the importance of the evil (and the Devil) in popular representations as a way in which civil and religious could control a very uncertain and wild territory.

[16] Some versions mention the Priest as Balthasar de Grado, while Alonso de Sandoval (de Grado's nephew) is also considered a possible candidate. Both priests (as other religious men from the same family branch) were very active in the early worship of Our Lady. Like Gil, some scholars suggest a possible family liaison/interests in regards to Our Lady and this family.

La Gotera (later *la Puebla de Los Pardos*) people from different parts of the country have made a pilgrimage to worship Our Lady every August 2nd, who immediately became very famous because of the multiple miracles she performed.

The story above is a summary of what Mons. Sanabria called *La Tradición*, which is the official discourse about how Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles appeared in the life of colonial Costa Rica. I call this work the *official narrative*, since even today, is repeated by local and national authorities and the Church's structure. The story in the previous paragraphs can be summarized by any Costa Rican who wants to explain the apparition legend of Our Lady. It is essential to clarify that the only official document that corroborates this legend is from Guatemala's ambassador who traveled to Cartago in 1639 and mentioned the construction of the hermitage in a black village just outside of the east border of the city. In summary, there is no reliable evidence for this story. Like any other legend, it is probably based on some real events that today are entirely impossible to verify, elements of folk tradition, superstitions, and deliberate omissions. A key element, here, in understanding the early religious phenomenon in the Americas is syncretism, which in this particular case means different phenomenological processes of blending, amalgamation, adaptation, and assimilation between different traditions. In concrete terms, a creative process that allowed the survival of *the others* within a new concept of *the whole.* I turn next to a deeper analysis of several elements that allow us to understand how *the* religious performance

tradition was conceived and evolved, enabling the cultural negotiations this study treats.

The first important detail about this story is the term used to explain how the icon of Our Lady relates to the people of colonial Costa Rica. Sanabria mentions the word *aparición*, which means *appearance*, in faithfulness to archival evidence and oral traditions. At the same time, he later uses the term he considers accurate: *hallazgo,* which can translate as *finding.* A recent work that defends and extends the official narrative, from the Priest and historian Manuel de Jesús Benavides,[17] is quite vehement in the importance of the correct term. The difference in terms is of prime importance, especially from the official narrative's perspective, since it has different theological valences. Supposing the icon *appeared* means that a miracle took place. It is a material element created directly by God to interact with the human realm, which immediately confers magical powers to the Virgin statue. However, if the image was *finding*, it means that it is a piece created by human beings, which can interact or be an intermediary between God and humans. An appeared icon could have magical powers on its own; a find found icon could offer agency to interact with the deity.

Sanabria was the Archbishop of Costa Rica when he published his study, which means he was probably the highest authority in theology in the country. It is

[17] "Los Negros y la Virgen de Los Ángeles," 2010.

almost impossible to consider that he could commit a naïve misreading of such an important event. By accurately representing the historical references, Sanabria gives a hint of how the people from the 17th and 18th centuries conceived the icon of Our Lady as a magical figure capable of performing miracles to stop nature's forces (such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions) and other magical interactions. The importance of the change of theological perspective during the 19th century, which Sanabria confirmed in the middle of the 20th century, and Benavides in the 21st century, is part of a phenomenon that re-shaped Our Lady's Tradition through the years.

Today it is an extended idea (as a part of the official narrative) that the icon of Our Lady was discovered in 1635. However, several sources from *La Tradición* mention different years. One source talks about 1635[18], another says 1637[19] (which was the year used to talk about Our Lady's history during the 19th century), and another source even mentions 1643[20] as the year of the *apparition*. The only

[18] "Estudios historiográficos de Monseñor Bernardo Augusto Thiel" by Vérnor Manuel Rojas & José Aurelio Sandí.

[19] In all the data related to the Coronation of Our Lady, both the Catholic authorities of Costa Rica, as well as the official documents from the Vatican mentions 1637 as the year of the discovery.

[20] This appears in a short Rhapsody named "Piadosa tradición histórica de la Aparición de la Imagen de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, en la ciudad de Cartago" by the priest Víctor Ortiz (chaplain of the Basilica) in 1904. In a brief introduction to the Rhapsody Ortiz mentions that the historical details of his piece had been sharing through generations between the oldest families in Cartago. Other sources like a book about the colonial history of Central America, printed in Guatemala in 1857 by Don Domingo Juarros; and several touristic reviews from the 19th century about Costa Rica, by the American *explorer* Thomas Francis Meagher; both mention 1643 as the discovery's year. It is probably they all have a common previous source, which reference is lost now a days.

archival evidence is the previously mentioned reference to an official document in Guatemala, which talks about a hermitage's construction next to Cartago's city borders to the east. Nevertheless, even this reference is vague since it does not mention the icon, the worship, or the event of the *Aparición* or *Hallazgo*. All of the above points up the real question of the present section: was the worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles a result of an event (Aparición / Hallazgo), or was the worship a creation of the political and religious authorities of the time, and the icon showed up as the consolidation of that process? It is capital to understand how the early colonial society worked and interacted with their spiritual life to understand how a Catholic icon and its worship could affect the whole social, political, and economic apparatus of a city like colonial Cartago.

One detail that helps explain colonial psychology and anxieties lies in the names of the village itself. Mons. Sanabria mentions that the icon was found in La Gotera, while Benavides says the name of the town is La Puebla de Los Pardos, and it is in this small detail where the key to understanding these dark years dwells. Cartago, even though it was the capital of the province of Costa Rica, was a small, isolated, and poor (in relation to other capitals of the area such as Guatemala or León). The colonial authorities were unable to control significant land zones from the valleys in the middle of the province, where Cartago and other important cities were located. Located west of the city were other colonial settlements like Curridabat, Barva, and San Juan; to the south, the city of Ujarrás; and to the north the Irazú volcano and the rest of the Central Volcanic Range. The

main problem was the eastern border of the valley where the city was located. That was the road to Matina's port in the Caribbean, which was the site of contact and interchange of goods with the Spanish Caribbean and therefore the main point of attack of pirates, zambos, and corsairs. Furthermore, the road to Talamanca, the mountain range where the Natives who rejected the Spanish domination lived; and the road to Portobello in Panama, one of the most significant points of slave trading in the Americas during the 16th and 17th centuries, was a standard route for the *Cimarrones (*outcast Africans) to run away from the slave traders.

The east flank was the source of fear and anxiety for Cartago's inhabitants at the beginning of the 17th century. However, the details of the social evolution can be traced in the names of the settlements, in which Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles became critical element. *La Gotera* was a settlement of black slaves right next to the eastern border of the city, mirroring other settlements' practice of enslaving Natives at the south and north-east borders in the same period. However, *La Puebla de Los Pardos,* while was located in the same area, refers to a different type of administrative and social structure. *Pardos* is a word that means a mixed-race; it could be a mulatto, mestizo, and a mix of races without a reference to the racial categories of the time. Beyond the name, historically, *La Puebla de Los Pardos* was a settlement (and later a village) of slaves, freed Africans, *Cimarrones,* and some Natives. It was a place of commerce and interchange and a site for some political agency for the black and native

population. It is clear that *La Gotera* and *La Puebla de Los Pardos* were two very different types of settlement, and the element that allowed one to become the other was *Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles.*

Regardless of the murkiness of the details, we know that the worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles started during the 1630s and 1640s in Cartago, Costa Rica. This worship included a series of political and economic relations during the early colony, which helped grow and consolidate Spanish power and give agency to other populations (Blacks, Natives, and mixed-race people). The worship happened on the city's eastern border, a place of problematic interactions with Cimarrones, and other African descendants.

There are two possible interpretations based on the contemporary scholarship of the finding of the icon of Our Lady regarding the worship and the social change the region underwent. One interpretation says that by 1935 the settlement on the east of Cartago was called *La Puebla de Los Pardos*, and it was in *La Puebla* where a mulatto girl named Juana Pereira found the icon of Our Lady. The event and the early Tradition related to Our Lady was so powerful that all the *Pardos* felt Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was a unifying element regarding their cultural and social interactions, which made them grow and prosper as a community. The other interpretation says that during the late 1630s and the early 1640s in Cartago, the slaves of a settlement called La Gotera and the outcasts who lived around that area were a focus of permanent trouble for the colonial authority. To allocate and

control this very heterogeneous population, the Spanish authority (political and religious) tried different ways to negotiate and consolidate the apparatus of their control. As part of that negotiation, a Catholic image of the Virgin, and worship concerning that image, was created. This development allowed some agency to *Los Pardos* and some control to the Spanish authorities. That process could be called a Cultural Negotiation (a term this work will develop in the coming chapters), and the consummation of it was the settlement of *La Puebla de Los Pardos*.

It is evident that both positions regarding how the worship and the Tradition related to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles started come from different approaches to the same phenomenon. While one interpretation takes a religious approach to the events, where dogma and faith have a fundamental level of involvement, the other has an anthropological approach. Cultural and socio-political relations define the key elements to be analyzed. It is quite interesting that both proposals draw upon almost the same historical evidence. The nearly complete absence of any archival reference whatsoever means that interpretation is a capital part of both methodologies in the attempt to unveil a historical moment and a series of subsequent events. There is a passage however, in Mons. Sanabria's book (which was foundational for both approaches) that enlightens the discussion. He writes:

> El proyecto de poblar los pardos en los ejidos de Cartago debió de ser antiguo. En ellos estaban interesadas las autoridades religiosas y

políticas. Estas por el peligro de que se aliaran con los piratas invasores, y por los daños que se seguían de que vivieran en campos y montañas, y aquellas porque de otra manera no podían atender al cuidado espiritual de aquellas almas. Mayor debió de ser su preocupación con respecto a los negros, pardos y mestizos bajos, que andaban por las montañas punto menos que en estado salvaje, y que no concurrían a misa. Era de necesidad fabricar una ermita para ellos, y poblarlos al alcance de la solicitud pastoral del párroco, y conociendo como debía conocer el P. Baltazar de Grado, la psicología de aquella gente, no es imposible que haya echado mano al piadoso recurso de colocar una imagen en el sitio escogido para la población, para despertar el interés de los pardos. Esta sería una explicación muy posible y de acuerdo con las realidades. [21]

[21] Sanabria, 59. Translation: "The project of populating the Pardos in the commons of Cartago must have been ancient. Religious and political authorities were interested in them. This is because of the danger that they would ally themselves with invading pirates, and also because their living in fields and mountains negatively impacted the possibilities of attending to those souls' spiritual care. The most significant concern must have been about the blacks, browns, and low mestizos who dwelled in the mountains like wild men and did not attend mass. It was necessary to build a hermitage for them and populate them within reach of the pastoral solicitude of the parish priest, and knowing how Priest Baltazar de Grado should know the psychology of those people, it is not impossible that he made use of the pious resource of placing an image on the site chosen for the population, to arouse the interest of the Pardos. This would be a possible explanation and according to the realities."

Sanabria understood the way the Church operated as a Power during the early colonial period in the Americas—how Virgins and Saints with European influence, but with Native or Africans features, could be used to create an identity, a sense of belonging between different populations, and to obtain political control and economic agency. In the Caribbean region, there are several examples of this type of Cultural Negotiation between Spanish authorities and displaced populations, with the intermediation of the Catholic Church. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Mexico, El Cristo Negro de Esquipulas in Guatemala, or Nuestra Señora de Regla in Cuba, are all examples of traditions similar to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles.

Today Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles is known as *La Negrita*, due to her (allegedly) black features. There is no reference to her blackness, however, in sources from colonial times (as there is for the Black Christ of Esquipulas or Our Lady of Guadalupe). The evidence available actually shows the opposite. There is a portrait of the Priest Balthazar de Grados with the image next to his chest (see Figure 1). It is clear that the icon was painted and it features a white Madonna (in a very European fashion). There are some references as well as oral traditions to the icon's paints and restorations. A contemporary study of the piece mentions traces of paint that vanished through the years: "…la pieza ha sido pulida, pintada, despintada y recubierta con patinas blanquecinas"[22] (Gómez-Álvarez, 67). It is

[22] Translation: "…the piece has been polished, painted, unpainted and covered with whitish patina."

possible during the colonial period that the ecclesiastic authorities painted the icon to make it resemble European Madonna. Gómez-Álvarez's book also recompiles posters announcing the celebrations of Our Lady during the 19th century; in some of those images the icon was painted, revealing white features, while in others the sculpture shows the dark greenish color that still shows today (see Figure 2). As it would be analyzed later in this dissertation, the image of Our Lady was part of the racial reconfigurations in regards to national identity, during the 19th century.

The naming of Our Lady in Cartago adds much to the analysis of interesting facts. The official day of the *Hallazgo*, August 2nd, is the day dedicated by the Franciscan order to Our Lady of the Angels (several icons of Our Lady have that name in Spain). Because the Franciscans were the most important religious order in the early colony of the Americas (in Costa Rica, they were the first of the orders that arrived from Spain), their power relations may have had influence on the name of the new worship. There is, however, a complication to this aspect of the story. The Franciscans did not participate in Our Lady's festivities until the late 18th century, almost 150 years after the worship and Tradition's instauration. As with Benavides's account, other versions mention the influence of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles de Sevilla in Spain. The Cofradía (brotherhood) of Our Lady in Sevilla was composed almost entirely of black people (technically people of color from different racial backgrounds). Because of the slave trade from Africa, Our Lady of Seville had an enormous influence in several Caribbean regions, such as

Cuba and Santo Domingo, and different Cofradías in the region followed Sevilla's example[23]. It is plausible that the name of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in Cartago was mirroring the icon and the worship in Seville, since there are some similar social and political motivations in both traditions.

[23]Those organizations' remains can be found today in places like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, where black brotherhoods are still an essential part of festivities like processions, carnivals, and popular folk performances.

Figure 1. Paint of Baltasar de Grados, priest of the parish of Cartago, with the icon of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles. Dated: August 2nd, 1638. As it is evident, the sculpture was painted to resemble European features, very different to the actual portray of Our Lady.
Private Collection: Milo Junco. Photo by Adolfo Ramírez.

The way the cultural negotiations that created those different worships worked was very similar: The Spanish authorities were capable of conquering the Natives' lands and imposing a government with rules of engagement that benefited the new European rulers. At the same time, they were able to bring the enslaved workforce from Africa to develop their plantations and mining business all over the Spanish Americas. All of this was possible thanks to their military superiority and skilled naval forces. With the domination and subjugation of entire populations and massive expansion of land holdings, however, several social issues emerged, to a point in which the fragile colonial balance of powers was put at risk. It is in this context where the Catholic Church emerged as an actor who facilitated Cultural Negotiations, which consolidated the political control to the Spaniards, the economic agency to the subjugated populations, and social control to the Church herself through cultural practices like the religious performance traditions.

It is evident how these practices took place in the particular case of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. By the 1630s, Cartago, the isolated capital of the province of Costa Rica, was dealing with social issues regarding their black slave population and their relations with outcasts, pirates, and other menaces of that time. The settlement of La Gotera, east of the city limits, was the epicenter of those problems. In a quest to support the political authorities and their efforts to impose Spanish laws and culture, the leading religious authority of Cartago, the Priest Balthazar de Grados, developed a campaign to congregate all the slaves, Cimarrones, and outcasts through the worship of a new Catholic icon: Nuestra

Señora de Los Ángeles. Our Lady's worship had consolidated somewhere in the 1640s; a clear example is the construction of a hermitage in the area by 1639. The hermitage and the civil and religious authorities' efforts transformed La Gotera into a more significant and more Spanish-like settlement: La Puebla de Los Pardos. The establishment of La Puebla meant that enslaved and freed Africans who worked in Cartago, along with some other people who used to be problematic for the Spanish rulers, would all be living in a particular site, following the laws and commands of Cartago's political authorities. At the same time, those populations developed a particular agency in political and economic affairs, thanks to a system created and promoted by the Church: Cofradías. Regarding this system of brotherhood imported from Spain, Isidoro Moreno explains: "En las cofradías étnicas en Andalucía, se encuentran las de negros, mulatos y gitanos, en América a las dos primeras se les agregan las de indios y las de ladinos, aunque este último grupo se debe más a un componente cultural."[24] (Moreno, 66).

A Cofradía allowed several disenfranchised populations to gain some power in colonial society. This power had to do with the Church's intermediation as the Institution who controlled the images (icons of Virgins and Saints), as well as their public demonstrations (religious performance traditions). The establishment of La

[24] Translation: "In the ethnic brotherhoods in Andalusia, there are those of blacks, mulattos, and gypsies; in the Americas, to the first two are added those of Indians and those of ladinos, although the latter group is due more to a cultural component."

Cofradía de la Virgen de Los Ángeles in 1652, is precisely how this type of colonial Cultural Negotiation was consolidated.

Following Moreno's analysis of Spain's brotherhoods and how the system was adopted in Spanish America, Benavides explains how the Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles had a double condition: a conscious condition and an unconscious condition. The conscious condition concerned the official activities of the brotherhood and how they were developed. In his words:

> Debían encargarse de todo lo referente a las misas, la novena del patrono y las actividades que se realizaban durante su fiesta como la procesión, la pólvora y los entretenimientos para los asistentes con comida, música y baile, incluyendo las máscaras en la procesión, costumbre española para solemnizar este tipo de actividades, incluída la del Corpus Christi. Los dineros para estas celebraciones tenían varias procedencias: la recolección por todo el país de limosnas en dinero o en especie, donaciones que hacían sus devotos o compra de tierras y ganados por parte de la cofradía, costumbre que les permitía ir haciéndose de un patrimonio que por sí mismo fuera produciendo dividendos.[25]

[25] Benavides, 64. Translation: "They had to take care of everything related to the masses, the patron's novena, and the activities that took place during his parties, such as the procession, gunpowder, and entertainment for the assistants with food, music, and dance, including the masks in the procession, and Spanish customs to solemnize these types of

It is evident in the quote above how la Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, following the structure and organization of other brotherhoods in Spain and the Americas, developed clear labor related to a specific social function. However, Benavides is clear in how these institutions worked in an unconscious level to create different relations in the colonial social apparatus: "Este tipo de organización religiosa constituye para el individuo un medio apropiado para desarrollar la sociabilidad, es decir la relación social por sí misma, en la que se ponen en contacto directamente las personalidades de los participantes y no solamente determinados papeles sociales"[26] (Benavides, 65).

One particular detail about this period concerns the pilgrimage to the shrine of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. There is a widespread idea in Cartago that says that the first pilgrimage took place in 1635. This is the year the Priest de Grados realized the icon was showing the place where the worship to Our Lady should occur, by continually appearing at the top of the same rock, in the same place (out of the city limits). The local traditions maintain that the Priest of Cartago's improvised procession, organized to bring back the image to the aforementioned

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activities, including Corpus Christi. The funds for these celebrations came from various sources: the collection throughout the country of alms in money or kind, donations made by their devotees, or the purchase of land and cattle by the brotherhood, a custom that allowed them to acquire a patrimony that by itself was producing dividends."

[26] This type of religious organization constitutes for the individual an appropriate means to develop sociability, that is, the social relationship itself, in which the personalities of the participants come into direct contact and not only specific social roles.

point, established the Tradition of the pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrine every year on August. That local story from a reliable oral tradition brings a very charming explanation and genealogy to the contemporary performance tradition called *La Romería*.

The *official narrative*, while detailing how the yearly pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrine started, is not very clear about *why* it started. Sanabria, as well as Benavides, argues that, since the beginning, Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was a very *effective* intercessor. The fame of the icon and the worship around it spread quite quickly around the province, sprouting interactions of faith like the pilgrimage. This discourse, while a very appealing way to explain the history, is supported more by faith than by facts, and avoids any key evidence of the period to back it up.

There is very little material that supports the idea of a pilgrimage as a standard and constant event during the 17th century in Cartago. Nevertheless, some interchange between Our Lady's celebrations and people of that city took place. I mentioned previously how La Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles organized the festivities in August of every year, and one of the critical characteristics of those festivities was economic. The brotherhood was able to obtain money by administering cocoa farms and cattle farms they possessed. At the same time, they obtained donations from all over the country. It is interesting to think about the brotherhood (freed slaves, outcasts, and mixed-race low class)

as administrators of farms and in charge of complex monetary transactions. It is all the more compelling because the colonial laws prohibited representation to those populations. The questions this arrangement raises are quite obvious: how were the Pardos able to develop such amount of economic agency?

Figure 2. Sculpture of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles today. It is easy to appreciate traces of Paint on top of the stone. The green volcanic stone from the distance looks darker, which is one of the explanations why people calls Our Lady today "La Negrita" (the little black). Photo by Adolfo Ramírez.

The answer is in the cultural and social spheres—the brotherhood of Our Lady brought to the Pardos the legal frame to develop their activities. Simultaneously, the festivities as an event allowed different cultural, political, and economic interactions to occur, avoiding the colonial authorities' control (or affecting it) and giving an extraordinary level of agency to subjugated populations. Our Lady's festivities were called *Fiestas Agostinas* (August's festivities) since they took place that month every year. The festivities were more than a simple religious celebration. Besides the masses, processions, some parades (in European Corpus Christi's fashion), they had fireworks, bullfights, theatre plays, ballgames, and gambling, among other *sinful* interactions. It is evident that at the *Fiestas Agostinas* colonial rules relaxed, and different types of interrelations took place. These festivities brought together a massive confluence of people from different parts of the country, since they were the only entertainment source in colonial Costa Rica.

Benavides, in an exceptional extract, steps back from his view of faith and Catholicism and explains this events as follows:

> …la cofradía fungió como el medio de integración social de los dominados en el mundo de los dominadores; esto fue un proceso especial pues lo que al inicio fue un mecanismo de dominación para lograr introducir al negro y al mulato en la cultura dominante de los españoles, se convirtió en el medio por el cual también estas etnias

logran fortalecer su unión para defender derechos por medios legales ante sus dominadores.[27]

The romantic version from the Oral Tradition, which portrays the pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrine as a matter of faith and recognition of Catholicism, is contrasted by the evidence available regarding 17th century Costa Rica. Instead of a religious pilgrimage, people from all over Costa Rica mobilized themselves once a year to the province's capital, Cartago, during August. During the Fiestas Agostinas, the people from different parts of the colonial province experienced public entertainment, relaxed colonial rules, and opportunities to develop economic interchange without excessive control from Spanish authorities. It is quite interesting to consider the position of the political and religious authorities of Cartago during those festivities. Instead of opposing the very activities that challenged their power and dominance, they not only allowed them to happen but, in some cases, they actively participated in them.

The first impression that comes out of the early formation of the Tradition (and festivities) concerning Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles is that they allowed an

[27] Benavides, 69. Translation: "the brotherhood served as the means of social integration of the dominated into the world of dominators; this was a unique process because what at the beginning was a mechanism of domination to for introducing the black and mulatto into the dominant culture of the Spaniards, became the way in which these ethnic groups also managed to strengthen their union to defend rights for legal means against their dominators."

imagined community to take place during August. As Benedict Anderson explains the term, "[i]t is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 6). People from different parts of the country, different social classes, and different racial backgrounds could trade, drink, gamble, and entertain. Interacting in a parallel reality outside of Spanish colonial rules became a moment of an early cultural negotiation, where a very early sense of national identity emerged. The way the colonial and religious authorities reacted to those representations and cultural negotiations by the end of the 18th century, however, reflects how dangerous those interactions became for the status quo.

1.3 THE COLONIALITY

The coloniality is when the images, movements, sounds, and structures used to represent identity and belonging were appropriated by traditional power structures and reframed as part of their colonial project. In the particular case of the province of Costa Rica during the late 18th century, and the worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, those power structures were what scholars such as Gil called *proto-nationalist movements*; in other words, the first conceptualization of *costarricanness* in the history of the country.

This stage starts in 1751 when we can trace material evidence of the worship to Our Lady and its performances with a different perspective. In that year, the

Bishop of Nicaragua and Costa Rica Mons. Pedro Agustín Morel de Santa Cruz consecrated the image, and "ordenó que solo personas del orden sacro pudiesen tocar la consagrada Imagen, a quien dotó con el rico pectoral de esmeraldas que adornan la sobretúnica de la Virgen"[28] (Sanabria, 70). Among the symbolic acts that Mons. Morel de Santa Cruz performed on behalf of Our Lady, the most important was the inclusion of the details of the worship and tradition of Our Lady in his report to Madrid, where he mentions: "la Reina del cielo, que tanto se esmera en favorecer a los humildes, les ha hecho (a los pardos) la honra de habitar entre ellos… que en el propio barrio hay una efigie de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, muy milagrosa."[29] That detail confirms how important the tradition of Our Lady was for Cartago's people and how he considered it vital to bring the Crown's attention to this phenomenon.

The level of agency and power developed around the worship of Our Lady during the 18th century, especially by the Brotherhood, their business, and public events, is evident in the overview Sanabria made in his study about this period:

> Esta cofradía llegó a ser muy rica. La Hacienda de Savegre y la de las Huacas le pertenecieron, y a más de imponer capital al interés de seis

[28] Translation: "…ordered that only people of the sacred order could touch the consecrated Image, which he endowed with the rich pectoral of emeralds that adorn the Virgin's over-tunic."
[29] Sanabria, 47. Translation: "The Queen of Heaven, who works so hard to favor the humble, has done them (the pardos) the honor of living among them… that in the neighborhood itself there is a very miraculous effigy of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles."

> por ciento, le sobraba para las atenciones de las grandes funciones de Nuestra Señora que duraban quince días a contar del dos de agosto. Cada año, la Cofradía de acuerdo con el señor Cura, nombraba lo que se llamaban mantenedores, uno para cada función y siguiendo las preocupaciones de la época, se denominaban españoles tres, mestizos tres, y mulatos tres también...[30]

Analyzing the passage above, it becomes clear what the Spanish elites' anxieties were at that time. The enormous level of agency (and power) gained by Pardos and Mestizos in the political, economic, and cultural spheres could challenge Cartago society's positions of power. That is why they started a coloniality project, a way to dominate and reshape not only the worship and its public representations, but especially the economic and political influence obtained by the Cofradía during more than a century. If Mons. Morel de Santa Cruz pointed out the idea 30 years before; it would be another Bishop in 1782 who consolidated the power grab and forever changed the worship and tradition.

[30] Sanabria, 72. Translation: "This Brotherhood became very rich. The Hacienda de Savegre and the Hacienda de las Huacas belonged to it; in addition to imposing capital interest of six percent, it had more than enough for attending to the great functions of Our Lady that lasted fifteen days starting on August 2nd. Each year, the Brotherhood, in agreement with the priest, named what were called sponsors, one for each performance and, following the concerns of the time, three were Spaniards, three mestizos, and three mulattos as well."

Mons. Esteban Lorenzo de Tristán, Bishop of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, made a *pastoral visit,* a tour through the different Churches under his control. But his tour dedicated a specific amount of time to Cartago and a demonstrated particular interest in everything related to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. Cartago was a complicated location, momentous political and social uprising and power interchanges had been taking place, and Mons. De Tristán's acts concerning Our Lady's traditions are a clear example of those struggles.

Benavides, in his book, is very concise in the explanation of the facts:

> Las actividades realizadas por la cofradía dieron lugar a ese intercambio ya mencionado entre personas de diferentes grupos sociales, al cual hay que agregar que las actividades en torno a las fiestas religiosas también se prestaron como en todas partes, para un relax en una vida cotidiana bastante controlada por las leyes de la Corona, que englobaban tanto las normativas religiosas como las civiles en torno a la moral. Lorenzo de Tristán, obispo de Nicaragua y Costa Rica, efectuó su visita pastoral en 1782 y comprobó los desórdenes nada católicos que sucedían durante la novena a la Virgen en el edificio de la cofradía que estaba al lado del santuario. Entonces, el prelado decretó que la imagen de la patrona de la ciudad de Cartago fuera llevada el día anterior a su fiesta al templo parroquial de la ciudad, donde se celebraría solemnemente la misa; en aquel lugar

> permanecería algunos días; ordenó, además, que el edificio de la cofradía se destinaría a la enseñanza de la juventud.[31]

The paragraph above summarizes the events that precede what is popular called *La Pasada* (Passover), the name the people gave the performance in which the icon of Our Lady is taken from the sanctuary in La Puebla in a procession that culminates in Cartago's Cathedral, where she would lay for the whole month of August (the duration of the festivities in La Puebla). *La Pasada* will be the object of analysis in the last Chapter of the present study; hence the limiting of this section to a discussion of the historical elements present in the formation and early consolidation of this performance.

This passage of Benavides contains a very interesting lapsus, which opens up the object of inquiry to new interpretations of historical events: He says Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was the patron saint of Cartago's city when Bishop Tristán's edicts took place, which is not entirely accurate. There is enough

[31] Benavides 100, 101. Translation: "The activities carried out by the Brotherhood gave rise to the exchange as mentioned earlier between people from different social groups, to which it must be added that the activities around religious festivals were also provided, as elsewhere, for somewhat of a relaxation in daily life, controlled by the Crown's laws, which encompassed both religious and civil regulations regarding morality. Lorenzo de Tristán, Bishop of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, made his pastoral visit in 1782 and verified the disorders against the Catholic doctrine during the novena to the Virgin in the building of the Brotherhood that was next to the sanctuary. Then, the Prelate decreed that Cartago's city's patron saint's image be taken the day before her feast to the city's parish temple, where the mass would be solemnly celebrated; in that place, she would remain a few days. He also ordered that the building of the Brotherhood be used for the teaching of the youth."

evidence to infer not only that the proclamation of Patronage happened after the first Passover, but to understand they were both events of the same historical process. The first Pasada took place on August 1st of 1782; by the 6th of that month, Cartago's citizens[32] made a public vote (cabildo abierto) in which they accepted the Patronage of Our Lady over the city. By the 14th of that month, Mons. Tristán made the official edict that reshaped the worship of Our Lady and the performances around it. By the 18th, the Patronage was celebrated in public with a special Mass in Cartago's Cathedral.

It sounds quite frenetic how all the events happened one after the other, especially in colonial Costa Rica. Reading more in-depth into the facts and the archival information about them raises three critical factors. The first is that it was impossible that something like the establishment of La Pasada as a new tradition and the Patronage of Our Lady over the city[33] were events that could happen spontaneously. Colonial authorities knew about the visit of Mons. Tristán and it is very possible they prepared the case in advance. The second is that all the events were planned and decisions made without considering the people who were entitled to the worship and the icon herself, the Pardos (and, broadly conceived,

[32]. It is crucial to denote that by citizens, we can only conceive Spaniards and their descendants. Pardos, mestizos, blacks, natives, and other marginalized groups were out of this category.

[33] The main Church (now Cathedral) of Cartago is dedicated since its foundation to Saint James, which is the patron saint of the Kingdom of Spain. Scholars always point that fact because even do Saint James (or the country) did not have Patronage over the city or the country, it is possible the inhabitants of colonial Cartago considered her like that.

all the marginalized groups in colonial Costa Rica). The third is that the events (and others during those days) happened while the icon of Our Lady was kept captive in Cartago's Cathedral, which means during the celebrations in honor of Our Lady, the image was away from her sanctuary in La Puebla de los Pardos.

My claim that using the Bishop's visit to create a shift in Cartago's cultural and economic status, through the most important element of the agency of the icon and worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, could be controversial. However, there is enough evidence and contemporary scholarship to suggest that it was possible. On the one hand, the Clergy of the city where not in the list of the beneficiaries concerning the Fiestas Agostinas. They had, after all, been opposed to those events for decades in advance of Tristan's decision. There is an insert in the archives of La Cofradía de la Virgen de Los Ángeles in which the ecclesiastic authorities of Cartago suggested:

> …procuren que no se hagan comidas y que cuando las haya comiencen tan temprano que se acaben con el día, de tal suerte que la noche les coja a todos retirados ya a sus casas y se eviten juntas de hombres y mujeres que especialmente de noche siempre han influido muy mala consecuencia con no poco estrago del bien

espiritual de las almas en que tanto se desagrada a la Santísima Virgen.[34]

As historical evidence shows, the Brotherhood's recommendations were not attended to, and they experienced a more prominent growth in the influence and agency of their members in the decades to come, which provoked constant tensions with the ecclesiastic authorities.

On the other hand, it was the civil authority, which throughout 18th century had very particular interactions with the Brotherhood and the Church itself, from being an active actor in the Fiestas Agostinas during the first half of the 18th century to supporting the events of 1782, that had concerns and objections to those decisions by the 1780s. The level of economic and political agency the Pardos enjoyed during the 17th and 18th centuries, thanks to the worship to Our Lady and the Brotherhood, found a way to collide with colonial officials' personal interests through decades.

There were some details that created some tension between them, however, and probably the most significant tension regarded the relationship with the

[34] ACM. Cofradías Cartago. Libro 16. Translation: "…make sure that no meals are made and that when there are meals start so early that they are over with the day, so the night finds everyone retired to their homes; avoid meetings of men and women which, especially at night, have always had a terrible consequence with no little damage to the spiritual good of souls in which the Blessed Virgin is so displeased."

military. Benavides mentions that: “El papel protagónico de los negros de la Puebla de los Pardos creció tanto que, además de que les dieron tierras y autoridades para el orden dentro de su población, su participación se proyectó al campo militar como sucedió en muchos lugares de Costa Rica y del resto de América Latina.”[35] (Benavides, 112). It is quite apparent the anxieties those situations created in the ruling class. Having marginalized groups with significant economic and political power, which they could project through the religious, cultural, and military life of the province, was a complicated situation where the power and authority of colonial rulers and their descendants were in danger.

After establishing why civil and ecclesiastic authorities needed a power grab like the one in 1782 to sustain their status and the colonial apparatus, it is essential to describe how the events occurred, and how organized the effort culminating in the establishment of *La Pasada* and the Patronage was. The events of July and August of 1782, when viewed through the scholars’ eyes and analyzing all the evidence, were probably not as coordinated as they appear today. Also, many events probably happened *behind closed doors*, and since they were not to the letters and proclamations of those years, they have been lost in the annals of history. What is clear is the intense effervescence of events, letters, declarations, and other manifestations on behalf of the decisions made by Mons.

[35] Translation: “The leading role of the blacks of Puebla de los Pardos grew so much that, in addition to giving them lands and power within their population, their participation was projected into the military field as it happened in many places in Costa Rica and the rest of Latin America.”

Tristán ; in today's words, the evidence clearly shows a strong lobby that became quite successful.

I will just point some particular elements of those events as an example of the process of 1782. On August 3rd, all the members of the Clergy of Cartago made a formal petition to Mons. Tristán during his visit to the city, to concede Patronage of the city to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. In their solicitation, they claimed some ancestry in this regard, going back to 1756, the year of the *earthquake of San Buenaventura*, which is the moment they considered the alliance between Our Lady and the inhabitants of the city consummated. For them, the 26 years between the earthquake and their petition had seen how their devotion consistently grew. By comparing evidence, we can find that claim was valid. After what Cartago's inhabitants considered the holy intersection of Our Lady to protect them during and after the earthquake, they developed a very curious performance as an act of thankfulness. Every June, Cartago devotees (Spaniards) would go to the little Church of Our Lady and sweep it (this could take them several days) culminating with a mass of thanksgiving. It is not clear why they swept the Church, how many they were, or why it took them several days to do the job (or if they just did for a particular number of days). The particular re-enactment was a piece of robust evidence on how the worship of Our Lady was as intense for the city's Spaniards as for the Pardos of La Puebla.

There is an identical petition from the civil authority, reclaiming the earthquake of 1756 and the events afterward as a significant moment in Spaniards' relation to the worship of Our Lady. It is quite curious that the civil authority in 1782 was an interim governor, the Lieutenant Colonel Don Juan Flores, a person with no relation to the Brotherhood's work and the interactions between civil authorities and the Pardos. By August 4th, a letter came from the Franciscan order. Their prior, Friar Juan Luis de Soto, called the Bishop to listen to "…las piadosas súplicas y clamorosos deseos" (the pious supplications and clamorous wishes), of the people of Cartago, whose only desire was to accept Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as their patron saint. This letter is a crucial element of evidence, since it is the first time the Franciscan order in Cartago made a public statement related to Our Lady. The fact that the prior de Soto was a descendant of one of Cartago's traditional families (that is, among those who could benefit from the solidification of the colonial apparatus in the city) could explain the order's particular involvement in that petition.

Finally, by August 6th, there was an open vote (cabildo abierto) in which citizens of the city declared their desires publicly on behalf of Our Lady's Patronage. While some scholars tend to find some proto-democracy in that open vote, this is not accurate understanding: the open vote was a device during colonial times to understand and measure specific populations' interests. In the case of the Patronage of Our Lady in Cartago, ecclesiastic authorities decided to call for it. For three days in a row, they had massive confluence of people coming to the

Church's facilities to declare their desires in favor of the Patronage. It is quite remarkable how this event took place over just three days; it looks like a coordinated action from the civil and ecclesiastic authorities of the city, to grab the power contained in the icon and the worship. Which at the same time acknowledges how important Our Lady was in the creation of an early national identity.

By taking away the icon of Our Lady during the annual festivities in 1782 and allocate it at the Cartago's main church (instead of La Puebla's hermitage), and by organizing the Patronage of the City, changing from Saint James to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles; Cartago's ecclesiastic authorities and European's descendant ruling class, performed an act of cultural appropriation, which immediately disenfranchised the Pardos. The powerful icon became part of the white European's domain, while the racial diversity communities were leave apart from the Tradition.

The fact people and communities in charge of the worship, the sanctuary, and Brotherhood of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, like Pardos and other marginalized groups, kept apart from the Patronage, should be read in direct relation with the fact the icon of Our Lady was also kept apart from their control. In just a few days, these groups were devoid of their agency and the imagery that unite them as a social group. They were disenfranchised from their symbols and traditions built in the last century and a half through adaptation and syncretism.

Of course, it is impossible to know the real motivations of the Clergy, the political class, and the Spaniard families of Cartago regarding the events of August of 1782. Nevertheless, a close reading of the social and cultural sphere before that year, and especially after it, would give some hints to unveil the real interest which the documents cannot explain. Before 1782, we have a collision between civil authorities and the Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. It was clear that the activities organized by the Brotherhood not only provided their members with presence and influence in Cartago's society, but there were benefits for (at least a part of) the ruling class. The business of the Brotherhood provided cash, loans, and commercial exchange to Cartago's authorities; and the Fiestas Agostinas created the perfect environment not only for entertainment and the creation of belonging through particular activities, but the perfect occasion to do business for a city with no other option than agricultural work. It is unlikely that changes in that type of structure came from the political/ruling class.

As we saw before, the ecclesiastic class already had some trouble with the Brotherhood, and their relations were a source of constant tension between them. Benavides explains the source of those tensions: "…el templo de la Virgen se fue consolidando desde muy temprano como centro religioso que desplazaba el centro parroquial"[36] (108). Religious life in colonial Costa Rica was one of the few

[36] Translation: "The temple of the Virgin was consolidated very early as a religious center that displaced the parish center."

ways to political and economic success. In that particular world, a priest had the opportunity to establish connections all over the country. It was widely practiced that these connections were used to develop mercantile interchange on behalf of the priest and his family. It was also widely practiced that important families from Cartago's ruling class had several of their members in the Church's network, which helped them gain agency within the colonial web of interactions and businesses.

The power gained by the cult of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was complicated since some ruling class members were losing influence over the people. Marginalized groups (as the Pardos) obtained agency and influence over the city's issues. But the real struggle was more complex: Costa Rica was developing an early attempt to create a national identity; in that sense, the images and traditions from the Pardos were more powerful than the ones controlled by the Church or the European's descendants. José Daniel Gil explains it as: "La Iglesia, al colocar bajo su dominio el culto, buscaba separar lo religioso y lo profano; para esto introducía una especialización en los papeles religiosos, en los cuales al laico cada vez se le iba separando del contacto con lo sagrado, dejando tan solo el contacto de este tipo a los sacerdotes"[37] (55). As mentioned at the beginning of this section, La Pasada and the Patronage were two elements of

[37] Translation: "The Church, by placing the worship under its control, sought to separate the religious and the profane; for this she introduced specialization in religious roles, in which the secular person is increasingly separated from contact with the sacred, leaving the only contact of this type to the priests."

colonization over the imagery and marginalized social groups' cultural life. The events of 1782 were probably the first conscious move toward a national identity for Costa Rica. The Catholic Church and a portion of the influential families of creoles decided to impose themselves over other social groups at the time, becoming very successful in that labor.

La Pasada itself was a complicated performance that became the repository of different traditions, interactions, and politically motivated symbolism for around a century. Until the late 19th century, with the rise of liberalism, La Pasada reshaped itself in a fashion similar to contemporary performance. The initial *instability* of the performance, reflects the social turmoil surrounded its establishment, which was more an imposition, a cultural colonization; that element will be studied more deeply in the last Chapter of this Dissertation. Mons. Sanabria, in his study about the history of Our Lady, recreates oral traditions from Cartago that explain how the first Pasadas took place:

> Comenzaba el desfile de la procesión; grupos de pueblo en todas las bocas de calle y en todas las puertas y ventanas; la asistencia de la procesión estaba enseñada a tomar las aceras y dejar libre el centro de la calle; sólo las mujeres la llenaban en desorden viniendo atrás de la sagrada imagen en sus vistosas andas, llevadas en hombros de sacerdotes vestidos de sobrepelliz y bajo el palio de varas sostenidas por lo más noble de la población, precedida por el Gobernador que

> llevaba el estandarte y seguida del preste con capa de coro y ministros con dalmáticas. Cerraba la procesión la tropa, tocando la pausada marcha.[38]

Quite compelling, here, is the absence of any reference to the Brotherhood, the Pardos, Blacks, or Natives. Nothing about the folk traditions that used to be part of the celebration, no sense of party or festivity, instead, the passage describes a solemnity that performed a different relationship with the people. It is clear that with La Pasada, Our Lady became a colonized image, part of an elite (civil and ecclesiastic) that reshaped the city, its political and economic interactions, and popular imagery. Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles became the flagship of the rise of a new social apparatus. As Gil mentions: "La Virgen de Los Ángeles representaba en esta circunstancia un ideal de liberación de los criollos cartagineses que deseaban diferenciarse plenamente de los españoles, encargados de administrar la provincia"[39] (76). In other words, 1782 meant the first break of the city and the province with colonial domination, as Gil calls it, a

[38] Sanabria, 73. Translation: "The parade of the procession began; groups of people in all the streets and all the doors and windows; the attendants of the procession were taught to take the sidewalks and clear the center of the street; only the women filled it in disorder, coming after the sacred image in their showy litters, carried on the shoulders of priests dressed in surplice and under the canopy of rods held by the noblest of the population, preceded by the Governor who carried the banner and followed by the lend with choir cape and ministers with dalmatics. The troop closed the procession, playing the slow march."

[39] Translation: "The Virgin of the Angels represented in this circumstance an ideal of liberation for Cartago's creoles who wished to fully differentiate themselves from the Spaniards, in charge of administering the province."

"proto-nationalist" act, and Our Lady and all the performances related to her worship were vital to succeeding in that enterprise.

The events of 1782 were foundational to the development of Our Lady's modern worship practices and the formation of national identity, a sense of belonging, and even a concept of citizenship. Several events that came after that year support the idea of 1782, La Pasada, and the Patronage, as the critical elements that led to the formation of a nation. For example, in the years following the events of 1782, the inhabitants of La Puebla de los Pardos and other settlements of marginalized populations in the outskirts of Cartago participated in what the national historiography has called *los desórdenes* (the disorders), which means various uprisings against the new model. Up until 1825, there is evidence of these activities and official petitions of the remains of La Cofradía de la Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles to avoid the translation of the image and to return to the previous model. All of this can be read with a double interpretation; on the one side, we can see the desire of those marginalized populations to regain some of the agency and influence they lost after 1782; on the other, we can see their desire to be part of the new model, incorporated into the new concept of national identity. They understood the importance of the icon of Our Lady in the new cultural negotiations, and could reclaim ancestry and belonging to the icon and the worship in order to have a voice in the new social apparatus.

1.4 THE CONSOLIDATION

As mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, Consolidation refers to a specific moment in which the contemporary worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was solidified as the vital element of national identity. The religious performances developed over the centuries (some of them the object of study in this project) were reshaped into their current form, mostly in their meaning or (more precisely) their creation of meaning for a national identity. This is the period that established the *official narrative*, which is the discourse from the power elites (Church and State) over Our Lady, her importance, and her meaning regarding the idea of *costarricanness.* That is to say, this is the period when different oral traditions regarding Our Lady, and the evidence, were put together to create an archival material.

The consolidation as a period to study starts with the *Coronation* of the effigy of Our Lady[40] in 1924/26.[41] This marks the moment where the worship and the religious performances related to it obtained their contemporary fashion and social meaning. The other important moment of the consolidation came with celebrating the 300th anniversary of the *hallazgo* (finding) of Our Lady, which can

[40] In a previous note, I talked about the statue (the image) of Our Lady as an icon. However, by this historical moment (at the beginning of the 20th century), the statue should be considered as already an effigy, and the process of Coronation merely consolidated that idea.

[41] The actual Coronation took place in April of 1926 with different activities. However, the authorization from the Pope is from May of 1924, which could be considered the actual moment when Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles became the queen of the country.

be considered the settlement moment for the official narrative and its historical perspective. There were specific moments during the 19th century that worked as a bridge between the coloniality period and the consolidation. At the beginning of the 19th century, we have three particular events relevant to this process: 1811's call for the Cortes de Cádiz, which was the last effort to save the Spanish empire in the Americas; the independence of the provinces of Guatemala (today's region of Central America) in 1821; and the Constitution of 1824, with the final establishment of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as the patron saint of the whole country.

Prior to his trip to Spain, the representative from Costa Rica to the Cortes de Cádiz, the priest Florencio del Castillo, attended a mass in the sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in order to perform the act of supplication to Our Lady so that he might have enough clarity in his labor. On October 13th, 1821, the population of Cartago, surprised with the independence process' news from the kingdom of Spain, decided to celebrate a Mass to Our Lady to offer her the destiny of the new country. During a Constitutional Congress of the independent province of Costa Rica in 1824, Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was declared the patron of the country, with a very particular provision that from now on, it would be the civil authorities, not the Church, who could give a patronage proclamation. Each of the previous events could be the object of a more in-depth study of the power relations between Church and State and how Our Lady consolidated her position as the iconic element in forming national identity. The historiographic

reading shows how the first half of the 19th century was a transition period in which the cultural negotiations I treated in the sections above, transformed themselves once again.

There is a critical period that allowed the country and the interrelation between Our Lady and the national identity to take different trajectories: the liberal laws from the 1880s. The establishment and consolidation of the liberal State, thanks to the direct relationship between the economic and political ruling class and European liberalism, reshaped the country forever. Those changes affected the conceptualization of national identity and the role of Our Lady's worship and performance. It also reformulated the relations between Church and State.[42] That new status quo finally created a type of two-headed monster, where the State and Church fight, negotiate and define the images and representations regarding national identity, citizenship, or political and economic agency.

About this complex and symbiotic process of power relations and cultural negotiations, José Daniel Gil writes:

> Pese a la discrepancia apuntada entre la Iglesia y el Estado liberal, esto no implica, en ningún momento, que las clases dominantes,

[42] For further reading about the development of the Liberal State: *Order and progress: The Constitution of 1871 and the liberal state* at "Costa Rica: a Global Studies Handbook" by Margaret T. Mitchell and Scott Pentzer.

> incluso la fracción anticlerical, dejaran de utilizar el culto en pro de sus intereses de clase, ni tampoco que la Iglesia dejara de ser un aparato ideológico que legalizara el dominio ejercido por las clases dominantes. La Iglesia no dejará de bendecir el orden de cosas imperante en el país por medio de la mitificación de una sociedad democrática e igualitaria y un orden social "impuesto" por Dios, el cual no debía cuestionarse.[43]

It is clear that the liberal State (1880-1940) as a political, economic, and cultural phrase, challenged the hegemony of the Catholic Church in Costa Rican society. However, it is also clear that Our Lady's effigy and Tradition represented a powerful element of national identity, which allowed the Church to redefine its relationship with the country's power structures.

The idea of the Coronation of Our Lady was part of the strategy of the Catholic Church of Costa Rica to take back a prime place in the country's power structures. The Church's hegemony was menaced by three special forces: The first menace was the liberal State itself. With the ruling class families' adoption of

[43] Gil, 146. Translation: "Despite the discrepancy pointed out between the Church and the liberal state, this does not imply, at any time, that the ruling classes, including the anti-clerical fraction, stopped using the cult in favor of their class interests, nor did it imply that the Church stopped being an ideological apparatus that would legalize the rule exercised by the ruling classes. The Church will not fail to bless the prevailing order of things in the country by mythologizing a democratic and egalitarian society and a social order 'imposed' by God, which should not be questioned."

the liberal ideology from Europe, and the establishments of the liberal ideas in the Costa Rican law system by the end of the 19th century, the Church was threatened with becoming an outsider in the social apparatus of the country. The second menace was Communist ideology and the organization of the worker's movement as a political force. The communist party of Costa Rica (Vanguardia Popular) would not be established as a proper formation until 1931. However, during the first three decades of the 20th century, groups of workers organized strikes, riots, and shutdowns, demanding better working conditions. Most of these groups (especially their leaders) considered the Catholic Church an enabler of the capitalist status quo and an Institution who obtained benefits from the powerless masses of workers and peasants; that is why both entities considered the other as a direct enemy. The third menace had arrived by the 1920s: the proliferation of Protestantism in the country made the Catholic Church consider them as dangerous as the arousing of the communist ideology.

After a fundamental analysis of the historical circumstances that the Church was facing in Costa Rica in the 1920s, it is easy to understand how they would utilize their most potent tool for social agency and cohesion: Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. The act of the Coronation offered to the Church the opportunity to start a new cultural negotiation within the country's power structures and in the interrelation between Church and people. As explained later in this study, that moment became the ultimate cultural negotiation, as least from the Church's perspective.

On September 20th of 1924, the Archbishop of Costa Rica Mons. Rafael Otón Castro sent the official request for the approval of the coronation and official patronage of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles to the Cardinal Mons. Rafael María del Val, Archpriest of the Vatican Basilica. In the letter, Castro wrote, "…el Arzobispo que subscribe, vocero del sentimiento del Episcopado, del Clero y de los fieles de la República de Costa Rica, suplica a Vuestra Eminencia Reverendísima y Venerable Cabildo Vaticano, se dignen otorgar la coronación solemne de la imagen de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, Patrona de la República de Costa Rica"[44] (Sanabria, 248). There is a very subtle detail in the quote above that explains how the Coronation's idea opened the possibility of a different state of affairs and a cultural negotiation between State and Church. Mons. Castro asks the Vatican for the authorization of the Coronation of Our Lady as patron of the country, in spite of the fact that Our Lady had been declared patron of Cartago first (1782) by acclamation of the inhabitants of the city, and by Costa Rica as a whole by the Constitutional Congress (1824).

Why was it necessary for another act (a coronation) to declare Our Lady's Patronage over the country again? Analyzing the Congress' proclamation of 1824,

[44] Translation: "…the undersigned Archbishop, spokesman for the sentiment of the Episcopate, the Clergy and the devotees of the Republic of Costa Rica, begs to your Eminence, the Most Reverend and Venerable Vatican Council, to deign to grant the solemn coronation of the image of Our Lady of the Angels, Patron of the Republic of Costa Rica."

two particular things come out; one is that the State decided to make a political (and legal) proclamation over a religious aspect of the life of Costa Rica; the other is by doing that, the Government declared itself as the Institution in charge of those matters in the country. It was a complicated interaction, but it is also clear that the Church was a stronger institution in the early Costa Rican independent life. The proclamation of 1824 was a way the Constitutional Congress looked for popular validation (via Catholic Church) of the state apparatus as a whole. By 1924 things were very different: the Church felt the menace of the Liberal laws on one side, and the growth of Communism and Protestantism in Costa Rica on the other. The idea of the Coronation of the icon of Our Lady, with the Pope's direct approval, was not only a way to reinforce the concept of the Patronage but to take back the symbolism of it from the Government, on behalf of the Church. A cultural negotiation and the re-location of the power structures within the country's power groups was already in process.

His Holiness Pius XI communicated in person to Mons. Castro (who in October of 1924 was visiting Rome and the Vatican) that his request was accepted. Mons. Castro was named the Pope's representative, who (in the Pope's name) would coronate the icon of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. In so doing, he would establish a new alliance between the Vatican and the people of Costa Rica. The official Vatican decree of October 20th of 1924 named Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as queen and patron of Costa Rica and the Basilica de Los Ángeles (her

temple), as her official location[45]. It is evident that after being backed by the Pope and the Vatican, the Catholic Church of Costa Rica had the opportunity to negotiate the relations with the Government and have a clear advantage in their particular war against Communism and Protestantism in the country's public sphere.

The beginning of the present Chapter explains how the image (the material sculpture) of Our Lady should be considered an icon initially, like almost every other image representing a Saint, a Virgin, or a Christ in the Catholic tradition, and that is how it has been during this historiographic review. However, hereafter, in the study as a whole, I refer to the image of Our Lady as an effigy, since the way the image functions in the symbolic world of Costa Rican national identity is close to Roach's conceptualization of the term: "Effigy is cognate to efficiency, efficacy, effervescence, and effeminacy through their mutual connection to ideas of producing, bringing forth, bringing out, and making" (36). I believe it was the moment of the Coronation of the icon of Our Lady when the image became an effigy since that was the shifting point when the real meaning of the icon was discussed and defined in the public sphere. That moment encapsulated centuries of traditions, but also it was the moment when the official narrative consolidated,

[45] The idea of making the Basilica de Los Ángeles the official site of worship could sound useless since it had been like that for almost three centuries. However, the unsolved issues of the controversy of 1785 and its consequences, like the establishment of La Pasada and the disenfranchisement of the Pardos in the worship of Our Lady, were buried after the Pope's proclamation.

and the narrative from marginalized communities (Pardos, Natives, Blacks), and their contributions to the history of Our Lady, vanished.

The presence and the absence of historical elements and cultural negotiations were unveiled. The powerful resonance of the image concerning national identity and a sense of belonging to the idea of *costarricanness* was finally official. The period of the Coronation was the transmutation of the icon in effigy, because of the inter-relations with performance traditions around the worship of Our Lady. "Effigy's similarity to performance should be clear enough: it fills by means of surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of an original" (36), says Roach, which in this particular case means that the performance traditions reshaped in this period became a container of the previous traditions, the bodies, and the symbolic elements that the Church's new discourse took out of the official narrative. The performances like La Romería, La Pasada, and the Mass of August 2nd, hold within themselves the bodies of the Pardos, Cimarrones, and Natives from the early tradition. They hold the structures created during the early pilgrimages, the bullfights, comedies, gambling, dances, and orgies from the festivities of La Cofradía; at the same time contains meanings created by the Church in the last century. The political racialized interruption of La Pasada, and the first Patronage, follows the same patron. The performance traditions established and reformulated between 1924 and 1935 work as effigies of the original bodies and their interaction, which just became a simple reference of something already lost.

In the first months of 1925, after the trip to Rome of the Costa Rican high Clergy and the proclamation of Patronage and Coronation from Pope Pius XI, the organization of the Coronation's events took place. Various commissions and committees were created within the ecclesiastic authorities, Cartago's local authorities, and (in particular) some economic and politically influential families whose genealogy was related to Our Lady and her history. One of the initial discussions was related to the Coronation's location: there was an attempt to make the event in San José as the capital of the country and headquarters of the Government, which could solidify the idea of a national transcendence and equate the Coronation with an important civic or political event. However, the inhabitants and the Clergy of Cartago refused this idea. By granting the event to Cartago's city, the unspoken agreement established after the independence (1821), which said San José is the governmental capital of the country and Cartago the spiritual one, was endorsed.

An *imperial crown* was ordered from a famous jeweler (R. Ortiz & son), and gold and gemstones were received as offerings from different families for the Crown's elaboration. A new pedestal in concordance with the new rank of Our Lady was also constructed. Different committees were put in charge of constructing arches and other structures in Cartago, mirroring the references to kings' coronations and entrances into European cities. Finally, a massive event was planned in Cartago, a type of performance of power in which the Church

used all their symbols and genealogies of power to start a new cultural negotiation to relocate their role in the country's power structure. Various delays forced the Church to discard the idea of having the Coronation during the festivity of Our Lady on August 2nd of 1925. The final event took place on April 25th, 1926. The invitation to Costa Rica's people came in a missive from the Archbishop of the country himself, read in every Church of the country a month before the event.

The letter itself is a clear proof of the Church's intentions for the Coronation events and the anxieties of the Institution in those years. By calling Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles "Judith," they made an apparent reference to the biblical figure who helped Israel's army defeat the Assyrians, claiming an ancient female warrior as a simile for the role of Our Lady in the Costa Rica of the early 20th century. There is a second layer in the reading of that argument, since the Book of Judith (in the old testament) is present in the Catholic and Orthodox bibles, but not in the Jewish traditions, and assigned by the Protestants to their *Apocrypha.* In other words, as a critical figure who works in parallel to Our Lady's symbolism, Judith is a particular Catholic figure in the claim of a biblical genealogy. About this Judith/Our Lady double figure, the letter mentions: "…que como la más segura defensa disipa las herejías, libra a los pueblos y a las naciones cristianas de todo género de calamidades y a nosotros mismos de tantos peligros"[46] (Sanabria, 216). The heresies the letter refers to would be specified during the following month

[46] Translation: "…as the surest defense dispels heresies, frees the peoples and the Christian nations from all kinds of calamities and ourselves from so many dangers."

through editorials, preaching, and articles, making obvious the fact that the Church not only started a negotiation with the State, but their own *crusade* against Communism and Protestantism in Costa Rica. As an example, the following passage appeared in the editorial from "El Mensajero del Clero" the day of the coronation:

> Confiando en la devoción del Clero a su Patrona, y sometiendo desde ahora mis ideas a la resolución del Prelado, me atrevo a exponer un proyecto sobre la manera de contribuir a la Coronación y es la siguiente: 1) La celebración del Congreso Catequístico, sobre las bases propuestas en la conferencia eclesiástica del mes de febrero del año pasado, en el cual se discuta y actúe un programa bien definido y práctico de acción social entre los obreros; 2) Emprender una campaña activísima contra el Protestantismo, en la forma que disponga el Prelado; 3) El establecimiento de la Unión Misionera del Clero en la Arquidiócesis…; 4) La fundación en todas las parroquias, de la Sociedad de Padres de familia, que tendrá así el carácter de obra diocesana.[47]

[47] Sanabria, 274. Translation: Trusting in the devotion of the Clergy to their Patroness, and submitting from now on my own ideas to the resolution of the Prelate, I dare to present a project on how to contribute to the Coronation, and it is the following: 1) The celebration of the Catechetical Congress, on the bases proposed at the ecclesiastical conference in February last year, in which a well-defined and practical program of social action among the workers is discussed and implemented; 2) Undertake a very active campaign against Protestantism, in the manner provided by the Prelate; 3) The establishment of the

The same letter contains some historically inaccurate references, which appeared as a way to create more substantial mythology behind the figure and history of Our Lady, but also a way to whitewash and redefine some aspects of the tradition. One crucial element is the color of the image itself: "Es negrita, y la Negrita llamámosla cariñosamente, porque aunque morena, es hermosa esta predilecta hija de Jerusalén sobre todas las bellezas de la tierra"[48] (Sanabria, 217). The idea of a Black Madonna gives to Our Lady a level of exoticism that even today is charming. However, in the symbolic realm, it not only surrogates the blackness of her story but simplifies all the historical and socio-cultural components into a naïve narrative, easy for the mass' consumption.

By exoticizing the image and simplifying her history, the Church is getting into the liberal state project, which whitewashed Costa Rican history at a level that erased the contribution and participation of the Natives, the Blacks, and other mixed-race populations in the construction of the country and the national identity. The only way those marginalized and racialized groups could get into the liberal State's version of Costa Rican history was as *noble savages*. The romanticized depiction of *Blacky* or the *Little Black Woman* in such an important

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Missionary Union of the Clergy in the Archdiocese; 4) The foundation in all parishes, of the Society of Parents, which will thus have the character of diocesan work.

[48] Translation: "She is a little black, and let us call her Blacky affectionately, because although brunette, this beloved daughter of Jerusalem is beautiful above all the beauties of the earth."

effigy perfectly fits into that narrative. One of the Church's strategies concerning Our Lady and their cultural negotiation with the State was to adapt elements of the tradition to the liberal State's discourse, as full of racialized language, historical revisionism, and reinforcing class division as modern society's natural affairs.

The main event of the Coronation took place on Sunday, April 25th of 1926. However, the whole set of activities started on the 24th and continued until the 28th. The list of events included masses with specific motives, concerts, processions, rosaries, fireworks, an extraordinary pilgrimage, and banquets, among other minor activities. The Coronation was significant at a national level; the masses were canceled in the whole country during that weekend, so all the priests and as many participants could attend to Cartago's festivities.

There are numerous newspapers' chronicles about the Coronation; all of them agree that the visitors to Cartago were impressed by the city's decorations. Arches with tropical flowers and paintings of biblical stories, electric public devices, altars with depictions of the history of Our Lady, kids and teenagers dressed up as angels, cherubs, and other celestial beings. All of these elements complemented the military and civic bands, choruses, and religious groups involved in different activities to liven up the atmosphere.

Extraordinary pilgrimages were organized from different parts of the country to attend the event. We should not compare this particular pilgrimage with La Romería, the traditional pilgrimage that every year devotees of Our Lady from different parts of the country take part in. This particular pilgrimage had a different relation between the people, the icon, and the worship regarding religion's performance in the public sphere. However, the conditions and guidelines followed during this pilgrimage worked as a guide to the future Romerías, like establishing and solidifying new engagement rules. As discussed and analyzed in the next Chapter, the Romería today follows the event of 1926 in many aspects, as the new way to perform that ancient tradition. Different chronicles talk about attendance between 30,000 to 50,000 persons, depending on the source. The previous year's census said that the whole country had a little more than 500,000 inhabitants, which means the coronation event gathered around 10% of the population of Costa Rica.

The first event of the 25th was a mass of sanctification of the Imperial Crown for Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles at Cartago's Cathedral. The mass was officiated by the highest priests of the country, Mons. Rafael Otón Castro, Archbishop of San José of Costa Rica; Mons. Antonio del Carmen Monestel y Zamora, Bishop of Alajuela, and Mons. Agustín Blessing, Apostolic Vicar of Limón. Joining the high Clergy were the religious and civic authorities of Cartago and special guests, the President of the Republic Mr. Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno, with all his cabinet members. From the beginning of the activities, a trio of power structures would be

part of the whole event: the Catholic Church of Costa Rica represented in their highest authorities, the Government represented by the President himself, and Our Lady as an effigy (crowned icon). In the symbolic realm, a new cultural negotiation was taking place, with the State on one side, the Church on the other, and Our Lady as the intermediary. As witnesses, thousands of devotees attended, and thousands of citizens followed the events in the days to come.

After the mass came the first public event, an awe-inspiring performance, because of the powerful ghosting sentiment. Marvin Carlson explains that sentiment: “Very commonly at the site of pilgrimage dramatic or quasi-dramatic observances are held, memorializing the religious events associated with that site and drawing much of their power from the cultural or historical memory of the site itself” (Carlson, 136). The three high ecclesiastic authorities preceded the mass at Cartago's Cathedral, leading to the Imperial Crown (already sanctified). The route was from the Cathedral in downtown Cartago to the Basilica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in the east. They were followed by the President himself, all the cabinet members, the city's civic and religious authorities, and even the *apostolic nuncio.*[49] The procession arrived at the Basílica de Los Ángeles and entered the Church for another mass, this one in honor of Our Lady, called the mass of Coronation. Led by Cartago's religious authorities, this mass sermon was an opportunity to recap the tradition of the relation between Our Lady and Costa

[49] The *nuncio apostólico* is the Holy See's ambassador in each country; evidently, it added to the event a sense of international politics that was quite powerful.

Rican people. The sermon became the perfect opportunity to develop the new official narrative of the tradition, and several elements of historical revisionism were more than obvious. For example, the romanticized tale about the early years of the worship was created, where noble families of Cartago and all over the country selflessly sold properties and goods to make the worship grow. The new official narrative transformed a complex historical interaction into a romantic and easy to digest tale for the mass consumption, where marginalized populations were erased from the history of Our Lady.

One particular element of the aforementioned new narrative is at least interesting, not only in the sermon of the mass at the Basilica de Los Ángeles, but also in other sermons, preaching, discourses, and editorials: the Church talks about the year 1638 as the year of the *hallazgo.* As the first part of this Chapter explains, the real date was the object of inevitable controversy. The Church decided that 1638 would be the correct year in their new narrative and officialized that year as the correct one during all Coronation's festivities. Curiously, less than a decade later, they decided to change it and establish 1935 as the moment of the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the finding. The real reasons for that change are not clear at all but exemplified how a new official narrative was being created, and adjustments to a better selling of the story were part of it.

The actual moment of Coronation happened in the square outside of the Basilica. The official chronicle of the Basilica de Los Ángeles described the moment as follows:

> En media plaza se levantó una Hermosa plataforma rodeada de una gran gradería rematando en un elegante kiosko, adornado con guirnaldas y cortinajes regios. Las gradas estaban cubiertas con un gran pabellón nacional que se divisaba desde lejos. Cientos de ángeles rodeaban la gradería junto con las mujeres bíblicas: Rut, María hermana de Moisés, Débora, Rebeca, Judit y Raquel. Frente al costado este se había hecho una hermosa avenida adornada de musgo y flores, lo mismo otra al costado Oeste. Por este camino floral entró, para ser coronada, la hacían guardia de honor las altas dignidades eclesiásticas y el señor Presidente de la República. Al pie de los ángeles estaba el Clero, Cuerpo Oficial y Diplomático y Corporaciones civiles, municipales, eclesiásticas y la ola humana que se agitaba ansiosa, para ser testigo del acto más grande que Costa Rica ha presenciado.[50]

[50] Sanabria, 280. Translation: "In the middle of the square, a beautiful platform was erected, surrounded by a large grandstand, ending in an elegant kiosk, adorned with garlands and regal curtains. The stands were covered with a large national flag that could be seen from afar. Hundreds of angels surrounded the grandstand together with the biblical women: Ruth, Mary sister of Moses, Deborah, Rebecca, Judith, and Rachel. On the east side, a beautiful avenue adorned with moss and flowers had been made, and another on the west side. Through this floral path, she entered, crowned, the high ecclesiastical dignities, and the President of the Republic made her a guard of honor. At the foot of the

The level of emotions and enthusiasm in the chronicle reflects how much was at stake in those events. The Coronation of Our Lady was the moment to put the Church back on track of the power structures relations, and the level of sentimentalism between the Church and the people was significant. In "La Nueva Prensa," Mr. Roberto Tristán, a socialite chronicler of that time, described the actual moment of the Coronation:

> Marcaba nuestro reloj las 11 menos seis minutos cuando el Arzobispo colocaba sobre la plana del trono la valiosa corona simbólica… En aquel momento la apiñada muchedumbre dobló la rodilla, resonaron los acordes del Himno Nacional, ejecutado por las bandas de San José, Cartago, Heredia y Alajuela y atronadoras bombetas interrumpieron su alocada armonía por el espacio. Momentos después resonó el estruendoso aplauso por la concurrencia. Se cantó el himno oficial de la Virgen y el Arzobispo impartió la bendición Apostólica a aquellas cincuenta mil almas arrodilladas…[51]

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angels were the Clergy, Official and Diplomatic Corps and civil, municipal, ecclesiastical corporations, and the human wave agitating anxiously to witness the greatest act that Costa Rica has witnessed."

[51] Sanabria, 292. Translation: "Our clock struck six minutes to 11 when the Archbishop placed the valuable symbolic Crown on the plane of the throne… At that moment, the packed crowd bent their knee, the chords of the National Anthem resounded, played by the bands of San José, Cartago, Heredia, and Alajuela, and thunderous bombetas interrupted their crazy harmony through space. Moments later, thunderous applause rang

After the finalization of the main event of the Coronation, endless other events took place in Cartago, from banquets, concerts, and masses, to a very significant procession of the already crowned effigy to different streets of the city. This last event offered the opportunity for the popular manifestation of faith and devotion to appear. The gardens of the houses and buildings where the procession took place showed different decorations, linking the folk tradition and religious beliefs with this particular festivity.

A superficial reading of the events above brings a sense of a *mélange* of civic and religious traditions combined, European style (mirroring courts and coronations from the 19th century), and undeniable claim of the aura of the omnipresence of Our Lady in every aspect of Costa Rican history. Also, there is a strong sentimentalist staging, close to the melodramas of the late 19th century (a very popular type of entertainment in Costa Rica, at the time). However, a close reading of the different social, cultural, and political layers of these events unveils the cultural negotiation taking part and how it changed the relationship between State and Church once again.

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out from the crowd. The Virgin's official hymn was sung, and the Archbishop imparted the Apostolic blessing to those fifty thousand kneeling souls…"

In the Chapters to come, I analyze and conduct a close reading of these cultural negotiations and show how the performance traditions surrounding the worship of Our Lady contain a historical background of these negotiations. Events like the ones from 1782 or the Coronation of 1926 were powerful; even today, anybody can see their repercussions in contemporary worship. This study seeks to unveil those repercussions to understand the formation of national identity and the idea of costarricanness.

CHAPTER 2: LA ROMERIA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will analyze the community performance called *La Romería*, which is the pilgrimage that takes place during the yearly celebrations in honor of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in Cartago. People from all over the country converge in Cartago around August 2nd, having walked hours and hours (sometimes days). As was explained in the previous chapter, there are accounts of different pilgrimages that can be traced to Our Lady's worship traditions beginning in the early 17th century. However, the modern Romería was established as a performance tradition in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries as part of several *cultural negotiations* by different actors and institutions in the country's power structure.

This chapter aims to further understand this pilgrimage tradition, not in a historiographical type of analysis, but in one that combines the performance itself with the decolonial premise of praxis/theory/praxis.[52] Every time a person gets involved and decides to take part in La Romería, they are, on the one hand, participating in a public communal performance of identity. On the other hand, however, they also enact a ritual of national identity and a sense of belonging.

[52] In the introduction to their book *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh explain how Decolonial theory understands the equation praxis/theory = theory/praxis, and through the chapters of the book, they explain the different connections of that premise.

How is that possible? Moreover, why is it necessary in the 21st century to continue enacting a ritual of identity through a communal performance? These are the questions that will drive the analysis proposed in the present section. To look for a better understanding of this phenomenon and the possible answers to the questions proposed, I decided to participate in La Romería in August of 2019. Becoming part of the performance myself allows me to find elements of the performers' personal and intimate realm and the possibilities of being part of a community that enacts their identity through this type of event.

The following sections draw on participant observation as an analytical methodology and a writing style. As Davies refers to autoethnographic project results, "…the final written product of research is intertextual" (256). In this particular case, the intertextual comprises personal accounts mixed with scholarly reflection and (in particular cases) archival references. With Davies, and as demonstrated by the approach and findings that follow, I argue that meaning, identity, and community are achieved and maintained through embodied and communal performance.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the use of a *critical ethnographic* approach to the study and analysis of this particular performance tradition is not only a method of analysis but a tool to *emancipate knowledge.* Madison's concept of emancipated knowledge directly relates to Mignolo and Walsh's equation of praxis/theory/praxis and the analysis of cultural representations through the

embodied practices. As I mentioned before, following Diana Taylor's idea of the *repertoire,* these embodied traditions (and their representations' particularities) are ways to transfer knowledge. This research tries to decode the knowledge in this particular performance, following an embodied research method to understand an embodied tradition. By taking Conquergood's prerogative, "through cultural performances many people both construct and participate in 'public' life" (188), I will develop an approach that allows me to be and take part in La Romería, as a way to understand how people in Costa Rica, through their participation in the *public life,* can construct national identity.

2.2 FIRST MEMOIR

August 1st, 2019, 4:00p.m. I come out of my family's house in Sabanilla, a middle-class suburb east of San José (the capital city of Costa Rica). Before leaving the house, I look in my backpack to check for all the usual supplies: water, candies, a sandwich, two apples, whole wheat chips, some clothes (extra socks), a sweater, umbrella, a lantern, my cell phone, my notebook, and a massive amount of pens and pencils. I have the feeling that I have lost touch with these types of events. I look more like a foreigner than a local. At that moment, I recall the phrase that will accompany me during this auto-ethnographic experience: I am an insider, but I should think like an outsider. My principal objective is to create a constant alienation-effect,[53]where I can, on the one hand, be an active part of the events, while on the

[53] It is common to understand *alienation* concerning Bertold Brecht's theories, closer to his *verfremdungseffekt concept (V-effect)*. However, in this particular case, I prefer a more

other hand develop a sense of reflexive analysis[54] of specific elements experienced during the events.

I leave the house at 4:00 p.m. and start walking through small streets full of memories: old friends' houses, parks, and sports fields, the same grocery store from a long time ago. I continue walking in search of San Pedro's main street (the eastbound route of the Central Avenue that crosses San José from east to west, which at the eastern point marks the limit of the province, and connects with the "Florencio del Castillo Highway," which runs from San José to Cartago). Suddenly, I realize something: the body remembers. I know where I am heading, but I have not made any route. I just started walking, and my body remembers it. The route I am taking is an unconscious one. My body has been in these streets, passing the same parks, houses, and stores, so it has taken an automatic route.

While passing through a neighborhood called Lourdes, I see a group of people in front of me taking a detour, a route unknown to me. At that moment, I realize that the street did not exist when I was young; there is something new and different. I experience a moment of alienation since this new option is not in my memory. The

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formalist approach, closer to the definition of Shklovski, who talks about *alienation* as the "self-modification of a literary image" (Shklovski, 2), a process against automatisms in perception and analysis. Shklovski proposes an exercise of auto-examination as a way to apply different approaches to the same phenomenon. I pretend to apply a similar effort to my ethnographic analysis about a tradition I already know.

[54] In the Introduction to this Dissertation, I briefly explain how I use *Reflexive Ethnography* as a concept and a methodology for a broader understanding of it: "Reflexive Ethnography, a guide to researching selves and others" by Charlotte Aull Dulles.

body remembers, and it is so powerful that it took me on a trip of memories and paths from my youth until the Lourdes' detour. While I am experiencing all the insights, I decided to stop in a corner to write a note in my diary to come back to this moment for my field research's memoir. I am writing, and I see groups of people passing me from both sides, little groups, four persons together in one, three persons in the other, a very loud group of six or seven persons, several couples. It is evident because of their interactions that they are somehow related: families, close friends, neighbors, spouses. I am inquisitive: how conscious are they in their routing? Have they experienced the same automatic, unconscious experience I just had? In some cases, there is a leader in each group, someone who knows the route very well and is in charge of the rest.

I am sure some of these Romeros have the same experience as I have been this August morning. Alternatively, maybe they are just following other people, getting into a massive movement of bodies. At this point, there is a significant number of Romeros, and we are all looking for San Pedro's main street to join the masses that are already walking to Cartago. I do not doubt that the body remembers; what is interesting for me is: how much does the body remember? Is this just an individual set of memories? Or is it a series of traditions taught from generation to generation? What about the social body? I believe it is possible to argue the conjunction of all the individual bodies is necessary to remember something as a community, as a social body. Maybe La Romería, that physical action of walking together, somehow activates a series of shared memories in the collectivity.

The original idea of developing this research project as an auto-ethnographic one is related to the immense set of possibilities I could offer. We can call this the *insider/outsider paradox.* As an insider, meaning having been born and raised in Costa Rica, grown up as a Catholic, and previously taken part in *La Romería*, I could identify essential idiosyncratic elements belonging to this type of events generated in the participants. Simultaneously, as an outsider, a researcher trained in the United States with direct access to theories and methodologies not available in Costa Rica, I could analyze the different performance traditions as *La Romería* with a more in-depth critical perspective. I could identify larger structural elements that could be fundamental to developing such traditions, perhaps not immediately evident to the locals.

The moment of stopping in a corner in the Lourdes neighborhood to realize how my body remembered routes and paths from previous stages of my life is a clear example of how complex auto-ethnographic processes can be, how the ethnologist becomes a piece that gives sense and perspective to the whole project. As Davies explains, “reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (Davies, 4). I affect and shape this study since I am involved in the event itself. However, I am offering an understanding of the event from my own experience, as objective as it can be and as personal as the most. The *paradox of the insider/outsider* is very close to Davies’ views on reflexive ethnography. “[I]ndividual ethnographers in the field – and out of it –” she writes,

“must seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilize subjective experience and reflection on it as an intrinsic part of research” (Davies, 5).

Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles and the performance tradition of *La Romería* hold cultural and historical elements essential to understanding the Costa Rican national identity, how it was constructed through the centuries, and how it can be reshaped in the future. Those social and cultural constructions happened through the performance of *La Romería*. To walk together as a social group is a performance of identity, and, through the decades of repetition, different elements of national identity were consolidated, scrapped, or re-defined. I decided to perform with the millions of people who participate in the pilgrimage each year, which allows me to understand *La Romería* and its connections to Costa Rican national identity through reflexivity.

When I mention in the memoir that *the body remembers*, it is not only insight but an open question at the same time. After the moment of recognition, I remember looking in the faces of people passing next to me, trying to discover in their eyes if their bodies also remember. Nevertheless, the real questions here are other. First, it is more important to understand *how* the bodies remember; and whether there is a collective memory, which would allow us to remember as a whole, as a group, as a community. As a community, the idea of the body is in direct relationship with Diana Taylor's *repertoire,* that embodied memory

contained as nonreproducible knowledge. Costa Ricans walk every year to Cartago because their parents did it, as did the parents of their parents, and so on since centuries ago. However, we also walk to Cartago because it was there where everything started: the idea of Costa Rica, of a country, and a particular identity, was rooted in that small colonial town. It expanded through all the territory and evolved from a basic understanding of their world to complex socio-cultural inter-relations. "The repertoire," Taylor writes, "requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission." (20). The critical element here is what Taylor calls *transmission.* To walk to Cartago every year is the search for the core of the national identity. By performing *La Romería,* Costa Ricans as a collective contract their perception to the smallest cultural unity, that proto-colonial moment of the contact and interaction between Europeans, Natives, Africans, and others, to later expand that perception to the complexities of contemporary society. In that (cultural) movement, we can reinforce, reshape, and create national identity elements.

To become a *Romero* is to engage in a particular type of performance, one that certifies a sense of belonging to the particular national identity of Costa Rica. It could be argued that there is little self-recognition of the engagement in many cases, that the meaning of the performance works more in the unconscious world of the people and the community. Nevertheless, at the same time, walking is a way to perform national identity. The different levels of relations and meanings

involved in this performance are what I call *cultural negotiations.* In the particular case of *La Romería,* to walk is a way to reaffirm a historical and cultural background that at a certain point is similar to all the Costa Ricans. By being part of *La Romería,* Costa Ricans can adhere their names to the country's genealogy and national identity. *La Romería* is just the cultural landscape that allows that process to take place. It is a tradition that works as a *vessel* where the adherences and changes to the concept of *costarricanness* (cultural negotiations) can happen through the performance.

2.3 SECOND MEMOIR

4:35p.m. I am just a few blocks from San Pedro main street, but I can see it at a distance. It is clear how different groups of people from different routes form a conflux leading into the main street. The authorities released information in the last few days about the recommended routes for La Romería. These are the main streets that police officers have closed to traffic and offer their vigilance to avoid incidents. There are also many Red-Cross Points in the recommended routes, where paramedics, ambulances, and nurses are ready to attend to any health issue. At 4:40p.m. I arrive at San Pedro's main street, just at the border between San Pedro and Curridabat, the two biggest suburbs, east of San José. I head to the east, through Curridabat. It is impossible to ignore that Curridabat is an Indian name, a pre-Columbian natives' town. In the early-colony, it became an important settlement of the new Spanish administration. The colonial village of Curridabat was relatively close to Cartago, and some of the few early recorded pilgrimages to Our Lady's

shrine (17th century), were from the inhabitants of this land. I walk through a typical wealthy suburb, full of condominium buildings, fancy restaurants, and very pricy stores. Nevertheless, the first pilgrims used this same route more than three hundred and fifty years ago.

There is a significant amount of people walking to the east. However, the last time I participated in La Romería (more than twenty years ago), I remember passing this point later in the day (around 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m.), and the crowd in my memory was more prominent than this one. I saw in the news that the authorities expect a more significant confluence of people after 8:00 p.m., so the early evening will probably be the "rush hour" of the event. The main street is already marked with signs of information for the Romeros. The street is half-closed: there are only two lanes available for cars and buses, and the rest is for the people walking. I can recognize that we are all wearing a uniform type: men in denim pants or sports shorts, t-shirts and basic sweaters; women in leggings or sport-lycra pants, long-sleeve blouses; and everyone is in tennis shoes. Almost everyone carries a backpack, and there are a lot of sunglasses and sports caps.

Some groups of joggers capture my attention. They are wearing professional runner's attire, walking very fast, and, in some cases, even running. Since running has become a trendy hobby in Costa Rica in the last decade, I suppose it is entirely normal to have a strong representation of runners in La Romería. This little detail makes me think about representation and identity. Upon seeing the third group of

joggers, I recognize some particularities in each group of Romeros. It is evident that they walk together for particular reasons; there is a type of kinship that unifies them. In some cases, that relation is personal, anonymous, and belongs to their private sphere. However, in some other cases, the relation is public and shows an apparent reference, something close to performance of identity. Beyond the joggers, for instance, I pass two very similar groups representing private catholic educational institutions. They are all wearing a sports sweater with the name and the emblem of each Institution. One group develops a fascinating interaction; while one member shouts some phrases, the rest shout a chorus-style response. I cannot understand what they are saying, but it sounds like "Santa María," which is very close to the Institution's name; maybe they want to clarify who they are and where they belong. It is a type of "here we are, present!"

I can also recognize groups with the name of big companies in their attire. One group consists of perhaps two dozen persons with caps displaying the logo of an important auto dealer, the other around ten persons in dress shirts with the name of a big supermarket chain in their pocket. It is clear they are co-workers, and they are proud to belong to those companies and share with-in the companies their devotion to Our Lady.

It is around 5:30 p.m., and I have been walking for fifteen or twenty minutes next to a very particular group. They all have a t-shirt with a surname printed on the back: Salazar, the same as me! It is quite funny because they all look like each other. When

I first saw them, I came very close to see if they were my relatives—maybe some of my uncles or cousins could be in that group, but that was not the case. Salazar is such a common surname in Costa Rica that it is normal for me not to be related to them, or maybe we are just distant family. I decide to walk next to them for a while. They do not know I am a Salazar. Since I decided to make La Romería by myself to focus on my ethnologist's activities, they are the closest experience to a sense of kinship I would have in this year's pilgrimage. I cannot avoid thinking La Romería is a way to perform identity. People can choose which aspect of their identity becomes public: their family life, their professional life, among others. At a certain point, this event works as a display of each one's public persona through a performance of identity.

It is close to 6:00 p.m., and I finally encounter a particular type of group that I have been looking for: a parish group. They are all together, very close to one another. Most of their clothing is white, I am not sure if that is on purpose or not, but while the sunlight is almost gone, this detail highlights them from the rest. Besides their clothes, two very particular elements capture my attention: they have an emblem carried by a member marching at the front of the group, and they are praying altogether. They are praying the rosary in low volume. It is like a whisper, but because they are so many (around thirty persons), the sounds create a hypnotic effect in all of us walking alongside them. It is like an instant coordinated effect: each time other people become aware of the parish's group presence and their prayer, they stop talking or decide to talk in lower volume. We are all showing respect to

this group and their devotion. The above case is a learned behavior, knowing how deep the Catholic beliefs and behaviors are rooted in Costa Rican society.

I try to read the emblem, but it is not that easy. I can recognize the word "Parroquia" (Parish), and something after that: "Santa María" or "Santa Marta." Santa Marta is a little parish very close to my family's house in Sabanilla, but Santa María could refer to many parishes in Costa Rica. I decide to let the issue of the exact name of this group go. I have been shadowing them for a while, and it is evident for some of them. They look at me with concern. The last time I made La Romería, I remember so many of these types of parish groups. It is probably the case that Costa Rican society has diversified their way to perform their identity at La Romería. It is not only through their parish or religious group, but through other elements of their life, like their workplace, professional affiliations, or other elements.

Previously in this chapter, I talked about *La Romería* as a way to perform a history and re-enact the formation of the national identity, which allows the possibility to confirm and solidify costarricanness and to modify or reshape elements of that identity. I want to analyze this idea more in-depth: the possibility of small changes that make the tradition evolve is what allowed Costa Rican national identity to preserve core values that unify different people from different backgrounds, races, classes, and even historical moments. Simultaneously, the preservation of these core values in turn allowed Costa Rican society to adjust itself to the changes it had faced through the centuries. Since there are no

historical materials that support any theory of how those cultural negotiations took place in previous historical stages, understanding how it works today can enlighten how the cultural process worked in previous years.

How does this performance of identity work today? La Romería works via what Joseph Roach calls *genealogies of performance*: "the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations" (25). In this particular case, however, there are two different elements to analyze. First of all, there is *the core,* which is rigid, collective, and looks for the transmission of those traditional cultural practices through a collective representation. Second, the *particularities* are more fluid and individual (or which pertain to a small collective), which comprise the elements of each person's way to enact the performance that is La Romería*.* Both elements contribute to the national identity, one firmly rooted in history and tradition, the other based on the *spirit of the times* and the necessities that different populations publicly display in their performance of identity. Given all this, it could seem like national identity, and costarricanness are the same thing, the same idea. This is not, however, the case. Suppose national identity is the abstract concept that unifies and belongs to the people of Costa Rica. Costarricanness, then, is the particular way of creating an identity through performances that allow minorities, fringe groups, and radical thinking to belong, and at the same time to affect the concepts of national identity.

Participants in La Romería want to show particular elements of their identity or elements that better *identify* them. In other words, specific details from their own lives clearly show who they are or what makes them proud. Take, for instance, the countless number of couples wearing identical outfits during the pilgrimage, just by themselves, holding hands. It is a straightforward way to show in public the relevance of their coupling, their relationship, and how that union is an essential element of their lives, and how each person is significant to the other. The co-workers who proudly showed a cap or a shirt with their company's logo and name portray themselves as successful workers from recognized organizations. By participating in little groups, they also show the camaraderie and team spirit from their workplace. Students from Catholic schools want to show their commitment to their Christian values and duties with important liturgical festivities. They show themselves as proud Catholic young citizens by wearing their school's sports jacket and carrying their emblem. It was clear the level of commitment carried in terms of values or public and private actions for the rest of us.

All those small groups form micro performances of identity. For some of them, this takes place just through wearing specific attire or couples walking and holding hands solely with one's significant other. For others, it can be even more precise by singing or praying during the walking. All these small features create a display of different elements of the national identity today. At the *core,* we walk to Cartago, like our parents, our parents' parents, and ancestors who solidified our identity through the centuries. In their *particularities,* different small groups want to

show who they are today this year. The fact that the *particularities* are so fluid makes it possible that they will show a different aspect of their identity next year, whether it simply becomes relevant or because it reflects an essential shift of that personal identity. The richness of all this is that in five years, and ten, or later in twenty, the same religious tradition (La Romería*)* will show very different ways to engage and identify themselves for Costa Ricans.

There is another way to see how the *core* and the *particularities* work as a symbiotic mechanism that creates La Romería. Perhaps the most rigid element of the genealogies of this performance is the route. The idea of walking from the highly populated cities of the west, north, and south of the Central Valley to the colonial capital at the east can be traced to Our Lady's early worship. The route is actually on the foundations of some colonial routes, crossing the same towns (and the same points) as a colonial pilgrimage. There is, however, an element that solidifies the *core* of the tradition, which is the government. The public display of security and health institutions creates the *official route* to recommend the pilgrims to walk. There are two elements that *the official route* is based on tradition and security. The government guarantees that pilgrims can experience an intimate journey to the colonial time's routes following that route. Also, the government guarantees the safest way to make the pilgrimage since the route will have a full display of police agencies, paramedics, food displayers, and other benefits for the *Romeros.* The government becomes the *guardian* of the *core*

tradition by creating the *official route* of La Romería, one that is linked to colonial times.

If the government is one of the elements that solidify the *core* of these religious performance traditions, a contemporary example of the *particularities* is the joggers. During the first two decades of the 21st century, jogging has become one of the most popular hobbies in Costa Rica. Every weekend thousands of amateur runners engage in training, amateur competitions, and social activities related to *running clubs.* La Romería is full of small runners' groups, wearing unique outfits and showing their running clubs' names. The last point is a clear example of how this particular contemporary activity allows several people to develop their identity performance. As I mentioned in a previous extract of the event's memoir, during my last Romería in the late 1990s, I interacted with several parish groups proudly portraying their belonging to that particular community. At the same time, I cannot recall seeing a single group of runners. By 2019, I was able to see just one parish's group*,* while the number of runners congregated in different groups was merely massive. The *particularities* reflect how Costa Ricans from different historical moments engage themselves through identity performances in the tradition's core.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I explained how the early pilgrimage tradition was established to allow people from different parts of the country to engage in communal activities, where economic, religious, political, and leisure

interactions took place. The few archival recounts from the late 17th century and the early 18th-century mention how inhabitants from different towns organized themselves in caravans from each location to make the trip to Cartago. In those years of the early colony, people developed their identity concerning their community. While the *core* of the tradition in those years was Catholic festivities themselves, the way people showed their identity (what today we can call the *particularities)* was as community members. In colonial Costa Rica, those communities were the small Spanish settlements, each with a strong sense of independence and self-determination and sharing only minimal relations between them.

2.4 THIRD MEMOIR

7:00p.m. I just passed Tres Ríos, which is the first town on this side of Cartago province. Tres Ríos is an early 18th-century Spanish settlement in the land where, before colonization, the Huetar people (Natives from the Central Valley of Costa Rica) had different settlements. Tres Ríos main street is a continuation of San Pedro's main street, crossing through the town from east to west. It was part of the old colonial road that connected the two main cities of the period, Cartago and San José, the old and the new capital.[55] This route in the west to east's route La Romería takes is uphill, which at certain moments gets hard.

[55] Cartago holds the title of capital of the province of Costa Rica throughout all of the colonial period. In 1823, less than two years after the independence, as a consequence of short civil unrest, the capital moved to the side of the winners of the conflict, which was the city of San José.

I arrive at Tres Ríos after 6:00 p.m.; it is already dark and getting a little cold. In addition to the public lighting and some extra lighting devices that mark a Red Cross point or Police Department point, there is a lot of light and noise. A massive number of tents line both sides of the road, like that of 'Mar Viva,' (an N.G.O. that protects water sources), with a significant number of volunteers. Different radio stations are broadcasting live the event of La Romería, unapologetically playing dancing hits at a very high volume. There are fruit stands selling bananas, oranges, and apples, and footwear stores selling last-minute tennis shoes for people who suffered accidents with their equipment. Artisans are selling hand-made earing, rings, neckless, and bracelets. Protestant congregations preach against the event, with thunderous and dramatic performances. It is altogether an open-air public market. For a moment, I remember that passage from the gospel when Jesus kicked the merchants out of the Temple. However, it immediately comes to me that this pilgrimage has been a religious event with a secular development since the very beginning.

Before leaving downtown Tres Ríos, a very particular detail reminds me of La Romería's rules of engagement for Costa Ricans today. It is a little stand on the left side of the road with a poster that says, "Musulmanes de Costa Rica saludan a los Romeros en su Fiesta Nacional" (Muslims from Costa Rica salute the pilgrims in their national celebration). The idea of inter-religious relations using La Romería as a place (cultural landscape) to develop that relation blows my mind. It explicitly brings into relief the cultural negotiations and cultural landscape ideas I have been discussing.

For many people, passing through a group of Muslims (which in Costa Rica are an almost insignificant percentage of the population), who are giving water and fruits for free to everyone, could be inconsequential. Nevertheless, I find it a clear example of the sense of belonging and closeness to the national identity that La Romería can create. It is a way Costa Rican Muslims can feel themselves part of a national identity performance as La Romería; at the same time, there is an unequivocal call for inter-religious tolerance.

Suddenly, I am out of Tres Ríos, on the closed for traffic "Florencio del Castillo Highway," walking uphill through Ochomogo Hills. These hills are quite crucial in the history of the country. They were the natural border between the former capital Cartago and the less developed west section of the Central Valley during the time of the colony. Two years after the independence, these hills were the battlefield of a war that defined how Costa Rica would manage itself as an independent nation, resulting in its first constitution and the shift of the capital from Cartago to San José. During the Civil War (1948), Ochomogo was a strategic point for the control and later invasion of the Central Valley and the taking of the capital. It was in a secret location somewhere in those hills where the Civil War ended, in an agreement between the Liberation Army, the Communist Militias, and the Catholic Church.

The environment changes drastically; there is almost no light, no houses in the surrounding landscape, nothing to distract Los Romeros*. People talk less; the walk uphill is not easy; it is physically quite demanding. Here we are, thousands of Costa*

Ricans that walk together, passing through Ochomogo. This moment feels like a massive communal meditation, a meditation regarding my country's history and national identity. The body remembers. We are not just walking, but we walk the same steps our ancestors walked for generations, almost four centuries ago. The body remembers, but can our body remember something older than ourselves? That idea is so powerful that it makes me cry. I am weeping in silence, in the dark, walking the same steps as my ancestors, surrounded by my fellow Costa Ricans. I have a revelation: this is how we Costa Ricans build our country and our national identity—by walking.

8:00p.m. I am walking down the east side of the Ochomogo Hills. It is still dark, but the eastern part of the Central Valley is clear in front of me. There is a bright shining moon that allows me to see the Irazú Volcano's contour to my left side. It looks towering next to the city of Cartago, the lights of which I can see in front of me. This part is the last section of my Romería, I am exhausted, and there is only one thing in my mind: to arrive in Cartago as soon as possible.

While I am getting ready for the last part of the walk, I notice a group of people who come singing together. In front of the group is a tall young man playing the guitar (while he is walking), and behind him a group of around twenty young men and women singing preaching songs. This group is probably a "pastoral," a particular group within a parish, with specific interests in common. They look like a "Pastoral Juvenil" (youth's pastoral) since they all look in their late teens or early twenties. Only

young people have the faith and the courage to perform songs while executing as physically demanding an event as La Romería. A few minutes later, I see a flag next to me; it is Nicaragua's flag. Since the early colonial period, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, neighbor countries, have been linked with historical, economic, political, and cultural ties. The struggles and encounters of all types are the common denominators in our history together. Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles has linked the historical relations between the two nations. Today, Nicaraguan immigrants represent more than ten percent of the total Costa Rican population, which means that the relations between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans are a source of constant tension and interesting interchanges.

I can see a different type of sense of belonging here, closer to the one the group of Muslims in the streets of Tres Ríos was portraying. As with the Muslims, there is a use of Our Lady's figure and the tradition of La Romería among the Nicaraguans to insert themselves or feel that they are part of the country's idiosyncrasy. La Romería as a performance, and themselves as Romeros/performers, can easily engage with Costa Rican idiosyncrasy more safely by respectfully taking part in this particular performance of national identity. They are enacting a performance of belonging by taking part in La Romería with a Nicaraguan flag, claiming a place in Costa Rican society, getting into the cultural negotiation to become a piece of costarricanness.

8:10p.m. The hills are over, and finally, behind me, I am getting into Taras, a small town next to Cartago. It is the final leg of the pilgrimage, and suddenly the landscape

changes radically. Just after the highway, Romeros from different sides converge in the small streets of Taras; we walk on the actual street because of the endless food stands to take the sidewalks. Taras is full of lights, noise, colors, but especially smells. I recognize the smells from the traditional stands at regional communal festivities, what we call in Costa Rica turnos: arroz cantonés, chop suey, churros, algodón de azúcar, prestiños, pupusas, olla de carne, and tamales. I cannot explain the variety of smells, and the sensations those smells provoke in me. However, in my fellow Romeros, everybody slows down their walk as a reflection of the food stands, and we are all enjoying that moment.

Nevertheless, the food experience is not all pleasant; for me, it is too much. There are not only food stands, but people selling clothes, crafts, toys, electronics. There is loud music coming out of almost every stand, amplifiers with each business's offers, people offering to rent out portable toilettes. This moment is even worse than the experience in Tres Ríos, not only because the market environment is more concentrated in a smaller space, but because a lot of the Romeros decide to stop and buy food, or check out the clothes and other products, or get in line to rent a toilette. The crowd is not moving even in the same direction; people are repeatedly colliding with each other. There is a feeling of a sense of stress in the environment.

After around 15 minutes, I find myself walking through downtown Cartago. The crowd coming from the west branches into the different streets of the old colonial city. There is still a sense of the market, but different. There are no stands but

windows and doors. Residents of the city open their houses to sell products to the pilgrims. They just sell water, juice, candies, cookies, or sandwiches. Some others are renting their houses' restrooms. Some people decide to take chairs out of their home, put them on the sidewalk, and stand on them to see the Romeros crossing in front of them. I remember that I have been looking for a way to explain and justify La Romería as a performance, but it is too obvious. The walkers are the performers; the locals are the audience; they enjoy looking at us while we are performing the national identity. I realize there are also many altars in the front of the houses, Our Lady's images, mixed with angels, other saints, flowers, and lights. It is like a public exhibition of dioramas. The locals are also displaying their concept of faith and national identity with their altars, and we, the walkers, take the role of the audience, appreciating their creations. Each altar has a theme about our Lady's tradition's early years, some based on different historical moments of the country, some concerning legends and traditional tales. However, all of them have something in common: a claim of Cartago as the main element of those traditions, legends, and historical reconstructions. Their message is clear. The country's history, identity, and birth directly relate to this city and its inhabitants.

This last section of the pilgrimage reveals how *La Romería* works as a *cultural landscape,* where *cultural negotiations* can occur. In the previous chapter, I mentioned how this pilgrimage, as almost all the traditions surrounded the worship to Our Lady, were adaptations of old Spanish Catholic traditions. Pilgrimages can be traced to the Medieval tradition. An example is *El Camino de*

Santiago (The Road of Saint James), a pilgrimage that follows a medieval route that crosses the north of Spain.[56] El Camino concludes in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, where Saint James' tomb is located. *El Camino de Santiago* can be traced to the 9th century. It was a reference for different pilgrimage traditions developed in the Americas during the early colony, like the one in Cartago.

La Romería works as a *cultural landscape* since it takes the medieval pilgrimages' structure and adapts that structure to the conditions of the place, the society, and the people involved in the new tradition. This structure had several changes over the centuries of tradition. As the previous chapter explains, it was successfully reframed during the period between 1924 and 1935 by reinforcing colonial customs on the one side and reformulating new ways of practicing and engaging the people involved on the other. La Romería is a very successful *cultural landscape* since it has a straightforward structure that is easy to follow. It only requires a primary activity: to walk in a specific direction. However, at the same time, simplicity allows a series of very rich and (sometimes) very complex *cultural negotiations*. In the paragraphs above, I explained how one of those *cultural negotiations* works, with the identity that each person can do individually or in small groups. By applying *the core* and the *particularities,* different identity performances can reshape the concept of national identity. In the following

[56] For further reading about this particular tradition: *The way of Saint James* by Georgiana Goddard King (2008).

paragraphs, I would like to explain another phenomenon during *La Romería*, and that also works as a *cultural negotiation*: the sense of belonging.

I briefly mentioned in a section of the memoir of my ethnographic experience of La Romería that we Costa Ricans create our identity by walking, which became a compelling insight at that moment. Initially, this might strike one as silly since it is too simple. However, different cultural and historical processes collide in walking to create a national identity. Costa Rica is a country with no army, no critical history of unrest or military conflicts (internally or externally). Most of our traditions are based not on big public displays but on private or communal events with our family or neighbors. However, there is something that Costa Ricans have always done, to walk to Cartago every year. La Romería is by far the most prominent public event in the country and contains different meanings in walking. Since we do not have military celebrations to honor our heroes, or fatuous parades to show political power, or ancient enactments to deploy traditions and history, we use La Romería as a way to contain all those feelings. By walking to Cartago, Costa Ricans honor their modern heroes and the country's achievements; the act of walking as a thankful act involves personal and communal feelings of pride, sorrow, hope, and pain, among others.

Since what happens in La Romería is so powerful at a personal and communal level, it is evident that the act of walking could also work as the locus of the sense of belonging. During the walkthrough of Tres Ríos, I found two different non-

Catholic religious groups deeply involved in La Romería. One was a stand of volunteers with a sign that identified them as *Muslims of Costa Rica*. The other was a group of different protestant congregations, all together in a type of stage, where they spoke against the act of walking to Cartago itself. Both groups are performing their sense of belonging by showing their necessity to adhere (somehow) to the tradition of La Romería. Just by being there, present in the route's physical space, referring directly to the people walking. They acknowledge *La Romería* is a vital performance tradition where costarricanness takes place and the need to belong to the national identity (traditionally rooted in Catholic representations) from a non-Catholic perspective.

The first group, calling themselves *Muslims of Costa Rica,* is very fringe in Costa Rica's civil society. The official census of 2011 does not mention a significant presence of Muslims in Costa Rica. However, the *Centro Cultural Musulmán (*Muslim Cultural Center) holds about a thousand persons in the country's entire Muslim community. There are only two mosques in the country: *La Mezquita Omar (Sunni)* the adjunct institution of which is the *Centro Cultural Musulmán*[57]*;* and La Mezquita Luz y Fe (Shiite), associated with the Centro Cultural Sahar.[58] It is quite interesting how such a small religious group decided to get involved in La Romería. Their message was quite clear, with a little stand offering free water and fruits and a sign respectfully honoring the people walking

[57] www.mezquitaomar.com
[58] www.saharcultural.blogspot.com

and the tradition itself. They could not walk and get involved in the performance tradition in that way—to do so could be in conflict with their religious beliefs—but they decide nevertheless to engage in this particular event, creating a *cultural negotiation.*

The peaceful and respectful engagement of the Muslims in *La Romería* is a claim to belong to the national identity, to be considered part of a sense of costarricanness. Instead of isolating themselves, this little religious group comes to the public display of national identity to include their community in Costa Rica's discourse. There is a necessity to belong to the country and be accepted in their differences, and they recognize La Romería is the ideal space in which to negotiate this belonging and acceptance. They found their particular way of engaging and creating an inter-religious dialectic, not from a high leadership perspective, but a popular interchange of sympathies.

At a certain point, the Muslims of Costa Rica engage in the public discourse as civil society members, which gives La Romería the possibility to negotiate secular and religious interchanges. This relation is evident as well in the case of the family with the Nicaraguan flag. It appears that they share the same religious values as the majority of Costa Ricans participating in the event. However, with the flag, they include a secular element in the public discourse, one that is in direct relation with the sense of belonging. Their flag is a symbol of immigration, racial disparities, political and economic tensions, among other historical elements, but

in the end is a reference to contemporary multicultural society, like Costa Rican in the 21st century. The discourse is not related to religious engagement but the civil one. As Charles Taylor writes: "We think secularism has to do with the relation of the state and religion; whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity" (Taylor, in Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, 36). The possibility of that family made La Romería with their Nicaraguan flag is an example of how secular (and multicultural) identities can be negotiated through the public performance during La Romería, what I called before a *sense of belonging.* This is an example of how religion works in the public sphere today, where the negotiations involve religious matters and secular ones.

A more complex *cultural negotiation* occurs with the involvement of the protestant groups engaging with *La Romería.* It was evident in the previous paragraphs how the pilgrimage could work as a *cultural landscape* and how different small groups (from a family to a small community) could perform their identity and negotiate their sense of belonging. In the case of the protestant groups, a more in-depth *cultural negotiation* is taking place. With regard to their agency and possibilities, they have a stage, a sound system, a type of set, and live broadcast via radio and television (and probably other streaming options). They are loud and visually disruptive, and it is on purpose. It is like a *tour-de-force* in which they want to display and engage in a power relation.

Interestingly, there is no reference to the name of a specific church or a congregation with this group, only the generic name *protestant, evangelical alliance, of holders of the true word.* This designation also appears as a part of a strategy, since, as it suggests a conglomerate of different protestant congregations, they look more prominent and cohesive. If they participate as individual churches, they would perhaps be limited to engaging only in small negotiations (like the Muslim group).

In the last decades, protestant groups in Costa Rica have been growing, not only in followers but also in agency. Today, they are powerful groups within the religious spectrum of the country[59], but also of civil society, with their own media companies, private schools, universities, and some investments in other sectors of the economy.[60] Their presence in La Romería is not only from the religious perspective (which will be just a little disrespectful) but as an active member of the civil society, with enough power and agency to develop a complex *cultural negotiation.* In Charles Taylor's words: "To form a state, in the democratic era, a society is forced to undertake the difficult and never-to-be-completed task of defining its collective identity" (Taylor in Mendieta & Vanantwerpen, 45). This

[59] A clear example is the "Federación Alianza Evangélica Costarricense" (https://www.alianzaevangelica.org).

[60] Examples of this claim can be: Enlace TBN Canal 23 (evangelical TV channel), Vision America Canal 31 (evangelical TV channel), Faro del Caribe (Protestant Radio Network), Universidad Evangélica de las Américas (University), Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana (University), Monterrey School (evangelical private school), Methodist School (private school), or Distribuidora Cristiana Shalom (department store).

quote aptly describes how in that never-to-be-completed task of consolidating a modern state, the Catholic Church, the State, and (now) Protestant groups are engaging in a *cultural negotiation* that is actively re-shaping Costa Rican society today. The presence of these protestant groups in La Romería offers an insight into the consolidation of two ideas: on the one side that the event is (probably) the ultimate *cultural landscape* of the country, and, on the other, that secular narratives from the civil society also take an essential role in this pilgrimage. Those ideas consolidate *La Romería* as a contemporary example of what Eduardo Mendieta calls "religion in the public sphere" (Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, 2).

Another important reference in the memoir was the encounter with a family of Nicaraguan Romeros. They were very publicly deploying their identity by charging the entire road with a flag of their country. The inter-relations between Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans go beyond the scope of this dissertation, since they intersect the social, racial, ethnic, economic, cultural, and historic relations between the inhabitants of both countries. However, the presence of several Nicaraguans on the one hand reinforces the function of this event as a way to create a sense of belonging in the Costa Rican society, while on the other hand reflects how deep and complex the cultural negotiations can be.

Just to exemplify the complexities of this situation: in recent years, the relations between Costa Rica and Nicaragua have existed in a state of "tense calm." Since the 1980s with the Sandinista Revolution, things have gotten even

more complicated: on the one side was the political factor, with the U.S. Government coaxing Costa Rica to reject any direct relationship with the Communist Government of the Sandinistas; on the other hand was the social and economic factor, with the emigration of thousands of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica in the 1980s and 1990s, first fleeing political repression, and, later, economic struggle. In certain spheres of Costa Rican society, like in conservative and elitist social groups, as well as in populist political organizations, Nicaraguan immigrants are seen as "dirty, anti-social, dangerous, and racially different." However, a more expanded vision of those groups is that they are taking away the jobs from Costa Ricans and adding enormous pressure to the public health system.

American readers can find a parallel between the ways in which some Costa Ricans envision Nicaraguan immigrants and how some conservative groups in the U.S. envision Mexican immigrants, which I believe have several similarities. Curiously, the worship of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles is one of the few moments and spaces where radical groups of Costa Ricans, usually opposed to Nicaraguan immigrants, accept and share with them in a more egalitarian relationship. This last point explains why Nicaraguans can easily adhere themselves into the national identity through a sense of belonging that takes place during Our Lady's festivities. A key aspect in understanding the differences between the Nicaraguans' "insertion" and the attempts of other groups (i.e., those of the Muslims or the Protestants) probably lies in this particular detail.

2.5 FOURTH MEMOIR

8:35 p.m. I know I am very close to the finale. I turn around a corner, and there it is, the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, the national shrine. I cross the street, and I am in the Square in front of the Basilica. The crowd is immense, and it is almost impossible to walk. I am just moving forward to get close to the Basilica to see if I can get in. The Church is illuminated with blue, purple, and yellow lights, which makes it look beautiful. The ambiance is different in the Square; there is a massive amount of people, all congregated, very close to each other. There are noises, talking, laughter, lights, and even some music from venues close to the Basilica, but something is entirely different from San Pedro, Tres Ríos, Ochomogo, or Taras. The attitude of everyone is respectful, and people are getting into a more meditative mood. I can observe how many people silently cry. Others are praying. Many like me are filming with their cell phones but in complete silence. Finally, I have found the signs that explain the protocol for the people who want to get inside the Basilica.

There are very long lines to get into the Basilica. The lines of people move like gigantic serpents all around the Square. At this point, I can recognize a very complex protocol, with hundreds of volunteers wearing blue shirts and an orange vest that says, "Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, 2 de Agosto de 2019." The volunteers help the people get in line, move as fast as possible, or answer any question. Everything is quite organized, and we are moving very fast, considering the number of people congregated. Finally, the line takes me to the front of the Basilica, where I can take one of two options. The first involves getting in the middle

of the church nave, where I would proceed to the altar on my knees. The second involves getting into a lateral nave, where I would walk close to the altar. I decide to take the first option, which is the one more people are taking. The tradition says believers should get on their knees after the pilgrimage as a sign of submission and respect to Our Lady and pray. I never experienced that act of submission by myself. I have, however, seen many people doing it, and it is a powerful performance. I decide to get into it and experience the kneeling path to the altar, like most of my fellow Romeros (see Figure 3).

It is around 9:20 p.m. when I can get into the Basilica; I get into the building and am struck with the brightest light inside. While I am trying to accustom my eyes, somebody tells me that it is my turn. I get on my knees and move forward. I can see next to me a family quite large in number, with people of different ages, one next to the other, including two senior persons in their late seventies or even in their eighties. This continues through different ages, down to the youngest, a boy of around ten years old. It is remarkable the level of commitment between them. I am moving next to them, and I can feel the energy they project, all together, praying, helping each other, holding hands. Their engagement in the tradition's representation is a clear message of their catholic values and a way of life they want to project. Their performance in a public display at the Basilica is quite engaging, and it captures people's attention next to them.

At that moment, I feel that I cannot anymore; my physical exhaustion is too much. I have just made like one-third of the way between the entrance and the altar, but my body says it is enough. The fact that I am moving on my knees makes everything worse. I freeze in the middle of the nave, and one of the volunteers tells me something like: "It is fine if you cannot continue. Come to the side and take a rest." I want to continue and have the whole experience, and the altar is just sixty or seventy feet away. However, I decided that the volunteers know better than me. They can probably recognize that I am exhausted and that somebody in that condition after the whole pilgrimage can collapse at any time. The volunteer helps me stand up and moves me to the lateral line, where the people can walk between the entrance and the altar. A rail divides the two spaces, with chairs next to the rail. The volunteer offers me to sit for a while. I accept. While I am sitting there, I feel some shame about what just happened. This episode is a climactic moment, and even though my experience is very anti-climactic, I can still see the reactions of the other Romeros.

I get as close as I can to the altar, which looks impressive. Thousands of flowers decorate the golden structure. Giant candles called cirios[61] give a ceremonious mood to the main stage of the Basilica. On top, the Imperial Crown and the Gold structure hold the little statue of Our Lady's icon. Unique lighting spots allocated to different parts of the Basilica give the effigy a look of holiness; from a distance, it is

[61] "Cirios" are the traditional candles used in Church's festivities; they are around three feet tall and four to five inches wide.

almost like the effigy is floating between the gold, jewels, candles, and flowers that surround it. This site is the end of La Romería, the place promising contact with the holiness when the moment of transcendence takes place, and it is worth it. The Square's experience, the path inside the Basilica, the sounds of thousands of persons praying, crying, and laughing inside the building, the magic the altar portrays. To experience the end of La Romería inside the Basilica solidifies something; it makes a strong link between the pilgrims, the Church, the effigy, the history of Our Lady, the country, and its concept of costarricanness.

I can walk freely inside the Basilica; it is fascinating to notice the significant number of families in this particular performance, like the one next to me when I arrived. They are extended family units,[62] almost all of them with at least three generations together, which explains how we Costa Ricans understand the concept of family: closer to a general concept of kinship than the modern nuclear family. Some people are sick, and they make it clear when they access the Basilica. I see a woman with a kind of turban, who once inside the building decides to remove it and show her hair-less head; when she passes (on her knees) close to me, I can notice there are a few small hair strands in her scalp, it is quite apparent she is suffering some cancer. It is quite obvious why she is coming to Romería. She has a couple of young men

[62] The idea of family in Costa Rica as a general conception is closer to what in the U.S. is called "extended family" since it includes relatives in three degrees of the confraternity. A family unit always includes parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and in-laws. It is also widespread that the in-laws work as a link between two families, creating particular branches that are not related by any blood filiation.

helping her, one on each side holding her arms and pushing her to continue. The whole image is too emotional and intense. A few minutes later, a disabled man is also crossing the central nave on his knees. It is evident that he has a movement or coordination problem; he is making a real effort to move forward on his knees. Behind him, a group of three persons vigilantly attends his labor. There is a decisive necessity of many of the Romeros to make a public display of their motivations. They show their personal affairs and perform a public persona that shows a particular (and in some cases appealing) element of their lives. I feel terrible, but at the same time, very curious. How is it possible that a middle-aged woman with cancer or a disabled man struggling with coordination is capable of crossing the Basilica to the altar on their knees, and I could not? I cannot understand or have access to this experience. Even if I do consider myself an insider because I am a Costa Rican, my role and motivation as an outsider/ethnologist is, at a certain point, an obstacle to wholly understanding what is happening here.

Before I leave the Basilica, I try to speak with some people about their experience. Nobody, however, wants to talk; people are in a different mood inside the Basilica; some of them are actually in a type of ecstasy, while others appear more in a meditative state. It is difficult for me, too, because I understand what they are feeling; all of this experience puts you in an introspective stage; you do not want to talk, you do not want to think about what to do next, and you want to be on your own. I decide to follow the masses of Romeros and leave the Basilica on the right side to continue to the grotto and the stone of the finding. The grotto is a natural water source that

has been part of legends and stories; in modern tradition, people believe that water has miraculous powers. The stone of the finding is an even more magical object, not only because the tradition says it was the exact place where the icon of Our Lady first appeared to Juana Pereira. Just by touching it, you can obtain an invigorating holy power that could help you to overcome physical, emotional, or psychological struggles.

Once I leave the main building of the Basilica, I find a boisterous crowd. The grotto and the stone of the finding are at the building's backside, on a lower level, where the original hermitage was located. To get there, there are ramps along the Basilica's side that take you to both places, but the massive amount of people are just blocking everything. It is impossible to figure out which line you have to follow, where it starts, and where it ends. Finally, I find a volunteer, and now I understand what a good idea it is to have the orange vests over the blue shirts; it is so clear where the volunteers are located. I ask her about the situation, she tells me they are not closing the grotto, but they are restricting the number of people because it is getting dangerous. She says that I should look for the lines and have some patience and that the waiting time would be around three hours. She tells me that if I do not need it, I should come back to visit the grotto another day. If I can do that, it would be better for the organizers and the fellow believers. "If I do not need it." What does she mean? To come to the grotto is a decision; I do not need to get down; I want to. However, it looks like the visit's idea as a "need" is a crucial concept in all this tradition. I decide

to cooperate with the event and many other people and desist from visiting the grotto and the stone of the finding.

There is a big complex just behind the Basilica with an official store surrounded by a vast lawn; hundreds of food stands take this space; it is like a turno. I cannot avoid remembering that in this location (or very close to it) was the building of the Cofradía de la Virgen de Los Ángeles. The Institution allowed Pardos, Natives, Cimarrones, and other people of color to have power and agency within the activities organized during Our Lady's festivities in the 17th and 18th centuries. This turno shows those events' remains: the dances, the bullfights, the theatre plays, the parties and orgies that took place next to the shrine. After leaving the turno, I go back to the Square in front of the Basilica. It is almost midnight, and the movement is even more intense than when I arrived three hours ago. However, there is something particular that I notice. There are thousands of persons looking for spaces to spend the night. They do not have tents or sleeping bags; they are just next to the Basilica's walls, or in the Square's greens, and even in some front yards of nearby houses. They lean against the walls and trees; or each other. They have some extra coats or a small blanket, but nothing more. They are resting, trying to sleep, waiting in there for tomorrow's public mass at the Square. I know this tradition very well; it is quite common for people who perform La Romería to spend the night on the street waiting for the next leading event. Everyone admires that type of commitment in Costa Rica; it is seen as part of the sacrifice they offer to Our Lady, and nobody judges them for doing that. I have seen that a lot previously, but now I can recognize

how linked it is to centuries of traditions. For my part, I am done. It is almost 1:11 a.m., and I need to rest; tomorrow it is a big celebration, and I should be ready to be part of it.

Figure 3. The Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, August 1st, 2019; 9:15p.m. On the left side of the image, it is visible the massive line of people waiting to get into the temple. Photo by the author.

Why could I not complete the path to the altar of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles on my knees? Why do some people need to go to the grotto of the stone of the finding? What is that crucial element that differentiates experiences of the pilgrimage between the real insiders and the rest? All those elements are related and go beyond my understanding as an ethnologist since they refer to a personal

and spiritual experience. “Faith,” a friend of mine told me after completing *La Romería* and making his way to the altar on his knees. But not only faith in a spiritual sphere, but a relation to a very concrete physical representation. For the hairless woman struggling with some type of cancer and chemotherapy treatment, that faith holds her life. For the disabled man who had a great struggle to cross the Basilica nave on his knees, faith is what makes him overcome his physical condition every day and fight to fit in a neoliberal society. Faith is what holds together that family next to me. The faith in their Catholic values links them to their ancestors and guides their life choices today. For them, Catholic family values are at the core of their existence and hold their own sets of beliefs and behavior together. They are all performing their faith. Not only their identity, particular situations, or sense of belonging, but their faith. That is the element that holds the invisible chain between thousands and thousands of different persons congregating in this pilgrimage. They perform their faith not only in a religious belief but also in a country's project. They understand the cultural negotiations that take place during the worship of Our Lady as the representation in a social and political sphere of their faith and their Christian values.

Inside the shrine of Our Lady, the *cultural negotiations* are not easy to follow, or to understand, since there are profound and personal feelings at stake. Outside, during the pilgrimage, there were endless examples of performance of identity, of sense of belonging, of public personas who gathered to express a sense of costarricanness. During La Romería, I identified the *cultural negotiations* and how

the secular interactions from Costa Rican's civil society displayed different performances. From Muslims and Protestant groups to co-workers, communal groups, or locals showing their interpretation of the national history with altars in front of their houses. Inside, everything becomes a personal display of emotions and beliefs. Inside the shrine, the faith is performed and at the same type experienced in a lived way. That is why I could not finish the journey on my knees; since I am an outsider here, my primary purpose is to understand this event and not live it from a religious perspective. For me, my life and beliefs are not at stake here; for them, they are, and in some cases, are a life and death issue. To visit the grotto and the stone of the finding is part of a life-or-death deal; that is why they need to do it, no matter the cold temperatures, the waiting time, or the physical exhaustion.

I cannot argue that the faith is at the core of every *Romero* who comes to this pilgrimage every year. However, it is clear that it is an essential factor and a channel to express and perform different elements of identity and belonging. People with different interests, Catholic, non-Catholic, secular, capitalist, political, and others, conflux every year in the *cultural landscape* that is La Romería, where very complex processes of *cultural negotiations* can take place. The faith in how this cultural process takes place and its effectiveness to reshape Costa Rican society's rules of engagement. At a certain point, the religious concept of faith extends its influence into the cultural processes, creating a quite complex social

engagement. This event is more significant than solely its religious aspect and holds a core element of Costa Rican national identity.

The fact that people have to walk every year and that walking allows them to perform different elements of their identity is a way to explain how national identity activates every year for a new *cultural negotiation*. By being part of La Romería, people from different backgrounds and interests sign their participation in the public discourse that defines, consolidates, or re-defines the social contract between Costa Ricans. The performance of La Romería activates a *cultural negotiation* every time it takes place*,* one that slowly changes and defines different elements of *costarricanness.* That is how it has been since centuries ago. Core elements of the old colonial tradition still present today are evidence of this. The *turno* is reminiscent of *La Cofradía de la Virgen de Los Ángeles, las Fiestas Agostina,* and the colonial interchanges associated with them. The grotto and the stone of the finding link the modern worship with colonial locus and behaviors, where miracles can take place by drinking the grotto's water or touching the stone. The personal performance inside the Basilica is a link to the medieval European tradition of pilgrimages to *Holy* (magical) locations, whereby the act of the faith and submission by showing one's miseries will allow the divine to take place and give you strength, peace, understanding, or other necessary qualities to overcome your struggle in life.

In her understanding of *reflexivity* regarding ethnographic researches, Davies explains that "issues of reflexivity are particular salient for ethnographic research in which the involvement of the researcher in the society and culture of those being studied is particularly close" (4). It is quite evident that this is the particular case of my autoethnographic work concerning La Romería (and at a certain point with the worship to Our Lady as a whole). It is necessary to acknowledge at this point how the deep personal involvement in this performance tradition, not as a simple observer but as a performer myself, allowed me to find precise details otherwise impossible to experience from a distant position. For example, the concept of faith is present as a religious practice and extended as a cultural particularity that creates deep cultural and social inter-connections.

The ancient tradition of La Romería has been shaped, reshaped, and consolidated through the decades, directly related to Costa Rican history and dependent on political, economic, or military effects. These very changes offer a way to trace national history development, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. I traced the various shifts in the worship practices associated with Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles vis-à-vis the construction of national identity. However, beyond the historical relevance, La Romería has become the repository of the way national identity is negotiated and how a concept of *costarricanness* can occur.

In the next chapter I will continue with the autoethnographic methodology, looking specifically at the Mass of August 2nd, which is the next event in the festivities in honor of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. As a performance of power in contemporary society and a representation of religion in the public sphere, the Mass of August 2nd can be understood as a way to explain the cultural negotiation between power spheres in Costa Rica, where the people contribute to validate such negotiations. There is a close relationship between La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd. It is so close that it is impossible to separate one from another; they are two different representations of the same phenomenon. However, for a more in-depth analysis in the present study, I decided to approach them as two different performances, as the next chapter will clearly show.

CHAPTER 3: THE MASS OF AUGUST 2ND

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to unveil the different layers of a very particular religious performance, the Mass of August 2nd, a feature part of the annual worship in the festivities of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. Several inconsistencies cohabit this *cultural landscape* – the cloud-topped volcano and the buzzing technological world of the press, the sacred church, and the secular reporters and politicians in their suits and cocktail dresses – elements that, *a priori,* seem like opposites, from different sides of the social framework. As I mentioned in previous sections of the present dissertation, I understand by *cultural landscape* the place (real or metaphoric), where the different interactions and transformations allow seemingly contradictory elements to be reconciled, as the ones mentioned above. Usually, those interactions and transformations have a public connotation, what I have been calling *cultural negotiations.*

In the specific case of the Mass of August 2nd, the *cultural landscape* is both a physical and a metaphorical space. The Square in front of the Basilica of Our Lady is the place that holds the *cultural landscape*. Simultaneously, the Mass as a public performance is the metaphorical place that allows a *cultural negotiation* to happen*.* Anyone can infer that the Mass that happens outside of the actual Basilica is merely a consequence of the massive attendance to this particular event, which is correct. However, this celebration extends the location from inside

the Basilica to the public, and a massive event at the Square reflects the transcendence and relevance of the *cultural negotiation* that takes place every year.

For this chapter, I would like to raise a series of questions similar to the ones raised in the last chapters. At the same time, I inventoried in my fieldnotes my initial impressions experiencing the event in the summer of 2019 (an account to which I will be returning throughout the chapter), and the questions that were raised for me at the time: What is the real purpose of this performance? Is it a simple religious enactment on a massive scale? Is it a political negotiation between different agents of civil society? It is a dense set of choreographed negotiations where tradition, belief, politics, and capitalism all get involved? Perhaps the truth involves elements of all of these questions (and their possible answers) together. This chapter's main goal, informed by these questions, is to identify precisely specific moments, perhaps especially those that seem to illustrate inconsistencies, and analyze their elements, background, and value within the culture to understand the *cultural negotiations* that occur every year at the Mass of August 2nd. While a cursory look at the event reveals a Catholic celebration of a worship of the Virgin Mary, a more in-depth perspective uncovers the performance of the different power relations between active political, economic, and social forces. This event is a performance of power that uses a religious tradition as a *cultural landscape*, and a very complicated feud of contemporary power relations occurs.

A constant element that intersects all the analysis of the present chapter is the inquiry of how religion interacts and works in the public sphere, understanding the Mass of August 2nd and the way it works as cultural landscape as a remnant of a genealogy of power interactions. About this, Habermas writes: "In church ritual, liturgy, mass, and processions, the publicity that characterized representation has survived into our time" (8). My understanding of how the public sphere and catholic representations in Costa Rica collide is close to the way in which Judith Butler mentions that "[s]ome religions are not only already 'inside' the public sphere, but they help to establish a set of criteria that delimit the public from the private" (Butler in Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, 71). These ideas frame my understanding of the analysis the present chapter presents.

3.2 FIFTH MEMOIR

August 2nd, 2019, 8:50 a.m., in the city of Cartago in Costa Rica. The Square is ready; the morning is sunny, the sky is blue (that type of blue that only exists in Costa Rica), deep green mountains surround us. The Irazú Volcano, with its cloudy top, seems to be looking at us from the same position it has occupied for thousands of years. The people located at the west and south of the Square, most of them with multi-colored umbrellas to protect them against the intense sun, comprise a beautiful mosaic of different colors, materials, and reasons to be here. At the north side of the Square sits the structure that has been designed exclusively for this worship,

facing southwest. On the east side is the Basilica, the Sancto-Sanctorum of the country (see Figure 4).

The structure occupying the north side of the Square is like a stage. It was designed to perform a particular type of enactment: a performance of power, like those of the European courts' during the Baroque period. It is not surprising, given the fact that the conquest and (mostly) the early colonial period in Costa Rica happened at the same time the Baroque was flourishing in Europe, that Latin Americans have always praised as 'barroquismo'[63] the style that is at the core of our identity. In front of the stage, hundreds of white chairs fill, little by little, with politicians and Government authorities. Men are in black suits, women in cocktail dresses (strict etiquette). I can see State Ministers, Congressmen, and Congresswomen, Court Judges, Mayors, Nuns. Some of them look out of place; maybe they are Diplomats. I can see the President of Congress and the President of the Republic, and the First Lady.

On one side of the stage, however, there are a group of chairs that remain empty. For whom are they intended? Is it possible there is a low attendance of official guests? Gathered at the bottom of the Square are all the media, Television networks with their top presenters, radio stations broadcasting with their famous voices, newspaper journalists, photographers all over, a few foreign press members, drones flying overhead, cranes with high-tech cameras. While it may seem like the press is

[63] "Barroquismo" is a Spanish word referring to something that looks like Baroque.

a harassment, an infiltration into this worship, at the same time, it is germane to regard them as another active part of the performance. I suddenly realize that sometimes I refer to the people as "they," and sometimes as "us." Am I already involved in this worship at a deeper level? There is no denying that my body is here at the very least, and I am an active part of the event regardless of my belief or intentionality. I cannot avoid asking the same questions repeatedly: what does all this mean? What is the value of these performances? It seems there are more profound levels of engagement than that which one can see superficially.

Figure 4. The Basilica's square, August 2nd, 2019. On the left side of the image, the stage created for the performance of the Mass of August 2nd. On the bottom, the Basílica of Our Lady, the "Sancto Sanctorum of the country," just minutes before the effigy of Our Lady comes out of the church. Photo by the author.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is a sense that Our Lady's shrine, and especially the event of the Mass of August 2nd, contains a powerful element of national identity, which prompts me to call the Basílica the Sancto-Sanctorum of the country. In the paragraphs to come, the analysis of the performance in this location every August will explain why this particular shrine and this particular celebration can foment the sense of national identity and the cultural negotiations regarding the rules of engagement of Costa Rica's society. Historical elements, however, complete the understanding of the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles and the Mass of August 2nd as the country's Sancto-Sanctorum.

Chapter one developed a historical analysis of Our Lady's worship's key elements and how those elements related to Costa Rican history and cultural evolution. I would like to recall two particular moments to consolidate this space and the event studied in this chapter as the national identity holders. The first one is the country's patronage on behalf of Our Lady by the Constitutional Congress of 1824; the second one the reaction by the establishment to the liberal laws in the late 19th century. The reaction to both events in Costa Rican society and how our Lady's worship contained each historical moment's expectations and anxieties, and, moreover, the ways in which this allowed an effective cultural negotiation that created core elements of national identity, inform why the location and the performance tradition in honor of Our Lady consolidated as the Sancto-Sanctorum of the country.

As was analyzed in chapter one, it was contradictory that the Constitutional Congress of 1824, while creating the first formal Constitution of the country, nominated Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as the patron of the country. Some scholars see this move as the way new civil authorities tried to grab part of the Catholic Church's immense power held in the early 19th century. In contrast, others understand that act as a recognition of Our Lady's worship for the country's people. Both explanations fail in putting together all the conditions of the period; like the understanding of Our Lady as a unifying symbol for Costa Ricans during the first years after the independence. It is in these details where the key to understanding the patronage of 1824 dwells. Costa Rica became a country before being a consolidated nation; since by 1821 there were not a consolidated set of elements or popularized traditions that could be considered pieces of a concept of national identity.

Contrary to other colonial territories in the Spanish Americas (Mexico, Guatemala, or Colombia), independence took hold in Costa Rica's province without a clear idea for its inhabitants of what it meant to be a Costa Rican. There was no consciousness of the traditions or beliefs that differentiate us from other countries; there was no real concept of *us.*[64] That condition of uncertainty made

[64] For further reading about the Costa Rican independence process: *La independencia y la formación de los estados nacionales* by Héctor Pérez Brignoli (1992), *La Independencia: historia de Costa Rica* by Ricardo Fernández Guardia (2007), or *29 de octubre de 1821: fecha de Independencia de Costa Rica* by Miguel Rojas Jiménez (2014).

the country's civil authorities use Our Lady's unifying worship capacity as the new nation's foundation. José Daniel Gil explains it as: “Aquellos hombres veían en la comunidad ideal que forma la religión un útil instrumento para consolidar una comunidad nacional.”[65] (Gil, 81). The symbolic realm where Our Lady used to exist in those years became the core of the national identity. From there, the country was capable of developing the concept of the Costa Rican nation.

That particular historical moment is a clear example of how religion can be understood within the public sphere, since “[r]eligion functions not only, or even primarily, through claims, but through organized, meaningful practices (such as rituals and ethical systems), actions, and displays of belonging, all of which inform public life, cultural identity, and political deliberation” (Chambers, du Toit, and Edelman, 4). As with the explanation of religion’s function in the public sphere quoted in the text above, so it was also in the case of Costa Rica. Since the first moments of independent life, Costa Rica based their concept of nationhood in the display of religion in the public sphere, with Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as the preeminent symbolic element. The analysis of the evidence in relation to that, found in the Mass of August 2nd, will be explained in the paragraphs to come, not only regarding the ways in which that process has evolved, but how it is still alive today.

[65] Translation: "Those men saw in the ideal community formed by the religion a useful instrument to consolidate a national community."

During the 1880s, Costa Rican society suffered intense transformations in its political, cultural, and economic systems. The wealthy were created by an effective agrarian production, essential infrastructure in transportation that potentiated commerce, and a new generation of leaders educated in Europe who imported the ideals of Liberalism; which allowed the social and cultural structures of the country to be reconfigured, becoming a modern democratic state. The most significant change of those years was what the Costa Rican historiographers have called the *liberal laws,* which implanted different legislation mirroring contemporary European liberal democracies.[66] The effect of those laws in the Catholic Church was immense; that period saw the most significant power grab from the Church's authorities on behalf of secular political and civil institutions.

However, the Church could survive as a capital institution of hegemony in Costa Rican society by potentiating Our Lady's worship in its cultural affairs. The cultural capital the Church holds with Our Lady became a powerful element of the political interchange. Gil explains that relation thusly:

> Finalizada la década de 1880, se observa que el mismo Presidente de la República, asistía a las fiestas religiosas, práctica que se incrementó en el siglo XX. Para las personas de alta sociedad, y para

[66] For further reading about the liberal state and the liberal reforms: *Consolidación del estado liberal:imagen nacional y políticas culturales: 1880-1914* by Érika Gólcher Barguil (1993), or *Hacia la consolidación del Estado Liberal en Costa Rica* (1870-1890) by Claudio Antonio Vargas Arias (2015).

> aquellos que ocupaban cargos públicos; la festividad de los Ángeles, era una excelente oportunidad de ver crecer entre las masas su popularidad, por la cual asistían a las principales actividades que se programaban en esos días. El acto religioso era manipulado por muchos políticos para así aprovecharse de la fe de los creyentes con fines no precisamente religiosos. Para fines del siglo, las fiestas tenían ya un carácter mucho más fastuoso, al transformarse en una fiesta nacional.[67]

If by the 1820s, Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles was meant to unify the country and its inhabitants through their religious values, allowing them to construct a concept of national identity, by the 1880s (and the whole liberal period 1880-1940), Our Lady had become a political symbol. The contradiction between a liberal state with secular institutions based on European ideas, and religious worship rooted in depth colonial traditions, reinforced the position of Our Lady as a symbol of authentic Costa Rican identity. It is a symbol far from temporary political and cultural revolutions, dwelling as it does in the symbolic world of real

[67] Gil, 64-65. Translation: "At the end of 1880s, it was observed that the President of the Republic himself attended the religious festival, a practice that increased in the 20th century. For high-class people and those who held public offices, the Angels' feast was an excellent opportunity to see their popularity grow among the masses. They attended the main activities that were scheduled on those days. Many politicians manipulated the religious act to take advantage of believers' faith for non-religious purposes. By the end of the century, the festivities had a more lavish character, as they became a national holiday."

costarricanness. The contradictions and feuds between hegemonic groups, created a wider experience of real political and social interaction, since: “the bodies and voices that perform religiously often belong to those excluded from the privileged spheres of public rational debate, thus exposing the disjunctions of power and subjectivity, sovereignty and agency that allow the public sphere to function in the first place” (Chambers, du Toit, and Edelman, 5). Our Lady's shrine consolidated its position as the Sancto-Sanctorum of the country during the 20th century by the constant interchange of hegemonic relations between Church and State, as was explained previously in chapter one.

There is a particularly key factor that requires more in-depth analysis regarding the idea of the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles as the Sancto-Sanctorum of the country. This is especially the case for the worship to Our Lady with the Mass of August 2nd, which features capital elements for performing national identity and developing a notion of nationhood. The fact that the main event (as well as almost all events concerning these festivities) takes place in a public space, with the participation of thousands and thousands of assistants who engage in this performance, always renews a concept of nationhood. This is a clear example of how religion interacts within the public sphere. In a contemporary explanation of that inter-relation, the sociologist Craig Calhoun writes the following:

> The public sphere is a realm of rational-critical debate in which matters of the public good are considered. It is also a realm of cultural formation in which argument is not the only important practice and creativity and ritual, celebration and recognition are all important. It includes the articulation between deep sensibilities and explicit understandings and it includes the effort – aided sometimes by prophetic calls to attention – to make the way we think and act correspond to our deepest values or moral commitments.[68]

In the quote above, Calhoun opens up different ways for understanding the public sphere and the ways in which religion, with its different rituals, festivities, and public manifestations, can contribute to the civil and rational discourse in the public sphere. In the paragraphs to follow, I will analyze different examples of how the Mass of August 2nd both follows and contradicts this claim.

3.3 SIXTH MEMOIR

Precisely ten minutes before 9:00 a.m., a complete silence invades the Square, and it is like being transported to an intimate and private space. It feels a little like the interior of a Church on a non-busy day. I cannot recall if there was some type of cue or if it is just that the participants know the rules, but it is evident that something is ready to start. Suddenly, many men wearing white robes emerge from the Basilica,

[68] Calhoun in Mendieta & Vanantwerpen, 132-133.

and everybody starts to prepare. I am not sure what will happen, but it is clear that something is coming from inside the Basilica. At the top of this memoir, I mentioned that the Basilica is the 'Sacto-Santorum' of the country. Interestingly, this performance's spatial development corroborates this: the Basilica is the space where everything starts, and everything ends. It works as the place of origin and the place of conclusion.

Nevertheless, what starts and ends in there? What is the "secret" or the "power" that this place guards? Why is this sensation that what is essential comes from there? Yesterday I had a similar feeling when I finished La Romería at the Basilica, but I thought it concerned what I experienced in that event. Nevertheless, today that feeling is back alive. The image of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles is in there. It is essential to understand the effigy's "real" meaning and define the cultural negotiations surrounding her worship.

There is a procession coming out of the Basilica, an endless line of seminary members, all of them in white robes.[69] *The route takes them from the main gates of the Basilica to the 'performance section' next to the stage. The unoccupied white chairs I noticed earlier are for them. There are a lot of them; it is impossible to keep count. Are they one hundred or two hundred? Ten minutes have already passed,*

[69] The Seminary is where young men study to become priests; there is a Minor Seminary and a Major Seminary. If these persons are taking place in a Catholic ritual, they are in the Major Seminary, probably senior students.

and we still have seminary members coming out of the Basilica. Throughout this proceeding, there has been a confused rumble in the air, but suddenly the noise reconciles into a heard song: "María, Hija de Sion, elegida de Dios Padre."[70] *The Church claims their genealogy, linking this tradition to Zion, Jerusalem, biblical times; there is a subtle but clear message in the music.*

After a long procession of seminary members, priests and bishops appear with the image of La Virgen de Los Ángeles. They use the traditional stand for Catholic effigies like those used for Holy Week's processions. The stand is covered in beautiful tropical flowers (mainly white flowers) that from a distance gives an effect of floating in between the people. This moment is not only beautiful but very powerful. I cannot avoid getting excited. There is a respectful silence in the thousands of participants around. I can hear the priest's voices in the procession singing, people crying of emotion in the multitude, parents telling their little kids to pay attention to the effigy that is very close to them. The body remembers, and I can feel it. Maybe what I am feeling is a residue of the Catholic education in my youth, maybe it is something that I learned at home from my ancestors, or maybe this feeling is just being part of the "social body." We (all the participants) remember something recorded in our collective memory. Maybe we are connected with our ancestors through this performance.

[70] Translation: "Mary, daughter of Zion, the chosen by God the Father."

Suddenly, when the image passes close, it is bright! There is a crown, a little crown, on top of the effigy. That is the reason why one of the ways to which she is referred is "Reina de Los Ángeles,"[71] or "Reina de los costarricenses."[72] However, this is not a fancy name or a simple issue; actually, there is much symbolism in calling her Queen because it is an actual thing. All the Square people get excited when the crowned effigy of Our Lady passes next to them. The image is not only crowned but wearing a type of royal regalia, full of gold, jewels, flowers, and accompanied by a group of very well-dressed men. Who are they? It seems they are some type of 'remnant' of the "Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles." I cannot forget that Cartago is a colonial city, there are traces of that all over the city, and their citizens are very proud of that colonial heritage. It is normal to think they would like to conserve or respond to colonial traditions, as the Brotherhood (see Image 5).

After Our Lady's effigy come all the country's bishops, eight white, middle-aged and senior men, in full white regalia. I have never seen this type of ceremonial clothes, but they look exquisite. It seems that this is their 'special suit.' The clothes they are wearing mark the fact that this is the most important ritual in the country, at least that is the message all this performance tries to deliver. Now, the purpose of all those empty chairs becomes more precisely evident; they were for all the priests and seminary members who were part of the procession. That area is now full and looks like one whole white cloth that slowly moves with the wind. The disposition is

[71] Translation: Queen of the Angels.
[72] Translation: Queen of the Costa Ricans.

quite impressive. On the west end of the stage, the politicians and other civilian authorities, all of them in dark suits or cocktail dresses; on the south, the clergy, all of them in pure white suits. They visually represent the two different powers present in this 'cultural negotiation': the political and the spiritual.

Figure 5. The crowned effigy of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. At the top of the golden structure is the Imperial Crown of Our Lady (the Queen of Costa Ricans). The inner structure that holds and protects Our Lady's little statue is made of gold and gems. On the right hand side with black suit is Adolfo Ramírez, a member of the "Hermandad de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles." Photo by Adolfo Ramírez.

It is clear how the combination of the Basílica, Our Lady's effigy, and the worship of her, work as the Sancto-Sanctorum of the country. However, there is an element linked to all of the above that completes the equation: the worship's

religious performances. I draw upon an understanding of performance here that aligns with Joseph Roach in what he describes as “the three-sided relationship of memory, performance, and substitution” (2). Here, the effigy of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles represents and moves forward the country's collective memory by the process of *surrogation.* At the same time, this approach to the evidence follows Diana Taylor’s idea of understanding Latin American performance traditions by “focusing on the embodied behaviors.” (5). The analysis of this performance tradition then treats performance as the container of historical aspects (memory), but also like the active negotiations that take place (surrogation). One can say that each year’s performance *activates* the *cultural negotiations* by process of surrogation; this could be understood in two ways: one is that the function of performance as a memory container is in constant change, making this characteristic deeply unstable; at the same time, it is necessary to activate the *cultural process* via the performance every year; otherwise this particular type of cultural interaction will disappear or become irrelevant.

As I mentioned in chapter one, the coronation process of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles (1924-1926) was simultaneously the culmination of another process, the consolidation of a tradition and a way of understanding how different social elements would be negotiated in Costa Rica. On the one hand, it established the format of the *Romería* by regulating different ways of behavior and engagement during this pilgrimage. On the other, it consolidated how the Mass of August 2nd would perform in the future and the relevance of such events for generations to

come. After 1926, all the Masses on August 2nd mirrored the one of the coronation. In other words, the coronation process in the 1920s was the consolidation of the Mass of August 2nd as a *cultural landscape*, since it established the rules of engagement for future *cultural negotiations* to take place.

The Imperial Crown was created for the 1926 event, and the act of coronation of the image transformed it into an effigy. Nevertheless, at the same time, the active participation and approval of the government officials of such an act gave it political relevance. At a certain point, one can consider Our Lady's effigy as the Head of State of the country, in the fashion of Parliamentary Monarchies in Europe, where the Monarch is just a symbolic and representative figure. The same symbolism and power of representation that a European Monarch has in a contemporary Parliamentary Monarchy is the one that Our Lady holds in her role as an effigy. One can argue that Costa Rica at the legal (constitutional) level is a Republic, but at the symbolic (imagined community) level it is a Constitutional Monarchy. This can be confirmed by the fact that before the 1926 coronation, the President and other political figures of the country took part in Our Lady's festivities as a political strategy. However, after the coronation, the festivities became part of the State's official affairs, not at the legal level but at a symbolic one, which confirm the concept of costarricanness.

During the coronation, the president of that time, Don Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno,[73] his cabinet, and his most significant political figures took part in key public performances that re-shaped the tradition forever. They were at the Mass in the city's cathedral where the country's archbishop blessed the Imperial Crown (the symbol of the new power). They were in the procession that took the Imperial Crown from the cathedral to the Basilica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles.[74] They were at the Mass inside the Basilica, in front of Our Lady's image, when what I have called the *official narrative* was fully displayed during the sermon, re-shaping, white-washing, and curating from the new power structures centuries of history concerning Our Lady. Nevertheless, most importantly, they were part of the coronation moment, on a stage in the middle of the Basilica's Square, where religious, patriotic, and folk symbols interchanged, in a set designed to inaugurate the new State of affairs. As Judith Butler writes: "[v]ery often religion functions as a matrix of subject formation, an embedded framework for valuations, and a mode of belonging and embodied social practice" (Butler, in Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, 72). In 1926, the country's power spheres (political, religious, and economic) established how *cultural negotiations* would occur in public, at the Basilica's Square, with the effigy/Church as the medium as the new State of affairs.

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[73] Originally from the city of Cartago and a member (from the paternal and maternal line) of the city's traditional families, historically related to Our Lady's worship.

[74] A critical performance at the symbolic level, since it (somehow) returned the power center from the city to Our Lady's effigy. Reverse to what happened with the establishment of *La Pasada,* which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

What I saw on August 2nd, 2019, and what anybody can witness every August 2nd during the Mass at the Basilica's Square, is the Church reinforcing through a public performance the idea of Our Lady as a symbolic monarch. At the same time, it granted the Church as an institution the power to negotiate and intermediate in the country's social, economic, and political affairs. The Church uses Our Lady's effigy, via public performance, in order to maintain and (sometimes) consolidate their relevance in Costa Rican society. The paragraphs to follow will explain and analyze how that happened during the 2019's events.

3.4 SEVENTH MEMOIR

"En el regazo de la Virgen de los Ángeles nació, creció y se formó la idiosincrasia de los costarricenses."[75] *This powerful phrase is repeated continuously during the different events of the celebration in honor of Our Lady. However, it is at this point where the analysis and ethnographic approach clash with reality and (maybe) some serendipity. My position in the Square does not allow me to see one corner of the stage, precisely where the preacher takes the stand. The ceremonial greetings begin, and I realize how much more complicated this would now be. I do not have to see the corner of the stage where the bishop is to know who he is: Manuel Eugenio Salazar, the bishop of Tilarán. My uncle.*

[75] Translation: "In the lap of the Virgin of the Angels, Costa Rica's uniqueness was born, grew up, and formed.

It is the first time my scholarship has had to face an important fact: in part, this research is inspired by my Catholic education: That is, by my being raised in a traditional family, studying with priests and religious brothers in a Catholic school, and being (as a little kid) the altar boy for my uncle. I understand that doing an autoethnography project could make me face different challenges, which have forced me to find a balance between the personal experience and the researcher position, but that is a discussion that takes me out of the project's scope at hand. It is, suffice it to say, essential to declare that from now on, this project is part of a personal struggle between the little altar boy I used to be and the scholar I am in the process of becoming. It is an actual process of "critical ethnography."

The sermon is a discourse of twenty-five minutes. Bishop Salazar used half of the time delivering directly to the audience, the other half directly to the President with messages to/and about his Government. During the sermon, there are several references about the Church's self-critique, which ended in just being mentions and were never elaborated beyond that point. As an example: "Consciente que en lo que voy a señalar, la Iglesia tiene parte de culpa y de la solución;"[76] *also later: "Hablo desde una Iglesia que es Santa y pecadora, que está en constante camino de conversión y que reconoce sus errores y ha pedido perdón."*[77] *Interestingly, the bishop mentions some flaws of the Catholic Church, but it is not clear what he is*

[76] www.iglesiacr.org/sermon_misa2deagosto2019. Translation: "I am aware that what I am going to point out, the Church has a part of the guilt and of the solution."
[77] Ibid. Translation: "I speak from a Church that is holy and sinful, that is in the constant path of conversion and that recognizes its mistakes and has asked for forgiveness."

referring to in particular. It is unclear if he is talking about the Church's mistakes as a whole, as a universal institution, or the Church in Costa Rica and its specific conflicts. There are no details about the nature of those sins or which situations he is talking about, or when they asked for forgiveness, and how they would deal with some reparations. It is a general call to an act of contrition but without a real interest in moving forward and being transparent.

This sermon sounds like the discourses one can hear in a political rally, and this event starts to look like one of them. I can notice three particular elements that always repeat during the sermon: short phrases with general ideas, no facts to support claims, and an imposing style in several phrases. The short phrases with general ideas are more like slogans than anything else. For example: "Los creyentes tenemos derecho a la libertad religiosa, la exigimos."[78] *It is a powerful claim followed by cheers from the people at the Square but after that nothing! The sermon moved to another topic. I am not sure why the Church wants to talk about it, but mostly, what is the real intention behind that phrase? In Costa Rica, the freedom of practice of any religious belief is a Constitutional right. When was that right violated? How? By whom? It is not clear why the "believers" are making that claim, since nobody knows which believers they are referring to: Catholics, Christians in general, all the religious people? I can see how those "catchy" phrases, or "slogans," as I called them above, are working here. They appear interstitially throughout the sermon and*

[78] www.iglesiacr.org/sermon_misa2deagosto2019. Translation: "Believers have the right to religious freedom; we demand it."

create an emotional reaction in the audience. No rational discussion or reflection of the topic, just emotions.

The sermon continues with numerous claims, but without any facts that support them, or references to their meaning in terms of the message the Church tries to deliver: "En un país donde hay pocos ricos, cada vez más ricos y muchos pobres cada vez más pobres, no hay justiciar social y por lo tanto no habrá paz social desgraciadamente."[79] *It is a serious claim to make on such an important platform. What shocks me more is how the Church can make such a claim without supporting it in any way. Costa Rica is a country with important public data related to its social, economic, and cultural characteristics. Just by searching on internet, anybody can have full access to the INEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censo*[80]*), or the "Informe del Estado de la Nación."*[81] *I cannot believe the lack of evidence and analysis in such claims is related to the lack of information, so I guess it is more related to the sermon's goal. The narrative concerning "the rich" and "the poor ones" sounds like the Bible's language. It is a simplistic way to reduce the discourse to essential elements closer to the Catholic dogma than to a real interpretation of national reality.*

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[79] www.iglesiacr.org/sermon_2deagosto2019. Translation: "In a country where there are few rich, increasingly rich, and many poor, increasingly poor, there is no social justice, and therefore there will be no social peace, unfortunately."

[80] National Institute of Statistics and Census, www.inec.cr

[81] A foundation subsidized by the country's five public universities, which uses scholars and other experts to analyze all the parameters and statistics the State produces every year. www.estadonacion.or.cr

I understand how this event works and how it constructs meaning for the performance of religion in the public sphere. There is an evident element of theatricality, which works as a constant reminder that this event is a political performance, with very particular rules of engagement. There is another phrase: "Quien entra al narco, no sale o sale muerto! No queremos un narco Estado."[82] *It is another slogan, but what catches my attention is not the phrase itself but the performative elements. Bishop Salazar makes a pause before this phrase and then delivers it slower than the rest of the text, pointing to every word and adding a false intonation that gets louder with the last three words. It is evident not only that this was rehearsed but also that the intention is to have an emotional reaction from the audience. This last example is quite impressive since the phrase could be understood as a message with a double-meaning. By saying, "whoever enters the narco, either does not leave or leaves dead," he is talking to the congregation, to the thousands that should understand the drug-business is contrary to the values and morals of the Catholic Church. However, the second part of the phrase carries a veiled message: "we do not want a narco-state." Those few words change the message, which started as simple moral advice and ends as a socio-political claim. Just by suggesting the concept of a narco-state, Bishop Salazar links figures and policies of the Government and the Congress, Lobbies, and Companies to the drug dealing business. By only coding the message, he unveils the acknowledgment that*

[82] www.iglesiacr.org/sermon_misa2deagosto2019 Translation: "Whoever enters the narco either does not leave or leaves dead! We do not want a narco-state."

the Costa Rican Catholic Church can make of the relations between Drug businesses and the State apparatus. Here it is a very subtle but clear interaction between the country's power structures (the legal and the illegal ones).

The first issue I should address in this particular section has to be that of the researcher's relationship to the researcher's realm, that idea of the insider/outsider. As I mentioned in the memoir, above, at the moment, I realized the analysis would involve a direct member of my family, with whom I had a special relationship that indirectly developed my interest in this type of case study. I call it an exercise of *critical ethnography,* which D. Soyini Madison explains as follows:

> Critical ethnography is not an objective method of analysis but rather a tool that addresses the condition (subjectivity) of the researcher and the particular characteristics of the phenomenon to research. The assumption of subjectivity concerning the *Other* transforms the object of study in a subject and transforms the researcher into the other. The dialectic between both subjects is full of biases, cultural conditions, misrepresentations, and power relations that make impossible an objective relation. [83]

[83] Madison, 11.

In a critical ethnography exercise, my condition as a researcher, as Costa Rican, is deeply involved in this study as a member of my own family. Different layers of a dialectic process and otherness through the performance can create three levels of understanding and possible interpretation of the phenomenon, detailed below. This critical ethnographic process is possible precisely by assuming these conditions, and the achievements of it come not despite them but because of them.

The first is the personal level, which involves my history, the relationship with Catholicism, with my family, Bishop Salazar, and all the power relations (and negotiations) those things carry for me. The social level is the second level and corresponds to the personal level but also in each one of the persons taking part in this religious performance, in relationship with their presence here in Cartago in the Square of the Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, as well as with the different type of engagement through media broadcast. The social level is the community of personal experiences that converge this August 2nd of 2019. Their stories, their relationships with Catholicism, with their families, even with Bishop Salazar. All the infinite possibilities of power relations and personal (or communal) negotiations can carry. The Third is the political level, which involves the symbolic representations and their meaning and power interactions in the present and in relationship with the country's historical narrative. The dialectic process occurs with the President of the Republic, not President Carlos Alvarado, but the President as a symbolic figure. That dialectic process is the final power

negotiation, since it involves two institutions that hold enormous power in Costa Rica: the Church and Government. Different symbolic and real power levels are at stake, as are the incestuous interactions of economic, moral, and ethical power between one institution and the other.

It is essential to understand that the Mass of August 2nd is not just a ritual regarding a Catholic effigy; this Mass is a multilayer structure performance, where different traditions with particular social, geographical, and historical backgrounds converge. The Mass, as with the other performances in these festivities, works as a frame or a container. The frame delimits the borders of how possible it is to represent identity and nationhood but cannot control the inner space within those borders: a container that has a specific size and capacity but cannot decide what can get in there. In other words, in a superficial envisioning of this performance, it looks like a public and massive Mass. However, in an internal envision of it, it looks like a sophisticated cultural device. After years and years of repeating this event, the capacity to contain and delimit different elements from different traditions allows the performance to become a *cultural landscape*. This event can hold cultural processes. However, it is with repetition that this event becomes a *cultural negotiation* by performing those cultural processes. As Diana Taylor argues, "[p]erformances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and sense of identity" (2). If performance works as transmission, *cultural negotiations* work to change or re-shape those that are transmitted. That is the social function of the Mass of August 2nd and it explains

the necessity of a massive group of participants to become performers during the event, which Roach calls a *surrogation process:* "[h]ow culture reproduces and re-creates itself" (2).

The *cultural negotiation* that takes place every August 2nd is a very fragile and delicate interaction, full of subtle acts and veiled messages. Among other civil and political authorities, the presence of the President and his cabinet is the first sign of the negotiations. Initial statements, body language, colors, and attitudes will be analyzed by each side and through the country's media as a whole. The sermon, in many cases, makes a direct reference to the President and his policies. In this way, the Church *throws the cards* into the negotiation, giving clues about what they want, how they feel about specific policies, and what they are ready to support in terms of their social influence. At the same time, those direct references work to influence the Catholic masses, prompting them to follow and support the Government's Church premises. After the Mass ends, all the media surrounds the President, the First Lady, and other authorities, looking for a real-time reaction, usually commensurate and polite.

In the days immediately following August 2nd, two different phenomena solidify the claim that the *cultural negotiation* of August 2nd is an example of how religion can work in the public sphere. One is how the general audience reacts to the sermon and the different interactions during the Mass. Those reactions start immediately after the Mass and sometimes can be captured by the media present

in the event. However, they will mainly be evident in op-eds, social media posts, interviews, comments in radio or television programs, and other social interactions. The second is from the Government itself, through press conferences, press releases, interviews, and other types of official and unofficial communications. The Government will react directly to the words and events of the Mass and the people's reaction to what happened on August 2nd. There will be a tacit agreement on several points. Both parties agree to develop specific policies and points where a strong disagreement will bring a more extended and more complicated discussion of specific topics. All of this is a clear example of costarricanness, how social interactions occur in a public display, and how policies, laws, and executive orders result from those interactions.

A critical aspect of this performance and how it works as a *cultural negotiation* is the people present in the Square and the ones following the event via media broadcast. With their presence and participation in the event, they actively participate in the cultural negotiation that happened every year on August 2nd. They are an essential part of the discussions, proposals, and modifications concerning national identity. Every year, thousands and thousands of Costa Ricans become signatories to the changes concerning nationhood and costarricanness. One can affirm that “[r]eligion itself is one of the many mediums through which the construction of the public sphere takes place” (Chambers, du Toit, and Edelman, 3).

I used the word “participants” previously because I believe it is more accurate than the “public” or “audience.” From a critical perspective, and after being part of this performance, I would like to clarify these terms. I understand public and audience as very similar concepts: the *public* is the group of people that witnessed a performance, a heterogeneous mixture of bodies in front of a representation, with different levels of engagement and different levels of understanding of the event, and (mostly) with a sense of disaffection to the event. The public can be very interested in the performance, or just watching it without real interest, merely curiosity. We have public in sports events, festivals, parades, and carnivals; this event's massive character makes it impossible to adequately understand who its public is.

On the other hand, the *audience* is a more specific group of people whose main characteristic is intentionality. They are a group of bodies, but a group of people wanting to witness the performance beyond that. Because the performance gives them a sense of community, class, familiarity, and other elements of belonging, the audience can be identified, since their characteristics are more visible in their clothes, behavior, and interests. The audience can be found in theaters, movie cinemas, a conference, or a classroom.

In this performance, one could argue we have both the public and the audience together, or to be more specific, some audiences within a larger heterogeneous public. Nevertheless, the religious (and the cultural) condition of this performance

makes those categories insufficient. That is why I call the bodies involved in the August 2nd event the *participants,* because they are taking part in this event. Some of them take part in a religious (catholic) fashion as an act of faith and tradition. Some of them take part in it in a social fashion to belong (by participation) in the concept of national identity this country has created around Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. However, to be *participants* links these bodies with thousands of bodies following the performance live through media broadcasting. Those bodies next to us through media take part in this performance, but more importantly in the *cultural negotiation.* I can go beyond categories, arguing the bodies present in the Square and the bodies taking part in the event through media are also linked to the bodies that have been here before, being part of this performance for years. Like those who will come in the future. The *participants* are linked to each other beyond time and space since all are *performers* in this religious performance.

It is impossible to conceive of the Mass of August 2nd without the understanding that the *participants* are at the same time *performers.* I do not want to get stuck in the Catholic dogma, which considers the Mass a *celebration,* a type of *holy banquet* where everybody is in part participant/performer. I want to go to the cultural level of the community's encounter to work in the realm of *symbolic communion.* Nevertheless, for a religious manifestation, “its meaning comes not (only) through theological argument, but (also) through ritual, liturgy, prayer, meditation; in short, religions exist because they are performed” (Chambers, du Toit, and Edelman, 2). As I said before, this performance is a *cultural negotiation*

where power relations can be solidified, challenged, or modified. After this performance, more social structures can be redefined. The participants become performers since their presence, reactions, and level of engagement could shift the power relations at stake. The participants perform the ultimate level of negotiation, the social level, where the masses could dictate in the fashion of a participatory democracy the importance of the cultural changes that could take place.

3.5 EIGHTH MEMOIR

After more than two hours, the Mass is over; we are ready to finish with this event. I cannot avoid having two compelling feelings: one as a researcher and one as a theater person. As a researcher, I do not understand why the effigy is still there, hieratic, where everybody can see her, but nothing happens. In one word: useless. There are other performance traditions with regard to Catholicism and the public sphere in which the effigies have more exposure and action: they dance, they work as characters with pre-recorded voices coming out of them, they have different rhythms and pauses in their transportation from one point to another. I do not understand why the effigy of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles has such a dull moment in such a crucial time: her party! As a theater person, I feel that this is such a dominant performance. I feel like something else should happen instead of it simply ending as a regular mass. I am pretty sure there will be a procession to take the effigy and all the Church's members back to the Basilica, but something is missing to seal the event. This is not, after all, just any other mass. This is a cultural

device for creating an identity, ideology, and a concept of nation/state, which is more significant than the performance itself.

Suddenly, just when I thought everything was done, and I was left with a feeling of disappointment, there it is. The national anthem of Costa Rica. Immediately following the religious ceremony, the anthem an important symbol of civil representation, one of the state apparatus's symbols as a whole. It is more potent than I expected; the union of religious and civil ideology is very evident and creates a difficulty to analyze.

The national anthem is one of the symbols of what I called earlier costarricanness, of that clarity of national identity, citizenship, belonging, and the nation-state. It is not casual; this is not random. There is clear intentionality. If we understand this as a performance, all the bodies reunite here (and the ones present through media broadcast) as performers of cultural negotiation. In that case, the anthem is just the confirmation of it. The elements of the symbolic realm come into confluence with one another: the effigy of Our Lady, the Church apparatus, the State apparatus, representatives of the civil society, the media, the people (participants/performers), the history within the performance itself and the different traditions contained in it. They are all present here in this cultural landscape to re-activate a device that has allowed the creation of a national identity, the performance of costarricanness, and the re-evaluation and re-shaping of that concept through the cultural negotiation taking place during the performance. Finally, the procession goes back to the

Basilica. All the Church's authorities following their Queen. The effigy/symbol of national identity goes back to the sanctum-sanctorum that holds the core of the values, ideas, and ideals that conceive Costa Rica as a whole.

The fact that the National Anthem marks the end of the event is exciting and disturbing at the same time. On the one hand, it solidifies the arguments I exposed before in this chapter, of how the Mass of August 2nd is not only a religious event but a political one. The Church uses the agency and power conferred by previous *cultural negotiations* to mediate in the country's social, political, and economic affairs. On the other hand, it shows how a non-democratic institution with specific and particular interests, like the Catholic Church in Costa Rica, has a disproportionate influence over the modern Republic's various affairs. In the first chapter, I explained how during the *liberal period* (1880-1940), the Church tried to retain its power and influence by facilitating the consolidation of some of the liberal ideals: the revision and white-washing of the national history, the establishment of a free market as the economic system, or the defense of eugenic ideas and views that gave to the ruling class a racial/divine right to govern over the poor, the minorities, and the diverse population.[84] Today, after the National Anthem, I can see how the Church has been able to appropriate national and secular symbols within their traditions, particularly Nuestra Señora de Los

[84] For further reading about race, ethnicity, and class in Costa Rican population: "Identidad, invención y mito: ensayos escogidos" ed. by Marianela Camacho Alfaro (2010), or "Historia de Costa Rica" by Iván Molina, and Steven Palmer (2017).

Ángeles, positioning themselves as the *holders* and *guardians* of the real national identity.

At the beginning of the present chapter, I quoted Craig Calhoun explaining how religion works in the Public Sphere. He talks about *deep sensibilities* and how they force us to make an *effort to* "make the way we think and act correspond to our deepest values or moral commitments." In this case, the intersection between religion and the public sphere takes the social discourse beyond the rational analysis by including moral conditioning factors. Let us take the Mass of August 2nd in Calhoun's terms. We can understand the rational-critical debate proper to the Public Sphere as insufficient for this particular event since traditional religious sensibilities in Costa Rican society reframed it to include Christian values and conservative Catholic morality. The Church facilitates and mediates the *cultural negotiation,* an example of contemporary Public Sphere's debate. However, since the Church offers the medium (Mass of August 2nd), at the same time, it frames the debate within their values and morality. This is in concordance with Mendieta and Vanantwerpen claim that: 'Religion is neither merely private, for instance, nor purely irrational. And the public sphere in neither a realm of straightforward rational deliberation nor a smooth space of unforced assent" (1).

In the analysis of the sermon of 2019 by Bishop Manuel Eugenio Salazar above, I talked about the sermon's use of binaries (good and evil, them and us) and simple conceptions (the rich and the poor) as a way to understand and

explain situations. Initially, these binaries may strike one as naïve since some of those situations were created by complex social, cultural, political, economic processes. However, using the dogma's logic and Catholic morality, whatever is inside (or within) Christian values, is part of *us* and the *good.* Simultaneously, whatever outside of the Church's morality is part of *them* or the *evil*. Since Catholic dogma and morality are constructed as a binary relation, the Costa Rican Church's interaction as an actor of the religion in the public sphere also works through binaries.

An example of this idea is captured by the phrase "we do not want a Narco-State," a very general idea. The phrase was preceded by a short story of poor fishermen in coastal communities involved in drug transportation at a small scale to survive (the poor ones). This was followed by a reference to how drug cartels obtain benefits by bribing powerful politicians (the rich ones). The Church only understands the phenomena in terms of good and evil; working with *Narcos* is terrible, good Christians should stay away from those affairs. There is no an analytical-debate on the precarious conditions of fishermen communities on the coastline of Costa Rica or how the drug business takes advantage of those conditions to offer the members of those communities a necessary income to survive; an area in which the Government, and the free market, has failed them. There is no analysis of how money laundering related to drug business has infiltrated the Costa Rican economy's macro-structures and granted them massive political agency. In other words, the Church is delimiting or framing the

debate with-in their structure of values and morality, an exercise of binaries that generates the borders of what is or is not permitted. The Government and other civil society institutions' labor would develop a critical-debate about the particularities, possibilities, and real solutions to those phenomena.

Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles is a potent effigy in Costa Rica concerning the Catholic faith and spirituality and constructing a concept of nation and national identity. The worship of Our Lady predates the independence process. Because of Costa Rican independence's particular historical conditions, the political and the religious became the same phenomenon.[85] The effigy of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles became an iconic symbol of national identity and (later) of a sense of belonging and Costa Rican meaning. By a surrogation process, the worship of Our Lady and the different performances that developed around it was where different social classes, races, traditions, and beliefs could converge and develop a unified national narrative. Nuestra Señora's mythology became national mythology, and she represents the concept of union, migration, diaspora, belonging, and loss at the core of the national identity. Like the Mass of August 2nd, these performances became the *cultural landscape* where different traditions

[85] During the independence process of Central America between 1821 and 1823, Costa Rica was the poorest, least populous, and most isolated colony of the Capitanía General de Guatemala (actual Central America). As a faraway province and having almost no agency in the events in the city of Guatemala, the independence for Costa Rica became something fortuitous, and the country was not ready for the structural changes that independence brought.

could dwell or at least leave a mark of their existence in the construction of the national identity.

The performers that come to take place in this event are witnessing, and at the same time being part of an ancient process, the process through which their ancestors shaped (and re-shaped) the national identity through the years. By being there, we all activate the process of *cultural negotiation*. For instance, we are connected to our predecessors in this labor, and we are probably portraying a similar job with different circumstances. Activation of *cultural negotiation* in the performance Mass of August 2nd reconnects us (those present in the Basilica's Square) with our past, and at a certain point, with our future. Since we are now part of the process that creates the concept of being Costa Rican, it is impossible not to be part of this. Because I am Costa Rican, because my body and mind are here, taking part and affecting the other bodies and the other minds that are taking part in this performance. I feel there is a kind of what W.E.B. Du Bois called *double consciousness: "*[t]his sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 41). In this idea of *doubleness* there are two forces trying to agree: the external one looks and acts as a researcher, a rational subject experiencing and analyzing this event; the internal one knows his body is connected with the bodies here before, is an emotional subject who is linking his present with how the ancestors conceived *costarricanness* through this type of performance.

From the cultural perspective, the Mass of August 2nd is an event, part of a religious and political tradition, official and folk, all at the same time. However, from a performance analysis perspective, the Mass of August 2nd is a *continuum*. This performance started decades ago, probably with the act of coronation in 1926, but it has not been finalized yet. The political/religious performance of every August 2nd, pauses and resumes every year in the act of *continuum cultural negotiation.* The bodies present in the Square change year by year (generation by generation). We are, however, the same: a conjunction of the Costa Rican population's representation during each period.

CHAPTER 4: LA PASADA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter develops a critical analysis of the final of the capital public performances concerning the worship and festivities of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles in Cartago, Costa Rica, each year. As I explained in the Introduction, the public performances selected to be part of the analysis are La Romería, the Mass of August 2nd (treated in the previous chapters), and La Pasada, the procession carrying the icon of La Nuestra Señora from her sanctuary in La Puebla to Cartago's Cathedral. I also mentioned that the critical element for selecting these particular performances is they are all massive events that include the country's participation as a whole, with millions of Costa Ricans taking part in different ways.

It is essential to clarify, however, that La Pasada is the performance with a more distinctly local "vibe" among the three events selected and studied. To be sure, even a superficial reading of it can infer it is an entirely local event. Nevertheless, the demographics bear mentioning: while thousands and thousands of Cartago citizens take part in La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd, they are outnumbered by hundreds of thousands (or even millions) of Costa Ricans from the rest of the country that also take part in each of these events. Conversely, during La Pasada, the thousands of citizens from Cartago will outnumber the thousands of assistants from other parts of the country. In addition to the citizens

of the city, the participation of an essential portion of inhabitants from small rural towns in Cartago's vicinity[86] adds interesting elements of identity to La Pasada, elements that will be analyzed later in this section.

At the beginning of this chapter, I called La Pasada *the final performance* of this tradition. This is concerning the fact that La Pasada chronologically comes after the other two: La Romería takes place (mainly) during August 1st, the Mass of August 2nd always happens that day (every year), and La Pasada usually takes place on August 3rd.[87] However, also, historically, La Pasada's genealogy is more recent than the other two: while ancient versions of what we call today La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd took place right after the establishment of the cult (between 1635-1638), the first Pasada has an exact date, August 1st of 1782, in a historical event and social turmoil explained in the first chapter. This is also why

[86] Even the distance between Cartago city and those rural towns in its vicinity is quite close, like 8 kilometers (5 miles) between Cartago and Tierra Blanca, or 15 kilometers (9.4 miles) between Cartago and Ujarrás; the self-identification between the city and the towns is quite different. It does not matter whether all of them are inhabitants of the province of Cartago: only the inhabitants of the city will call themselves "Cartagos." At the same time, the people from each town will identify with their town's name. This distinction is rooted in identity elements, like the fact that the people in the towns are peasants, proud of their hard manual work. In contrast, the city's people are (in most cases) descendants of the Spaniards that arrived in the area between the 16th and 17th centuries. In some cases, several families can trace their ancestry to the low Spanish aristocracy of those years.

[87] Historically there have been different dates for La Pasada. However, as explained in chapter 1, during the consolidation of the modern tradition in the period between 1924 and 1935, La Pasada was established as a festivity that takes place immediately after the official celebration of August 2nd, with the 3rd consolidated years later.

La Pasada is the last of the main performances since it is the *newest* of them historically.

I turn now to La Pasada with this context in mind: that while it is a more recent addition, and with perhaps smaller national repercussions than either La Romería or the Mass of August 2nd, its character as a more local event hinges in a capital way on the participation of the citizens of Cartago city and the peasants from nearby towns who play an essential role in the performance.

As in the previous two chapters, the analysis of La Pasada is grounded in two elements: on the one hand is the auto-ethnographic research I developed during the summer of 2019, when I participated and took part in La Pasada on August 3rd of that year; on the other hand, a decolonial analysis based in the performance studies perspective, which allows understanding the performance and its different elements from the praxis itself and its cultural relevance.

4.2 NINTH MEMOIR

August 3rd, 7:30 a.m. I am back in Cartago to continue my field research. I have been in this city for the last five days in a row, and it has been quite intense. During that period, I have taken part in different religious representations of the worship related to the annual festivities in honor of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. It is very unlike that anybody (I mean the same person) has participated in as many events as I have in these festivities. There are too many events, one after another,

from big important ones like the Mass of August 2nd to small and local performances such as "la vestición" (dressing-up) or the "serenatas." I have to recognize that I am exhausted. Physically, it has been a very demanding period, and my body is asking for a break. However, while I am arriving at Cartago today, something is exciting in the mood. I believe it must be related to the fact that I know almost nothing about La Pasada. I have heard all my life about it, and I encountered fascinating historical facts about this performance in my archival research, but I have never seen it. I know neither how it works nor how it looks. I understand that it is a type of procession through downtown Cartago's streets, and everybody I asked about it mentioned that it is a beautiful spectacle (whatever that means).

It is 7:40 a.m., and I finally arrive at the Cartago's cathedral. I know this church! I thought I had never before been here, but actually, I realize now, I passed in front of this church many times in my trips to Cartago throughout my life. It just does not look like a cathedral, at least not like the image that I have in my mind in that regard. Contrary to other similar buildings in the country (like San José's cathedral or Heredia's cathedral, or even the Basílica of Our Lady), the cathedral does not cover one whole city block, but rather just half. The other half of the block is occupied by a five-story retail building that honestly diminishes the possibility of contemplating the church. I place myself in front of the cathedral's main entrance. The entrance follows an art deco architectural style. The impression that it gives, however, is that it is in the middle of a renovation or, to be more specific, has

suffered an incomplete renovation. Different tones of paint, scaffoldings, and some closed areas are part of the structure today.

Outside of the cathedral I am able to notice how several streets are already closed and how some early preparations for today's event are taking place. There is a "float" nearby, which is covered with colorful flowers and some produce representing the ones produced food crops grown in Cartago: bananas, potatoes, yucca, chayote, onions, tomatoes, and plantains. I can observe a tent very close to one of the lateral entrances of the cathedral. It is full of produce from the surrounding farming area, just like the "float" I just described. It looks like they have a farmers market here. I just realized that today is Saturday, the traditional day of the farmers market in Costa Rica. However, I do not understand how they are able to have such an activity simultaneously with La Pasada, and just a few steps from one another. I believe there is something else happening here. I can also see volunteers arriving with different packages and pots getting into the cathedral through one if its lateral entrances. That reminds me that I have a meeting before La Pasada: I found an insider who will guide me through this exceptional performance.

I enter the cathedral of Cartago, and sense a kind of a tense calm dominating the place. I can see a few of the volunteers walking around; they all have light blue t-shirts with a print on them that says "Catedral de Nuestra Señora del Carmen,

Cartago."[88] *Most of them also have walkie-talkies and look like they are in a hurry. The backside of the church*[89] *is already decorated with flowers all over the place, and a few volunteers are cleaning the floors and saints' figures on the walls. I move to the front of the church, and it is impossible not to be shocked by the altar. It is fully decorated with flowers, fruits, and vegetables, once again direct references to an agrarian society that I have never seen in anything related to Our Lady, not even in the previous days and performances.*

Once at the altar, I see somebody who comes right from the sacristy and I ask him if he is Adolfo Ramírez. He tells me he is not Adolfo but invites me to another room to meet Adolfo; he is waiting for me. I do not know Adolfo; we've just talked by phone a couple of times. He is my "insider." I found him by the recommendation of

[88] It is important to clarify one important detail about this: in the previous chapters, I mentioned the cathedral of Cartago as the "Church of Saint James, the apostle." Some quotes from scholars like Gil and Benavides also talk about the main church of the city of Cartago as "Saint James' church" or "Saint James cathedral." A diligent reader can notice the contradiction since Cartago's cathedral is dedicated to Our Lady of Carmen. What happened was that during the earthquake of May 4th of 1910 (known as "the Cartago's earthquake"), the old cathedral of Saint James was destroyed (as was nearly the whole city). As a temporary replacement, the church of Our Lady of Carmen, which was just three blocks from the "Plaza Mayor" (main square, where the old cathedral was located), became the ecclesiastic authorities' headquarters in Cartago. Because of the high cost of rebuilding the old cathedral, and because the budget to rebuild the city was mainly dedicated to housing and roads, El Carmen's church became the new official cathedral of Cartago, and the old church of Saint James was left in ruins. Today, anybody that visits Cartago's Plaza Mayor can see on the eastern bloc of the site the ruins of the Church destroyed in 1910 a place that became a tourist attraction and (sometimes) an artistic venue.

[89] In a Catholic temple, the "backside" is where the entrance is located, and the "front side" is where the altar can be found.

the Dean of the Basílica himself, priest Arias. In my interview with priest Arias a couple of weeks ago, Adolfo's name came out as someone I should talk with, since he knows the "unofficial details" of the celebrations. As such, he is a crucial figure in the organization of La Pasada. Already in my previous phone conversations with Adolfo, I found two fascinating elements of La Pasada: first, that it is organized entirely by Cartago's cathedral staff (not The Basilica's, as with La Romería, the Mass of August 2nd, and other minor performances); and second, that a pseudo-official organization that has been in a secondary role during the festivities will take center stage during La Pasada, the "Hermandad de la Virgen de Los Ángeles."[90]

I get into the cathedral's actual sacristy, which is a great space, made all of fine wood, a very tall ceiling, completely clean and in silence. In the middle of the room, there is a vast table with what I immediately identify as bishop's regalia. A few minutes later a middle-aged white man appears who identifies himself as Adolfo Ramírez. He introduces himself as a staff member of Our Lady of Carmen's cathedral. He has a present for me, a beautiful photo book about the history and the festivities of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. Adolfo is a very energetic person. I follow him while he is finishing all the preparations for today's event. In the

[90] It is complicated to translate into English an accurate definition of the "Hermandad de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles" without creating confusion with the "Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles." For the effect of this work and because I believe it is the closest word to the real meaning and purpose of the organization, I will call it "Fellowship of the Virgin of Los Ángeles."

meantime, he talks to me, asking me questions, explaining to me things he feels are essential to notice. It looks like he is an essential member of the cathedral staff because of the way other people refer to him. Also, because he constantly talks about the instructions the bishop gave to him, it looks like he is the operative arm of the bishop for La Pasada. Our conversation is constantly interrupted by questions he receives via walkie-talkie; he is the guy with all the answers!

I know we will have just a few minutes to talk, so I ask him directly about the altar, since I found the agrarian connection quite interesting. He briefly explains to me that La Pasada is not only a celebration of the people of Cartago, but the celebration of the peasants of all the province, and they use this event to perform their thanksgiving to Our Lady, who is blessing them with a good crop year around. That is why everything today will be related to agriculture, peasants, and farming. He explains that all the products I will see today are donated by the peasants as their thanksgiving act on behalf of Our Lady. Some products will be donated to charity institutions. Others will be sold in front of the cathedral to fund other Catholic charities, and some will be especially donated to the Church's authorities. It blows my mind to think about La Pasada right now: officially (and historically), it is a civic event that engages with a religious festivity. Unofficially, however, it is a popular agrarian festival of thanksgiving. It is clear how the performance has been divested of its original meaning (probably because, after the decades, that meaning became useless) and given a new symbolic meaning, one

that has created a new type of engagement between folk's traditions and Our Lady.

Adolfo knows I am very interested in the altar and he takes me to that area, now that the church is almost empty and everything is ready, just waiting for the event. I touch the bananas, the onions, the parsley, and the tomatoes; they are real! From a distance, they look so perfect that, for a moment, I think they are fake. Adolfo explains that all the products arrived the previous night, and were harvested yesterday. This is why they look so fresh. The set was created during the early morning; the idea is to give the sensation that the fruits and vegetables are still on the trees or the bushes. People should look at the altar and have the feeling that it is an orchard. Then he shows me a little secret: the set and all the fruits and vegetables integrated into it are strategically located to hide some portable wooden stairs right in front of the altar. Adolfo explains that once the effigy of Our Lady arrives at the cathedral, it temporarily disappears from all the performance's participants and later appears amid the "orchard" at the top of the altar. He says it is a beautiful moment and that, as a theatre person, I should not miss it. Interesting! He recognizes all the theatricality involved in these religious performances.

For the proper analysis of La Pasada as a performance tradition, it is crucial to understand what is at stake in the cultural realm; in other words, what the importance of this performance is today. Without such an analysis, one can only

ascertain what appears, superficially, to be an empty shell, one with a particular shape, but without content or meaning. The first element to analyze is how La Pasada works as a *cultural landscape,* since it can hold the possibility of different *cultural negotiations* taking place.

As it was broadly explained in chapter one, La Pasada has a start date, since it was established by Mons. Tristán in 1782. The first Pasada took place on August 1st of that year. The motivations for such an action were many, but at the core was the necessity of the ruling classes of Cartago (mainly ecclesiastic authorities, the colonial administration, and creole upper classes) to dominate the most important symbolic element at the time, which was the icon of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. By doing so, the ruling class of Cartago at the time obtained two clear objectives: on the one hand, it would dominate an icon that gave enormous agency to the populations in charge of its worship, such as the pardos; on the other hand, the ruling classes were able to develop an independent concept of identity, by re-shaping and re-branding Our Lady as the prominent local symbol of the city and its inhabitants.

Basically, during August 1st of 1782, the first Pasada was a significant shift in the cultural capital of the city of Cartago via the *colonization* on the part of the ruling class (Spaniards and Spanish's descendants) of the elements (symbolic and real) of power and agency that had to that point been controlled by a series of minorities in the town. During La Pasada of 1782 and the subsequent annual

events in the years immediately following 1782, the pardos, blacks, natives, and other minorities were bereft of the symbolic image that gathered them not only in identity but in the political and economic agency. As I mentioned in previous chapters, this event should be understood as a *power grab,* since the primary purpose was to alienate those minorities on behalf of maintaining the popular traditions controlled by the ruling class.

From the very beginning, La Pasada was a *cultural landscape*, because the main objective in 1782 (and the years to come) was to enact a change in the power structure, or, to be more precise, a reclamation. The actual route of La Pasada shows the symbolic purpose it has contained since the very first event. On August 1st, the day before the official annual celebration of Our Lady, the icon left the church in her honor in La Puebla de Los Pardos,[91] at the east border of the city of Cartago. The procession that took the image from La Puebla was led and organized by the civil and ecclesiastic authorities of Cartago,[92] moving out of La Puebla and into the city through the Central Avenue, and into the Plaza de Armas (Main Square), a location surrounded by the buildings referencing the colonial power: Palacio del Gobernador (civil), Cuartel General (military), and Cathedral of Saint James (religious). In the Plaza de Armas, the icon was received by the

[91] A neighborhood in the outskirts of Cartago, where pardos (mixed race), natives, enslave and outcast blacks, and other racial minorities used to live.
[92] Spaniards and their descendants were already rooted as the city's most prominent families.

citizens of Cartago and taken into the cathedral, where it would be held for around one month, while the festivities in La Puebla de Los Pardos were taking place.

As made evident in the paragraph above, the whole event reflected a new way to interact with an element of symbolic power and agency as Our Lady's image. La Pasada established a *cultural landscape* in which to negotiate the new status quo, and especially new rules of engagement. The agency that had been obtained by La Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles and its members (pardos, blacks, natives) in the political, economic, and military fields, was claimed back by the European's rulers of the colonial city. The *cultural negotiations* that took place during those years concerned the diminishment of the agency of specific populations in colonial affairs and establishing an element that unified a local conception of identity, at least in the symbolic realm. As explained in the first chapter, the history demonstrates that those goals were obtained in a very effective way. Pardos, blacks, and natives were removed from the colonial power structure and even from the country's identity discourse later. Our Lady became a symbol of unity and identity, first in Cartago and later of the country as a whole. La Pasada, symbolizing the multiple actions taken in the legal, religious, and economic spheres, could be considered the ultimate *cultural landscape*, since in its structure was implied the *cultural negotiations* that were taking place.

Today, the performance resembles the original, both in the route and in the translation of Our Lady's image from one location to the other. However, since the

racial and class struggle of the 1780s is not present anymore, other elements have changed or lost relevance. For example, the date of La Pasada today falls after the main festivities in the Basílica on August 3rd. Perhaps this is because the original idea of disenfranchising the Cofradía and La Puebla's inhabitants has no sense today. The Cofradía disappeared in the early 19th century, and all the licentious festivities organized by them are also part of the relegated history. Even the location is different, since La Puebla de Los Pardos does not exist anymore. With the expansion of the city of Cartago in the 19th century, the area became part of the city and was renamed as Los Ángeles' neighborhood. Another detail is the route itself. La Pasada does not arrive at the Plaza de Armas anymore (which today is called “Parque Central de Cartago”) but rather is brought to the former church of El Carmen, or today's Cartago cathedral. The symbolism of the route is lost in time, which by the way, is a clear example of how effective La Pasada as a cultural landscape was, since it remains in the city's tradition. Simultaneously, institutions like La Cofradía, the festivities, and even the colonial ruling disappeared.

The fact that La Pasada survived all the different historical changes is not new. I already analyzed in previous chapters how La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd have done so as well, and how they changed and adjusted during the intervening decades to acquire new meaning and a different relevance on the symbolic realm. It is evident, however, that La Pasada is a different case from the others, since it lacks a coherent meaning rooted in the religious tradition with

relevance at the national scope. As Diana Taylor explains: "At times, the transfer of performances outlasted the memory of their meaning, as populations found themselves faithfully repeating behaviors that they no longer understood" (50). This was certainly the case here. La Pasada, through the decades, lost the political and cultural effect of its beginnings, which vacated it of a real meaning. Nevertheless, the fact that it survived with certain transcendence until today is evidence that re-signification occurred through the years. Later in this chapter, I will analyze whether those new engagements allow La Pasada to host different *cultural negotiations*. Negotiations of this type could be relevant for the construction of national identity in today's Costa Rica.

4.3 TENTH MEMOIR

8:50 a.m., I decide to head to the Basílica. The main activity there will start soon, and I want to check all the setup. I leave the cathedral through the south entrance, which the volunteers use to exit the church. Once in the street, I notice a structure that I saw earlier, but now I understand why it is here. There is a tent with the logo "Municipalidad de Cartago" (Cartago's city hall), full of fruits and vegetables, on the diagonal to the cathedral. Before, when I arrived, I thought, "why would anybody conceive of having a farmer's market next to a celebration like La Pasada?" Now I understand. This farmer's market is an essential part of La Pasada, or is, as it were, a parallel event linked to the central performance. Because La Pasada today is rooted in a peasant tradition, farmers take the event's prominent role.

I am walking the ten blocks that divide Cartago's cathedral from Our Lady's Basílica. The streets are closed to traffic and ready for the event. There are already some people with chairs in the sidewalks, looking for the event's best spot. About two blocks away from la Basílica, I start to see some oxcarts with actual oxen, mules, cows. The carts are full of produce like onions, potatoes, lettuce, parsley, and yuca root. Of course, nobody uses oxcarts in modern farms, and it is obvious these are not functional carts, since they are beautifully painted with traditional motifs. There is a lot at stake at the symbolic level here. The traditional oxcart is one of the "national symbols" of the country, officially decreed by the Congress as a symbol of the country's agrarian genealogy and the ideal of the "labriego sencillo" (humble peasant) as the core of Costa Rican identity and citizenship. The fact that these modern "humble peasants," who are farmworkers and small farm owners, are using the oxcart for this performance says a lot about how they are claiming their role at the core of the nation's identity genealogy. In 1782 and the years to follow, La Pasada was a colonized project. Spanish descendants, the mestizo ruling class of Cartago, grabbed Our Lady's icon from the pardos and made it part of their European-style social order. Nevertheless, today, La Pasada is about peasants. It is an agrarian and folk festivity where the power is not in the higher classes but in the farmworkers. Any reference to pardos, black, or indigenous people, however, has been erased. Somehow, the popular discourse was able to re-shape this performance and, with it, the core concepts of national identity.

At the Basilica's square, everything is ready for another mass: A farewell mass for the effigy of Our Lady, who will be out of her sanctuary for one month. It is quite evident by the setup that today's celebration is not going to be as big as yesterday's. A few thousands of persons are located at the square, getting ready for the mass, and also some media is on location to broadcast the event, but it is less than the media coverage of the Mass of August 2nd by far. Everything looks a little disorganized, but that is just my perception. Maybe because this is a more local event with far fewer participants, everything is more relaxed.

9:05 a.m., I quickly get inside of the Basilica because I hear some ceremonial music coming from inside. As soon as I get into the building through one of the lateral nave's entrances, I can see a little procession with Our Lady's effigy heading to the main entrance of the church. At the head of the procession are six "monaguillos" (altar boys) with golden crucifixes and a couple of cirios (tall liturgical candles). After them, a double line of seminary members with their white robes—not as many as yesterday: there are around thirty of them. And after them, Our Lady's crowned effigy, flanked by a group of twenty pilots in their dark blue suits. Yes, pilots! I read about this; Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles is the "general commander" of the Homeland Security Ministry's Air Section since 2013. I cannot avoid thinking again about something: It came to my mind yesterday how Our Lady (sometimes) has a ceremonial role in Costa Rican civil society, such as the one monarchs have today in some European constitutional monarchies. She is our

Queen. We crowned her almost a century ago, and at every official event she is wearing the crown fashioned with the gold donated by our ancestors in the 1920s. I know it can sound shocking, especially for a non-Costa Rican, to realize how I am talking about a stone icon as if it was a natural person. However, it is the only way to explain how alive is that stone sculpture for Costa Ricans and how it became an effigy that plays a vital role in its public life.

After the effigy and her pilots, another group with cirios, and a giant bible. They are wearing white robes, with some details in light blue, and the image of Our Lady embroidered in a golden thread on the front of their robes. These are not seminary members; these are middle-aged men, so they are likely priests. At the end of this group of priests is the bishop of Cartago with his bishop's regalia that matches the white, light blue, and golden attires of the priest in front of him. I have constant reminders of how this is a local event, priests friendlily waving to people in the audience, volunteers in a very relaxed mode, nothing near the ceremonial style of the previous performances (La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd). Once the procession has left the Basilica, it is immediately apparent in the building's mood; everything suddenly changes. The solemnity of a sacred place that was present just a few minutes ago is replaced by the environment of a venue that needs to be cleaned and rearranged for another event.

I leave the Basilica after a few minutes and the mass in the square is already happening. As I imagined, it is not as big as yesterday, and the event looks a little

bland without all the paraphernalia of August 2nd. Besides that, I had a little tip from my "insider," Adolfo. He told me that there is nothing special in that mass of farewells of the Basilica because nobody wants to overshadow the mass of welcoming at the cathedral after the procession of La Pasada. Hence, the first event is short and frugal on purpose. He told me that I could walk to the streets behind the Basilica to take a look at the preparations for the coming procession, which could be interesting. However, he said, primarily I should watch the arrival of the parade from Llano Grande, which will be the starting point for the translation of the effigy from the Basilica to the cathedral.[93]

I leave the Basilica by the south exit, which has been closed for the last two days because of thousands of persons trying to get to the grotto on that side of the church. Once in the street, I am shocked. It is like a time capsule. On both sides of the road, I can see oxcarts, with actual oxen and mules; they are all beautifully painted and are full of produce, once again the potatoes, the onions, bananas, oranges, and greens (See figure 6). I know this street at the south side of the Basilica goes through the east of Cartago for three more blocks until it connects

[93] It is important to clarify that officially La Pasada is in the charge of the peasants of Llano Grande, a small rural town just a few miles away from Cartago city. They will have a "parade-style" event of floats decorated with multi-color flowers, their produce (fruits and vegetables produced in the area), and some motifs in a kind of "tableaux-vivants" style. The Llano Grande event will get to the Basilica's Square to *pick up* Our Lady's effigy and take it to Cartago's cathedral. However, hundreds and hundreds of peasants with their loads, oxcarts, cattle, and produce from other nearby agrarian towns will be part of the event. These participants will be located in the Basilica streets and will catch the procession immediately after the group from Llano Grande.

with the road that takes to Paraíso. I am in the southeast corner of the church, and I can quickly see how those three blocks are full of oxcarts, beasts, and people very well dressed.[94] *Men in slim denim pants, leather boots, white long sleeve shirts with embroidered designs in golden or silver threads, and cowboy-style hats. Women in colorful cotton dresses, with flowers in their hair, and leather sandals. Some very young boys and girls are dressed up in the "traditional costume" (peasant style), but they are on top of the carts. They are literally in costume and are part of a tableaux vivants between a simple set with food products, flowers, and some religious icons like Saints and Virgins.*

I find a boy; he is around thirteen or maybe fifteen years old, very well dressed; he is like a mini version of the grown-up men around him, with the leather boots, the cowboy hat, and everything. He looks very serious, almost mad. I try to talk with him because his cart and the beasts next to them are simply beautiful, but he rejects me. Then comes a middle-aged woman, who happens to be his mother. I talk to her, praising the cart and the animals, asking her about the boy's role. I know something is happening here beyond the obvious. She tells him he can talk to me. At that moment, the boy explains that it is his first Pasada, the first one in which he is participating, because in previous years he came as a kid and was playing in between the carts and the animals, but now he is taking part in the

[94] The "formal attire" for Costa Rica's farmworkers is quite similar to the idea of cowboys in the United States, with noticeable differences in terms of materials, because of the weather.

event. He proudly explains to me that he is big enough to manage the oxen. This year, his parents gave him the role of leading the family's cart during the procession and giving the "offering" (produce) as a thanksgiving act to Our Lady in the name of his family once they arrive at the cathedral. A rite-de-passage! For peasants' communities, or at least for some inhabitants of those communities, La Pasada is a cultural landscape to perform their rite-de-passage.

10:15 a.m., I am at the northeast corner of the Basilica, at the ancient road that links Cartago with the towns north and east of the city. I can hear some horns and whistles in the direction of Llano Grande. They are coming closer and closer until I can see the chariot for La Pasada. It is a massive truck. In the back, it has a platform decorated with multi-colored flowers and designs made of cabbages, onions, carrots, beets, and potatoes. Behind the "chariot" is a never-ending line of tractors, with flat platforms attached to them, in each platform more potatoes, bananas, onions, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, and more and more produce. Adolfo told me about it. These are the offerings to Our Lady, these are the products these peasants will give as a thanksgiving act, and which the Church will donate or sell to raise funds for their charities. I do not understand: why is the parade coming from Llano Grande full of trucks and tractors, while the participants from other towns take part in the event in a more old-fashioned way? It is not clear at all.

Figure 6. At the left side, a traditional oxcart made of wood, painted in folk motives. At the left side, two oxen, used mainly for festivities and celebratory events. Photo by the author.

If there is something straightforward, it is how La Pasada acquired a folk element through the years. The fact that today the performance is charged with an agrarian power influence, becoming a thanksgiving act from peasants and farmers from the area, is an example of how the event has changed and been re-signified since its establishment more than two centuries ago. However, those changes have been historically even more aggressive, since accounts of La Pasada from the late 19th and the early 20th century talk about a very different type of event. José Daniel Gil recovers a description from 1900 about La Pasada in terms of

> [e]sa mascarada inmoral que acompaña al acto religioso de la pasada de la imagen a su templo. Esa es una mezcla informe de paganismo y cristianismo. Bien sabido es como se abusa del disfraz en dicho acto

> para cometer ciertas torpezas que desdicen la cultural social y moral que debíamos haber alcanzado, meretrices disfrazadas con faldas cortas, camisas escotadas, chanzas indecentes dichas por muchos enmascarados, no podrán nunca formar más que una vil profanación de un acto que debiera revestir toda la serenidad posible.[95]

A performance with masquerades,[96] prostitutes, and indecent jokes. It not only sounds very different from the type of performance that happens today, but there is no reference to oxcarts (notably actually used in those years), agricultural products, or a thanksgiving celebration.

The performance changed during the 20th century to become similar to the basic form it has today. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to pinpoint whether there was specific moment in which this happened, or whether it was just a slow and almost imperceptible process. Since La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd were conceived in a new form and different meaning after the Coronation process

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[95] Gil, 57. Translation: "[t]hat immoral masquerade that accompanies the religious act of passing the image to its temple. This is a formless mix of paganism and Christianity. It is well known how disguise is abused in this act to commit certain blunders that undermine the social and moral culture that we should have achieved, prostitutes disguised with short skirts, low-cut shirts, indecent jokes said by many masked men, they will never be able to form more than one vile desecration of an act that should have as much serenity as possible."

[96] As in other parts of Latin America, the traditional masquerade in Costa Rica is a mix of Spanish medieval tradition with Natives' features from the Americas. In Costa Rica's case, the masques are big heads built in papier mache or fiberglass, with a wooden structure that holds the head and allows a person to get in and manipulate it. The structure is cover in colorful fabric, as a type of costume of each character.

of 1924-26 it is quite possible that La Pasada suffered a similar *re-branding* in those years or close to them. Joseph Roach gives a hint of how to look for the motivation and reason for those changes, which probably dwell in the performance itself. "Performances," as he writes, "so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions – those that were rejected and, even more invisibly, those that have succeeded" (5). It is in the symbolic elements of the performance itself where the current event's actual meaning can be found.

La Pasada today is a type of agrarian folk festivity, a thanksgiving event for peasants and farmers. Besides the vegetables, fruits, and flowers present in every moment, some images have a solid symbolic charge in the Costa Rican identity. The ceremonial oxcart painted with traditional motifs is one of the symbols of the national identity created by the National Congress. The traditional peasant costume is another of those symbols that are officially linked to identity. Elements like the oxen, the mules, the agrarian offspring are linked to the *humble peasant concept,* which is at the core of the ideal perception of Costa Rican citizenship, because it represents the values and traditions that are equal to all the inhabitants of the country. These symbolic conceptions were created during the first decades of the 20th century, when liberal thinking re-shaped the country's institutions and the public and social life.

In the previous chapter, I explained how during the Coronation process (1924-26), which took place during the late liberal period, a new discourse about Our

Lady's history was created by the Church. The new discourse leaves out of the official narrative the local struggles of the worship to Our Lady, and the participation of pardos, blacks, and natives in the origins of the cult and their importance through La Cofradía. It is quite possible that the idea of La Pasada grounded in the *humble peasant* character and re-branded as a peasant's thanksgiving festivity happened during those years or as a consequence of those new narratives.

The whitewashing of the national history (and that of Our Lady), the conceptualization of the *humble peasant* as the ideal of citizenship, and even the celebration of the image of Our Lady as a black Madonna[97] were all part of the same political/cultural project. They were all part of a mythification of Costa Rican society as white, peaceful, and egalitarian. As Roach puts it, in his discussion of public performance characteristics, "Performance, in other words, stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace" (3). One can easily argue that the *re-branding* the performance of La Pasada, to create the performance we know today, is a direct consequence of that political project.

[97] Before the 20th century, it was common to paint Our Lady's statue to make it resemble a Virgin with more European features. By the last years of the 19th century and the first ones of the 20th century, the Church stopped this practice of altering the appearance of the image and instead talked about "La Negrita" (the black one). However, there is no direct connection between the participation of the black population in the first two centuries of Our Lady's traditions, at least from the official narrative, that talks about an idea of egalitarian mixed-race society symbolized by the dark effigy of Our Lady.

4.4 ELEVENTH MEMOIR

It is 10:30 a.m., and in the Basilica's square, the Homeland Security Ministry pilots take the effigy of Our Lady and deposit her in the "chariot" that just arrived from Llano Grande. At that moment, the image is "taken," and it becomes a national symbol that is taking part in a local tradition. It is pretty apparent, especially after all the historical research, that this performance has been charged with new meanings and new symbols through the years. It is pretty interesting to decipher why and how different meanings and symbols arrived and consolidated in this tradition.

Once the effigy is in her chariot, the procession starts. It makes its way forward for a couple of blocks, with a group of fire trucks from the Cartago's Fire Department heading the procession; they make much noise with their honks and sirens, announcing to the people that the procession is coming. Behind the fire trucks, around twenty Fire Department officials in dark blue shirts, black ties, and many insignias in their clothes are marching behind the trucks. Then come the Transit Police with patrol cars, motorcycles, and some volunteers, with more sirens and honking. Some officials march in a white shirt and a (relatively) short black tie. There is a police troupe of only female officials marching at the end of this section; they look more serious and engaged than the previous ones. After them, the bishop of Cartago in the traditional black and purple robe flanked by around thirty or forty priests in white robes. After them, the chariot with the effigy, and behind Our Lady a never-ending line of trucks, tractors, and other work vehicles,

decorated with flowers, fruits, and vegetables. I cannot see them, but I know that following the line of trucks will come to the oxcarts and the people with their tableaux vivants on top of them.

I find the distribution of the performative space quite interesting. The procession is headed by civil authorities (Police Department, Fire Department). Next comes ecclesiastic authorities of the city flanking Our Lady's effigy, behind her all the peasants and farmers with their offerings as an annual thanksgiving act. On the sides of the roads, the inhabitants of the city, bourgeois middle-class people, traditionally conservative, with claims of familial genealogies that date back to Spain. I am not sure if I can consider the people on the roadsides as participants, as was the case during the Mass of August 2nd. Initially, they have a passive relationship with the performance with a particular type of engagement, like an audience. However, at the same time, their presence here completes the performance. It is adding a historical and class element that defines the meaning of this event today.

I notice two essential elements; one is that Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles's chariot has a set in which the effigy is on top of a figure made of flowers that resembles the oxcart, with two oxen figures made of papier-mache (See figure 7). The symbolism of the traditional oxcart is present all over the performance. However, I believe it is trying to reinforce a new type of relation within a construction of national identity. The second element is the behavior of the people

on the side of the road. We just passed the Central Park of Cartago (the ancient Plaza Mayor). We are less than three blocks away from the cathedral. Suddenly, all of them decide at once to fall in immediately behind the chariot with Our Lady, shifting from the audience to performers. I find it quite confusing since the performance is not over; hundreds of peasants with their trucks and carts are behind, waiting to join the event. As I mentioned before, this is the most local of all the events: regardless of the fact that it is open and that people from all over the country attend it, the internal dynamics of the performance are very local. I cannot understand why, given how strictly the previous two days' enforcement of the organization's rules was practiced, today looks like a family reunion, and it seems like anybody can do whatever they want.

It is 12:30 p.m., and the chariot with the effigy of Our Lady finally arrives at the front of Cartago's cathedral. I am next to the entrance, which has a tiny square and some uneven steps all over the atrium. The amount of people makes it almost impossible to move. I try to film and take some photos, but, basically, everybody else is doing the same, so it is useless. Our Lady's effigy is in a type of glass container. With all the people and all the camera's flashes, it looks like it is floating over the multitude on its way inside the cathedral. Once the image gets into the church, I can enter through a lateral door, following the image's route. Once inside, hundreds, or maybe thousands of persons are all together, following the image to the altar. Everybody has their cell phones above their heads to record the occasion. Inside the church, there is deafening live music and much incense; the

ambiance is not pleasant at all. Actually, I feel it is dangerous. I try to follow the effigy of Our Lady, but it is impossible. I am in the cathedral's central nave, but I feel a little lost, with no idea of what is happening or where the people are taking me. Because I cannot decide what to do, the only thing I can do is "follow the stream" of the mass of bodies. Suddenly I hear people cheering and yelling, and I can see it: the effigy of Our Lady is already at the top of the altar of Cartago's cathedral, the enactment of the old moment of cultural colonization is done. Whatever happens after here, I guess, is just "decoration," or religious faith, because the actual performance, the cultural landscape is completed.

Immediately after the image is located on the top of the altar, the people start to de-congregate. I am amazed because it only requires two or three minutes, and the space is less claustrophobic; I can move freely and find a seat next to the cathedral's northern door. In front of me, there is an alley that allows the people to move in and out of the church to see how fast people are leaving the building. Interestingly, for many of the event participants, the important moment was when the effigy is deposited in the altar of the cathedral. I do not know if they are consciously witnessing the enactment of what their ancestors did to create a local identity by appropriating symbolic elements (as it was with Our Lady's statue). However, I am sure there is an unconscious inter-generational connection, which makes them come and witness the specific moment of the "appropriation" as a way to guarantee things will continue as usual. Suddenly, the mass starts, with a very loud live music accompaniment.

1:40 p.m., I decide to leave the mass and come out of the cathedral for a moment because I can hear how things are still taking place outside. There are just people taking photos and eating on the building's stairs in the atrium of the cathedral. However, diagonal to the church, there is a frenetic activity. I realize the trucks full of produce are still arriving at the selected point to donate their goods. The scene is typical of a bustling market, with people shouting and moving in a frenetic way. I realize then that the procession is not over. The trucks that are delivering their offerings are part of the first section of the caravan. I walk eastward and notice that the first oxcarts are more than two blocks away, which means there is a massive line of people with their produce and their prepared sets, and their animals, and their costumes, who are still waiting for their turn to deliver an offering. Now I understand it; these are two different events: La Pasada is the religious/civic procession that enacts the events of the late 18th century in Cartago, while the peasant's parade is a more contemporary addition to the event which contains a different symbolic meaning. The thanksgiving act of the peasants, with their symbolic images, was at a certain point the way to re-signify La Pasada as an event of the folk tradition of Costa Ricans. However, two different types of performances dwell in different symbolic realms happening here.

Figure 7. The effigy of Our Lady in her chariot, on top of an oxcart covered with tropical flowers. On the left side the figure of an oxen made out pf papier mâché. Photo by the author.

I am in the corner of Central Avenue and 6th street in the city of Cartago, in the actual south-west corner of Cartago's cathedral. From here I can see a clear example of costarricanness, that particular way we Costa Ricans construct and develop our national identity. In this case, a double identity's element can include reconciliation through the cultural landscape of La Pasada. Inside of the cathedral behind me, there is still a mass taking place, the "welcoming mass," which is a way to rename the enactment of the cultural colonization Cartago's upper classes made in the late 18th century. In front of me, in the city streets, a vast public farmers market is taking place, with all the products that work as offerings to Our Lady, as a thanksgiving act from the region's peasants and farmers. A folk agrarian performance and a religious/civic enactment are the two primary components of La Pasada.

2:30 p.m., the mass is over at the cathedral. It was an extended celebration. People leave the building and congregate with the masses outside, the farmers market, and the surrounding areas. There is music coming from several businesses in the nearby streets; the market ambiance is everywhere. I decide to walk through Cartago's central avenue to confirm the carts' never-ending line, painted with traditional features, pulled by oxen and mules. Carts decorated with seasonal flowers and full of fruits and vegetables from the area, and in some cases with peasants on top, dressed up in the traditional festive costume. In this way, they contribute to creating a national identity by claiming our heritage as an agrarian

society, and keep alive with this particular performance the values and traditions at the core of the country's national identity.

One of the most clarifying facts after the auto-ethnographic process with the performance of La Pasada is that it is possible to verify that at the event two performances collide in a single festivity. The re-enactment of the *appropriation* of Our Lady's icon with all the symbolic power of that act is one performance, and the agrarian festivity of thanksgiving from the peasants and farmers of Cartago's province is the other. Maybe the word collide is not enough to explain the intersections between these two performances, because sometimes they can complement each other. However, after the critical observation on site, and the review of the event's historical components, it is still evident to recognize two different types of performances taking place at the exact same moment.

At the beginning of this chapter, I explained how La Pasada (historically) could be considered the ultimate *cultural landscape* since its structure can explain the *cultural negotiations* that are at stake or already happening. Nevertheless, today's performance is quite different from the one analyzed historically, not only because the form has changed but also because the content has been emptied since the elements at stake in the late 18th century do not exist anymore. One can even conclude that the performance itself lacks relevance. However, the possibility of two performances coexisting in the same event can also be evidence of a different *cultural negotiation* taking place. Norms “are contested, not merely applied,”

writes Diana Taylor, in discussing how enactment can establish claims to cultural agency. “Humans do not simply adapt to systems. They shape them" (7). La Pasada can maintain its cultural agency; it created new types of *cultural negotiations.*

The first performance present in La Pasada is the historical one, since it is a re-enactment of the moment when Cartago’s ruling classes of the late 18th century developed a cultural appropriation project targeting the symbols of identity of specific populations (pardos, blacks, natives), which at the same time allowed the former to reduce the agency of the latter in political, military, and economic terms. That particular act brought the possibility of joining all the colonial Cartago inhabitants into the worship of a symbolic icon that represents the values, aspirations, and local interests.[98] That symbol of local and independent identity from the city of Cartago was so successful that after the country's independence in 1821 it became a symbol of national identity. In other words, Cartago's local identity became the national identity in the first decades of independent life in Costa Rica.

La Pasada today, as a civic/religious event, is a re-enactment of a successful cultural project. One that allowed by the end of the 18th century the creation of an effective local identity mirrored European ideals of citizenship, race, religion, and

[98] The icon of Our Lady could be re-signified, not as an image for the outcast, illegals, and racially diverse; but as an image of the European ruling class and its local aspirations.

decorum. By the 19th century, it was a useful national identity based in similar terms. As discussed in previous chapters, Cartago's local identity is strongly linked to the worship, and the icon of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles is at the core (historically and culturally) of the national identity. That is why the performance of La Pasada today, and its re-enactment of a colonial act of appropriation, works as a way to remember, but mainly commemorate, the first symbolic act of creation of that identity, what José Daniel Gil called *proto-nationalism.*

As we already know, La Pasada today contains a double-performance structure, in which the second type of performance collides with what can be called the traditional/historical enactment. A folk festivity, an agrarian ritual of thanksgiving and local identity, is also present through a very eclectic type of performance: a procession that follows the traditional religious one, with loads, oxcarts, beasts (oxen and mules), costumes, some tableaux vivants, and other elements that represent popular rural identity. This performance reinforces the folk element by ending in a type of market, a carnivalesque modern version of a farmers market with direct interaction between producers, buyers, volunteers, church, charities, and other businesses.

In the introduction I mentioned how La Pasada is a performance where the concept of redeeminization can be seen effectively. La Pasada redeems itself since it mutates from a type of power grab by hegemonic classes, to a way to

include lower classes and displaced populations in the national discourse of identity. In several elements of the performance, as the route, or the inter-change of the effigy of Our Lady, one can recognize the original motives of the event. However, by a process of redeeming, which added through the years different characteristics to the tradition, as the oxcarts, or the tableaux vivants; the cultural negotiations that take place during La Pasada became more inclusive and less elitists.

I explained before how all those symbols are a direct reference to the idea of the *labriego sencillo* (humble peasant), a set of images, values, and behaviors promoted by the Church and the liberal state during the late 19th century and the early 20th as an ideal image of citizenship and national identity. The *humble peasant's idea* is in evident tension with Cartago's central concept of identity, based on their European values and features.

The tension present in the interaction of both performances is grounded in the historical conceptions of one, and ideas of national identity in the other. Molina and Palmer, in their book about the history of Costa Rica, explain the tensions during the formation of new identities during late 19th and early 20th centuries:

> La Iglesia, el Estado liberal y los jóvenes radicales compartían la obsesión de evangelizar, civilizar y redimir a campesinos, artesanos y trabajadores. La fuente de este deseo era un profundo rechazo de sus

> culturas, cuyo perfil irreverente y plebeyo preocupaba en extremo a eclesiásticos, políticos, capitalistas e intelectuales.[99]

Later in the same section, they also explain how the social movements created a tension in the cultural agency of the country:

> Los sectores populares, que descubrieron en la cultura de masas una fuente para revalorizar algunas de sus propias costumbres y creencias, aprovecharon su creciente alfabetización y sus derechos políticos para asociar la identidad nacional con contenidos promovidos por la generación de intelectuales radicales de 1900: la justicia social, la pequeña propiedad territorial y la paz.[100]

The quotes above exemplify the tensions in where the concept of the *humble peasant* emerged. The tensions are between the ruling class, which is not European anymore but formed by an elite upper class based on an amalgam of Christian and liberal values, and a conglomerate of popular classes: peasants,

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[99] Molina and Palmer, 89. Translation: "The Church, the liberal state, and young radicals shared the obsession to evangelize, civilize, and redeem peasants, artisans, and workers. The source of this desire was a deep rejection of their cultures, whose irreverent and plebeian profile extremely worried ecclesiastics, politicians, capitalists, and intellectuals."

[100] Molina and Palmer, 92. Translation: "Popular sectors, which discovered in mass culture a source to revalue some of their customs and beliefs, took advantage of their growing literacy and political rights to associate a national identity with content promoted by the generation of radical intellectuals of 1900: social justice, small territorial property, and peace."

farmers (small producers), proletarians, and left-wing intellectuals. So, the presence of the humble peasant's symbolic discourse in La Pasada is, at a certain point, an evocation of the *cultural negotiations* of 1782 and the years immediately after. The difference is that instead of the Spanish colonial ruling class, now we have a national Christian and capitalist upper class. Instead of the pardos, blacks, natives, and other minorities, now we have peasants, small producers, and proletarians.

Taken together, this can be understood as scanning the country's cultural agency at the metaphoric level. The Church and the civic institutions (police department, fire department, homeland security) are the symbolic representation of the country's hegemonic institutions. The people of Cartago, which during the performance are spectators and participants, are the metaphor of the ruling classes based on European values, while the peasants and farmers of Cartago's province, in their symbolic representation of the *humble peasant*, are the metaphor of the country's popular classes.

The fact that La Pasada today is an event composed of two different performances that collide with each other is a metaphor for the historical survey of the construction of national identity in Costa Rica. The tensions, interrelations, and incomplete discourses are a clear example of *costarricanness,* which is a constant act of building a national identity by trying to fuse pieces from different traditions, backgrounds, and historical periods. There is something raw, direct, and violent in

La Pasada: the fluidity in which different elements from (even) opposite traditions can coexist in tight harmony. The performances are too evident, un-curated, and obvious, giving the sense of something incomplete or disorganized.

La Pasada is a *cultural landscape* since it holds a public performance structure based on religious and civic elements. However, it is also due to the fact that it allows a *cultural negotiation* to happen based on historical references. It is a repository of the history of *cultural negotiations* based on the conceptions of national identity. It holds the claims of local colonial elites, 18th-century racial agency, national conservative identities, the liberal state, different historical conceptions of the Catholic Church, popular identities, and representations of the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is in constant tension because it is in the construction of a national identity that those tensions are present. It is incomplete and (sometimes) incoherent because the national identity is not a homogeneous set of beliefs and behaviors. It is raw and violent, because it denotes the fights in the symbolic realm of the country's different hegemonic groups. It is difficult to continue calling La Pasada the ultimate *cultural landscape,* as it could be when it was unsaturated in 1782. However, it is a perfect metaphor to explain the process of *costarricanness* present in the religious public performance concerning the worship and festivities to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles.

In the concluding chapter to follow, I will bring the discussion of the cultural negotiations, and the process of costarricanness in La Pasada, together with that of La Romería and the Mass of August 2nd. That summarizing discussion will be the corollary of the concluding remarks of the present dissertation.

CONCLUSION: TO REDEEM, TO NEGOTIATE.

To perform is a way to show a power relation. This is why performance is a tool to express, change, negotiate, impose, and create power relations and power structures within a culture. Since they dwell in the symbolic realm, those relations and structures are a way to concentrate, sublimate, or metaphorize the real power that exists in the political, economic, spiritual, military, and quotidian spheres in our societies. Performance is not powerful by itself, but it represents the metaphor of the real power structures and negotiations in a society.

Because performance is a metaphor of power structures and relations, performance analysis is a way to unveil deep power relations within social behaviors and institutions, like folk traditions, religious and spiritual enactments, and political organizations. The understanding and possibility of studying and analyzing the different layers present in performance traditions can expose the history, evolution, and consolidation of entire populations, regions, and even nations as a whole.

As an embodied practice, the knowledge and wisdom in a performance tradition belong to a non-traditional category. I align my understanding of embodied practice with Diana Taylor's concepts of the *archive* and the *repertoire.* In the *archive* (books, files, legal documents, articles, official scripts, annals), Taylor reminds us, one can find the knowledge and information that survived the

official curation of history. In other words, the history of the winners: the conquerors, the colonizers, the settlers, the official relators. As she points out, “we might conclude that the archival, from the beginning, sustains power” (Taylor, 19). It is in the *repertoire (*carnivals, processions, songs, legends, folk tales, oral traditions), however, Taylor continues, where one can find the knowledge and wisdom of the outsiders, the minorities, the conquered, displaced, eliminated, and disappeared; because “the repertoire allows for an alternative perspective on historical processes of transnational contact and invites a remapping of the Americas” (Taylor, 20).

The idea of studying the *repertoire,* those embodied traditions of which performance traditions are a substantive part, is grounded in the necessity to complete the history of a country or a population. It is aligned with Joseph Roach's idea that performance completes something that somehow is historically incomplete. In Roach’s words “[i]t fills by means of surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of the original” (Roach, 36). In that regard, the analysis of a performance tradition is a way to present a different perspective, one that could challenge but certainly completes the official narratives.

To study and analyze the religious performance traditions regarding the worship and festivities of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, in Cartago, Costa Rica, is to decode the knowledge and information contained in those traditions. At the same time, it is a way to unveil elements of the construction of national identity

and national history, covered by centuries of social and cultural interactions, of discussions, feuds, censure, and re-creation of official narratives. The effigy of Our Lady has been linked to the region (Cartago), the area (Costa Rica), and the people (Costa Ricans) since early colonial times (17th century). That is why its performance traditions are the repositories of innumerable histories and events that can give different explanations for, and understandings of, Costa Rican history and identity. The goal of this dissertation project has been to study and analyze those performance traditions to add to the findings new perspectives on national history and the understanding and discussion of forming a national identity, since this identity formation is still alive and in constant evolution.

As a project rooted in the philosophy of *decoloniality*, this work follows a straightforward but compelling decolonial equation: *theory/praxis/theory* (which can also be read as *praxis/theory/praxis*). That equation means that if the theory can explain a practice of a methodological application, the practical or methodological exercise can also explain a theoretical concept. Catherine Walsh explains it as "[a] rethinking of how and with whom we think (and understand) theory, and a recognition of the intertwines of local histories, knowledges, political praxis, and place" (Mignolo and Walsh, 27-28). Regarding this study's application specifically: if the official historical narrative explains the meaning of elements of formation of national identity (like folk traditions and embodied behaviors), the analysis of those elements of national identity (religious performance traditions in

this particular case) can explain or even expand the understanding of the national identity and its mechanism of formation work.

In other words, the official historical narratives related to the constitution of Costa Rica as a country, as well as the construction of national identity for Costa Ricans, are not enough; they are incomplete. Since they follow the consolidation of power structures and institutions, and the narratives that accompany them, they represent a subjective perspective on the history and cultural interaction of the country. They reinforce particular ways to understand a period, an institution, or a cultural phenomenon, while leaving out, changing, or even censuring other perspectives. It is at this point where performance traditions can complete and bring a broader understanding of elements of history and identity in the consolidation of Costa Rica as a country and an identity. It is precisely in the religious performance traditions related to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles that one can find interesting information, as I have demonstrated in the foregoing chapters, since the tradition (and its performances) have been linked to the history and development of the country since early colonial times.

The process of auto-ethnography developed during July-August 2019 allowed me to get more in-depth regarding the concept of the researcher as an insider/outsider, a figure capable of *emancipating knowledge,* as D. Soyini Madison calls it. In other words, this process is a way to embody critical ethnography. While I was an insider/outsider in my auto-ethnographic experience,

I followed Madison's idea of *subjectivity* from the position of the researcher. But contrary to traditional ethnography and cultural analysis, that *subjectivity* allows to understand and decipher embodied traditions as the Religious Performances studied in the present dissertation.

There is a critical perspective in this auto-ethnographic approach, called *reflexivity.* For Charlott Aull Davies *reflexivity* "[m]eans a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference" (Davies, 4). In other words, I embodied at the same time the role of the researcher and the role of the object of study, and it was from my own subjectivity and reflexivity that key personal elements of the performance traditions studied could emerge to a conscious critical level, where they could be explored and analyzed.

A clear example of this emergence happened during La Romería. While I was walking in silence and darkness through Ochomogo hills, physically exhausted and in a more meditative mood. It was in that moment and in that place that I understood the capital importance of La Romería as a public act, as a communal performance. The act of walking all together as Costa Ricans, to the old capital, the place where the seed of nation, country, and citizenship were planted by the creation of particular local (and later national) identities, is the way we Costa Ricans constantly construct and endorse the national identity, and the sense of nation state. Because of this, while I was walking through Ochomogo, I cried, not because I was alone in that moment of enlightenment, but because I was

accompanied by my fellow Costa Ricans: the thousands alongside me that day, but also the millions that came before me, and even the ones who would come after me. This moment could be characterized as what Victor Turner calls *communitas,* a moment of deep communal feeling, often spontaneous and unmediated, of profound kinship and mutual understanding and belonging (Turner in Bial and Brady).

In the introduction, I mentioned that this study works through an *object of study* and a *subject of study*. The selected performances and their characteristics, being the object of study, are those I called *cultural landscape*. At the same time, the subject of study concerns the symbolic changes and negotiations in the metaphoric realm during those performances, which I called *cultural negotiations*. The *cultural landscape* is an object to study, because it lacks agency, is static, and the changes that it could suffer are based on external influence. It contains a set of rules and behaviors applied year after year. On the other hand, *cultural negotiations* are a subject of study because they are in constant change, have agency, and are composed of ideas and interests of different human groups.

The relation between the cultural landscape and the cultural negotiations is symbiotic since they are in direct relationship, and neither would retain its purpose and content without the other. They would probably lose all purpose and content in other conditions. The cultural landscape, even if in itself it is static and lacking agency, should allow the cultural negotiations to occur. It should demonstrate

enough flexibility for the different changes and interventions that cultural negotiations could create. Also, cultural negotiations should develop their interactions in the metaphoric realms by following the symbolic notions proposed by the cultural landscape. As the case study in this dissertation demonstrates, that symbiotic relationship can hold a powerful means for developing cultural interactions that can be transferred to fundamental power structures and institutions in the political, economic, or spiritual spheres.

For this dissertation, I proposed analyzing three particular performance traditions in the worship and festivities of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles, each of which work as clear cultural landscapes: *La Romería*, the *Mass of August 2nd*, and *La Pasada*. Each of these cultural landscapes allows the contemporary development of cultural negotiations regarding concepts of identity, citizenship and belonging. However, they also work as repositories of previous cultural negotiations, unveiled through integrating the performance analysis and the historiographic understanding of each element. Each performance tradition allows both an understanding of the genealogy of cultural negotiations and their applications today.

The selection of these specific performances in a particular religious tradition follows what I mentioned in the Introduction with regard to Dwight Conquergood's emphasis on the popular manifestations of performance. This project, by finding the voices and remains of the pardos, the blacks, natives, colonial rulers, and local

creoles in each of the performances studied, aligns itself with Conquergood's idea that it is in the streets, the markets, the shrines, and the squares where the displaced communities and populations have survived. In his own words: "Ethnographers study the diversity and unity of cultural performance as a universal human resource for deepening and clarifying the meaningfulness of life" (Conquergood, 65). Following Conquergood's ideas, one can say that the auto-ethnographic research of the performance traditions concerning the worship of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles unveils meaningful details, which, after a critical analysis, can offer new readings on the ontological condition of the country and its inhabitants.

La Romería shows how historically different regions of the country and different populations have been using the act of walking to Cartago to include themselves in the Costa Rican nation. Since colonial times, Cartago as a city first, and in the worship of Our Lady later, became the core element of national identity and *proto-nationalism*. By walking, by being part of such an embodied tradition, inhabitants of different parts of the country include themselves and their places of origin in the national discourse, in the creation of a nation and a national identity. Through the years, more complex ideas like citizenship and the construction of the symbols of a nation-state have also been incorporated. A clear example of this was the *Romerías* of the 1920s and 1930s when the anti-communist visual expressions became an essential element of the tradition; those elements helped reinforce

Costa Rica's idea as a Catholic and democratic country, in favor of a capitalist economic system.

Today *La Romería* works like a very complex device, where very different and (sometimes) contradictory elements of identity and sense of belonging come into confluence. Specific populations, for instance, like Nicaraguan immigrants or Muslims, decide to participate in order to include themselves in the national discourse of citizenship. Likewise, the Protestant groups of Costa Rica understand the symbolic power of the event, and try to have a voice in it (even though it is a Catholic celebration), as a way to be part of the cacophony of voices that comprises the national identity today. Finally, other elements of belonging with regard to more personal or local identities are also present; people that belong to the same family, the same parish, or that work at the same company, want to show their community's identity through this particular performance.

As I noted in the auto-ethnographic research, *La Romería* today develops acts of *redeeming* by the inclusion of the different ways individuals and social groups perform their particular identities. The runners, the parishes' groups, the families, all of them show publicly their self-identification as a way to complete in the contemporary performance of *La Romería* the local identities of those first communities who used *La Romería* as a way to construct a concept of nation and a national identity during the 18th and 19th centuries. The small particular identities

of today's *Romería* redeem the local identities of previous centuries in a type of palimpsest that creates the complexity of Costa Rica's national identity today.

The *Mass of August 2nd*, as I explained in chapter three, is a clear example of how religion interacts in the public sphere today. The public sphere, that niche reserved for the rational thinking and analysis in a public domain, only partially controlled by the hegemonic groups, has been redeemed in the last years as a place where religious thinking and events can influence the rational discussion of societies. Historically, the Mass of August 2nd has been a religious enactment. However, through comparative analysis of the performance on the one hand and examination of key historical events like the Coronation of 1924-26 on the other, one can find crucial cultural negotiations contained in the performance itself.

Between the coronation process and today, the *Mass of August 2*nd has been the site of a conundrum between hegemonic groups in the country. Every year, the Catholic Church, the Government, the Media, and other economic interests engage in a public negotiation in the Basilica's square, with repercussions at a national level in the days to come. However, it is the fact that it is an open and public negotiation, with the active participation of the general public through their presence at the square and in the media broadcast, that completes and makes the process a complex interaction. The participants reaffirm the cultural negotiations as a tradition first and participate in the public debate later. All of this

creates a complex and constantly changing example of how religion and the public sphere can interact in the 21st century.

It is in the *Mass of August 2nd* where the icon of Our Lady redeems its role as an effigy for Costa Ricans. As I noted in the field work of 2019, the way the icon is treated and the role it develops in the public sphere allows an ancient mechanism of public negotiation to take place. It is the icon of Our Lady during the festivity on her honor, every August 2nd, that reignites the historical agency of the Catholic Church in the development of Costa Rican history. By claiming that role, the Church (at least momentaneously) brings back the previous cultural negotiations surrounding Our Lady's tradition, *redeeming* the icon with those negotiations, and transforming it in an effigy that completes the role of religion in the public sphere in Costa Rica.

La Pasada is a fascinating performance tradition. Initially, I called it the ultimate cultural landscape since its structure perfectly defined the cultural negotiations that could take place during the performance. However, with all the changes over more than two hundred years of history, it appears at first glance more like a carcass without real meaning. In other words, a performance tradition, but not a cultural landscape, since no cultural negotiations seem to be taking place during the event. Nevertheless, a deeper analysis involving the contradictions of the symbolic elements present in the performance brings a different conclusion. *La Pasada* is two performances happening together, a two-headed cultural

landscape. That doubled identity is the capital element through which to understand the cultural negotiations that are taking place in contemporary tradition.

Since *La Pasada* has a start date (August 1st, 1782), its origin is easier to trace in terms of intentions and meaning. There is enough and specific archival material in that regard. I believe the best word to describe the instauration of *La Pasada* as performance is *appropriation,* as I mentioned in the last chapter of this study. It was a cultural appropriation, not only of the icon of Our Lady but of all the symbolic elements of power and agency that the icon contained. It was a metaphor for the political and economic changes that involved Cartago's society first and subsequently that of Costa Rica. However, today *La Pasada* is a clear and direct cultural negotiation between two different traditions that are part of the national identity historically: the European ideals of Cartago's conservative society, based on a tradition and a genealogy that goes back to colonial times (and even Spanish low aristocracy); and the folk and popular tradition of the idea of the *humble peasant,* a reminder of the agrarian and egalitarian ideal of Costa Rican citizenship.

While I was in between the oxcarts, the tableaux vivants, the agricultural products, and the sirens and horns of fire trucks and police cars; I understood how *La Pasada* is an incomplete redeeming. Or, to be more accurate, a redeeming in process. That is why it always felt raw, direct, and unfiltered; because the

cultural processes were obvious, wide open to the public analysis. It was while I was over there in Cartago's central avenue, that I could realize that probably, not long ago, *La Romería* and the *Mass of August 2nd* were like that. And that probably, in a few years, *La Pasada* will be a completely redeemed performance tradition, which will allow different and (probably) new cultural negotiations to take place. However, I cannot deny how lucky I was, in my ethnographer's role, to be able to experience and analyze *La Pasada* nowadays. It was that sense of incompleteness that allowed me to understand the interacting mechanism of the three performances in the cultural realm.

Figure 8. A detail of the altar of Cartago's cathedral, previous to the "Mass of welcoming" during La Pasada on August 3rd, 2019. Photo by the author.

Another key concept that has been developed throughout the present work is *costarricanness.* As explained in the previous chapters, *costarricanness* is not a direct reference to the national identity but a way to name the active process to create, re-shape, and transform the national identity. Since the concepts of national identity, citizenship, and belonging are in an unstable process of constant change, they are at the same time incomplete or uneven ideas in a continuous process of (re)definition. The act of *costarricanness* can take different traditions, backgrounds, or behaviors and allow them to collide. The particularity of *costarricanness* is not the collision, but the calm interaction after it; that interaction will create a hybrid set of concepts that could conform to the national identity and concepts like a nation-state, citizenship, or belonging to the Costa Rican society. *Costarricanness* can deal with contradictions, anachronisms, or incompleteness and create a particular space or moment when all of that has sense.

As I have demonstrated, Costa Rica became an independent country because of a very complex historical process before being confirmed as a nation. The independence surprised a country in 1821, without a clear concept of what it is to be Costa Rican and what differentiates this nation from others in the same region. In such a predicament, the icon of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles appeared as a unifying element for the country's inhabitants. For the first years and decades of independent life, the *imagined community* created by religious worship became one with the possibility of an *imagined community* in the civil sphere, because as Benedict Anderson points out '[i]n the minds of each lives the image of their

communion" (Anderson, 6). At the core of Costa Rican identity, the concept of the nation-state and citizenship, is the worship and tradition concerning Our Lady.

La Negrita is a repository of vital elements of national history and identity since the performance traditions surrounding her worship contain traces of those historical and cultural processes. Nevertheless, it is also a metaphor of what it means to be a Costa Rican. The image is made of local volcanic stone, which at the time of its finding was only a medium worked by native artisans. It is a dark sculpture with some resemblances of African facial features and traces of paint. For almost two centuries, it was painted to look like the European religious icons. Today it is considered a *black Madonna,* but not in reference to the blackness of the African descendants' population of Costa Rica, but rather as a metaphor for the country's mixed-race configuration. The effigy of Our Lady contains all Costa Ricans, the natives, the blacks, the pardos, the Europeans, the mestizos, the creole, the Catholics, the liberals, the communists, the protestants, the Muslims, and the immigrants.

In its origins, the present project looked for a new way to understand how national identity, and concepts like the sense of belonging, citizenship, and nation state, were constructed historically through the participatory performances in relation to Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. But also, how likely those performances are today to continue, or even surpass, those initial processes. If there is something this dissertation contributes to the analysis of the formation

and evolution of national identity in Costa Rica, it is to conceive several performances traditions as places where endless material can be found, and to develop new perspectives to analyze it. It already unveiled multiple other possibilities, rooted in the public domain and in the folk tradition.

While the invaluable works of experts like Sanabria, Gil, or Benavides are grounded in archival research and social analysis, the present research is based on performance studies and analysis, as well as in a decolonial understanding of the objects and the subject of study. If there is a clear contribution in this regard, it is the diversion from traditional scholarship, introducing new ways to understand and to study Our Lady, the performance traditions related to it, and other approaches to Costa Rican national identity.

At a certain point during the evolution of this dissertation, the events of the Covid-19 pandemic directly affected the research roadmap in general and the auto-ethnographic calendar in particular. Initially, I thought all the struggles from the pandemic era would render the results of this study somehow incomplete. However, instead of an incompleteness, the pandemic gave to the present research a sense of work-in-progress, while at the same time it opened innumerable opportunities for the future scope of this particular analysis.

Thinking in the future, it will be necessary to re-evaluate all the claims and findings of the present dissertation in light of a post-Covid era, and how such an

experience as a pandemic could affect the performance tradition in the worship and festivities of Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles. If I approach the pandemic years as a true challenge and real test to the meaning and relevance of the performance traditions studied here, with relation to elements of national identity, sense of belonging, and the concept of *costarricanness,* the changes or adjustments of the post-pandemic years will bring a lot of gravitas to the conclusions present in this dissertation.

It is possible that the future approach I will take to this research on the methodological and fieldwork side will look similar to the one developed in this dissertation. However, it is possible that there could be some type of comparative analysis to be made between the findings before and after the pandemic, which would give a sense of depth to the whole project. The idea of understanding these two very complicated years and all the terrible things that happened not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity, not only allows this project to grow in scope, but to develop a larger relevance in the conversation about national identity in Costa Rica.

The effigy of Our Lady contains the essence of the history and national identity of the country. However, through the performance, those elements can be activated, celebrated, contested, or modified. The performance traditions related to the worship and festivities of Our Lady are the devices that conduct the cultural processes studied in this research. However, it is the power of performance that

gives them life and the possibility to become an essential element of the discourse regarding national affairs. The performance is the *redeeming*, that process of constantly redeem and improving the ideas of national identity, citizenship, and the sense of belonging in Costa Rica.

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