

The Legacy of the Filibuster War: National Identity, Collective Memory, and
Cultural Anti-Imperialism

By

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ABSTRACT

The Legacy of the Filibuster War: National Identity, Collective Memory, and Cultural Anti-Imperialism is a dissertation project analyzing how the Filibuster War becomes a staple for Costa Rican national identity. This work presents several challenges to traditional theories of modernization in the creation of nationalism. By focusing on the development of cultural features defined by the transformation of collective memory, this project argues that national identity is a dynamic process defined according to local, national, and international contexts. Modernization theories connect the development of nationalism to the period of consolidation of the nation-state, usually during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The Costa Rican case demonstrates that, while modernization coincides with the creation of symbols of official nationalism, the Filibuster War became a symbol of national identity beginning in the 1850s, and it has been changing throughout the twentieth century. Threats to sovereignty and imperialist advances served to promote the memory of the Filibuster War, while local social transformations, as the abolition of the army and internal political conflict forced drastic changes on the interpretation of the war and the establishment of a national narrative that adjusts to social transformation.

To Diana, Lynn, Edgar, and Barbara

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

On September 12th, 1860, William Walker stood in front of an execution squad on a desolate Honduran beach. He had just been found guilty of filibustering. For almost five years, Walker tried to conquer all of Central America with a mercenary army formed by adventurers hired in the United States. Influenced by the ideas of Manifest Destiny, they conquered Nicaragua in 1855, reestablishing slavery and developing an Anglo-controlled government. In 1856, Walker's forces invaded Costa Rica. His dreams of conquest were represented in a flag he created; its motto was "five or none." Costa Ricans rallied to defend their sovereignty, and along other Central American forces, defeated Walker. Before the firing squad, Walker insisted that he was the legal President of Nicaragua. However,, of the five Central American republics he had conquered, he was president of none.

Since then, the Filibuster War serves as a symbol of resistance and national unity in Central America and the source of romanticized tales of a lost empire in the United States. If Walker had succeeded, he could have annexed the region to the United States or at least have founded a Central American slave republic. This could have represented important support to the southern Confederate States during the U.S. Civil War. If annexed to the United States, Central America could have tipped the congressional majority in favor of southern slavery. Instead, an improvised army formed by small-land farmers under the leadership of an energetic Costa Rican president stopped the filibusters'

advance. For Costa Ricans, defeating Walker generated a certainty about their ability to defend their homes, families, and national values. The memory of the Filibuster War continues to define the national identity of Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Costa Rica presents a unique case for the study of nationalism and national identity because it challenges the hegemonic Eurocentric models that discourage nuanced examinations and alternative interpretations. In Costa Rica, as in Latin America, national identity does not precede the nation, which already challenges theories of ethnonationalism. Instead, it is generally accepted that, in the Americas, the state was created and only then a national identity followed.¹ In Costa Rica, national identity developed with the nation, and not as a product of it. That is, national identity reinforced the consolidation of the state at the same time that the state created a national narrative. Another difference between Costa Rica and the rest of the Americas is that Independence Day is not the major holiday connected to the nation; instead, it is the Filibuster War which occupies the most important symbolic value for Costa Rican national identity. Commemorations of the Filibuster War also challenge traditional modernization theory, demonstrating that Costa Rican national identity has been defined both by the intervention of the

¹ Hebe Clementi. *Formación de la Conciencia Americana*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Pléyade, 1972. Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen. *Beyond Imagined Communities*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona. *Nationalism in the New World*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006. Eastman, Scott. *Preaching Spanish Nationalism across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2012. Enríquez Solano, Francisco, comp. *Fin de Siglo XIX e identidad nacional en México y Centroamérica*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000). Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

state as much as by popular discourse, contesting the theories that national identity is the result of a top-down imposition. This is reflected especially in the celebrations of Juan Santamaría on April 11th. Finally, the victory over the filibusters not only helped Costa Ricans to establish the nation as a viable project, but it shaped its relationship with the hegemonic United States. While relations between Latin America and the United States usually fall into the categories of victim-perpetrator, Costa Rican national identity is based on successful resistance, establishing a discourse that does not fit postcolonial theory. Costa Rican active and successful opposition to U.S. hegemony allowed it to create a discourse of anti-cultural Imperialism, in which Costa Ricans are always in control of their own sovereignty.

This dissertation analyzes the legacy of the Filibuster War, with a special focus on Costa Rica, the country in which memory of this war has developed like nowhere else. The main questions asked in this dissertation relate to the construction of national identity: How did the memory of the war influence the sense of collective identity of the participant countries? How has this war been remembered? Why, in Costa Rica, is the annual celebration of Walker's defeat given greater importance than the commemoration of Independence Day? The last question is especially relevant when a comparison is made with almost all other countries in the Americas, where Independence Day continues to be the only basis of official national identity and a legitimizing element for the state. The underlying topic is the conceptualization of the nation-state in Costa Rica. The legacy of the Filibuster War presents a unique case that deserves study through

the theoretical lens of nationalism in general and national identity in Costa Rica more specifically.

The study of national identity relates directly to the study of nationalism, a topic that deserves some analysis. For some of the more important authors on the topic of nationalism, national identity is in fact a prerequisite for the nation.² While there is a large body of scholarship in the area of nationalism, it is important to note that nationalism in the Americas developed in a context that contrasts with nationalism in other parts of the world.³ The traditional ideas of ethnonationalism espoused by Anthony Smith, and the modernist theories promoted by Ernst Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, derive from a Eurocentric understanding of nationalism, and therefore do not fit the model created in the largely multicultural and immigrant nations of the Americas.⁴ For these authors, language and ethnicity are the basis for national identity. According to these theorists, nations create states based on an allegiance derived from common language, common ethnic background, or common cultural features. But

² Among those who argue that national identity promotes the establishment of a nation are: Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner, Michael Hechter, Miroslav Hroch, and Eric Hobsbawm. See: Ernest Renan. Ernest Renan. "What is a Nation?" In: Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny. *Becoming National: A Reader*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 41-55. Ernest Gellner. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. Michael Hechter. *Containing Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Eric Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Hroch, Miroslav. "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe," in Balakrishnan, Gopal, ed. *Mapping the Nation*. New York and London: Verso, 1996.

³ Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona. *Nationalism in the New World*. (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 2. Nicola Miller. "The Historiography of Nationalism and National Identity in Latin America." *Nations and Nationalism*, 12 (2), 2006, 201-221.

⁴ Anthony Smith. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986. Also see: Gellner *Nations and Nationalism*, and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*...

ethnonationalism does not apply to the Americas, where a multitude of languages, ethnicities, and cultural orientations existed since the colonial period. During the late colonial period, the colonizer's allegiance responded to Europe, since the legal and political core of the empire was located there. For most creoles, identity also resided on their birth place in the American periphery. While there are some signs of identification with the Americas during the colonial period, it was clear that Latin Americans considered themselves primarily part of the Spanish Empire. Therefore, it was the creation of a state that was able to develop national identities in the region. As Hobsbawm recognized in a later study about Latin American nationalism, when it comes to the traditional European model of nationalism, Latin America "is somewhat anomalous."⁵ Hobsbawm reflects here a traditional view that contemplates the concept of nationalism as a reflection of European development, unable to recognize that there is not a unique or prevalent form of nationalism. What he called anomalous is in reality normal in the Latin American context.⁶

The above Europeanist discussion centered on ethnonationalism proposes that national identity preceded the creation of the nation. Scholars of Latin American nationalism have established the opposite for the region, where the

⁵ Eric Hobsbawm. "Nationalism and Nationality in Latin America." In: Bouda Etemad, Jean Batou and Thomas David. *Pour une Histoire Economique et Sociale Internationale. Mélanges Offerts à Paul Bairoch/Towards and International Economic and Social History. Essays in Honour of Paul Bairoch*. (Genève: Editions Passé Présent, 1995), 313-323. Also, Nicola Miller, 201.

⁶ Nation is defined here as the specific community for which an individual feels an allegiance and sense of belonging. The state is the social, economic, and political structure that controls a territory. Nation-state is a specific kind of liberal state representative of the Modern period that by definition (although not necessarily by practice) encompasses one nation.

nation was created during the process of independence, and national identity came later.⁷ Certainly, there are some pre-national features in the Costa Rican case that can be perceived as foundational elements of a national identity, but such studies prove to be anachronistic, since national identity is a phenomenon that can be studied only *a posteriori*. To search the past for precedents of now commonly accepted values of, say, Costa Rican anti-militarism, is to try to distort the past. Instead, if we study the effect of the abolition of the army in relation to anti-militarism, we can establish if there is such a connection. Still, some Costa Rican scholars have ventured on the terrain of proto-nationalism, arguing for the existence of an identity that predates the nation. Juan Rafael Quesada talked about the existence of a Costa Rican proto-nationalism, arguing that some features of Costa Rican nationalism predate the nation.⁸ Quesada does not take into account that there cannot be a Costa Rican national identity until there is a consciousness of it existing as a separate nation. During the colonial period Costa Rica formed part of the Kingdom of Guatemala and responded to its authorities. After gaining independence, a short two-year hiatus was followed by the inclusion of Costa Rica in the newly created Central American Federation. The adoption of September 15th as Independence Day in Costa Rica is an acknowledgment of its belonging to a larger nation. Therefore, Costa Rica was not an independent nation

⁷ Miller. "The Historiography of Nationalism..." 201. Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780...*, 68. Doyle and Pamplona. *Nationalism in the New World...*, 6. This means that the process of creation of the state was reflected in the creation of a territory that considered all its inhabitants as members of the new nation. The process of creation of national identity was therefore a political tool directed to standardize the meaning of being a member of the new nation.

⁸ Juan Rafael Quesada. *Clarín Patriótico: la guerra contra los filibusteros y la nacionalidad costarricense*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2006), 64.

until 1838, when the federation collapsed, and more specifically, until 1848, when the republic was finally declared. Before those dates there was no clear consciousness of Costa Rica as a separate nation. It is important to note that during the colonial period, Costa Rica, as Spanish America, had a dominant Spanish identity.⁹ This identity was not easily erased. Borders and divisions that separated each new state in Latin America did take the same shape of the provincial divisions of the former Empire. As soon as the state was created, it engaged in a process of establishing a unique identity to differentiate the new nation from other Latin American nations.¹⁰

While it is agreed that states in Latin America preceded national identity, perhaps it is better to think of Costa Rican national identity as developing along the process of construction of the nation-state. In Oscar Ozlak's words, "as a state comes into existence, a dynamic process of social creation takes place in which other social entities and actors come into existence and acquire their own distinct character."¹¹ Modern social values can have ancient roots, but the introduction of the state created a new structural framework that redefined social and cultural dynamics, preventing the continuation of traditional pre-national social relations.

⁹ Kagan, Richard L. *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. Eastman, Scott. *Preaching Spanish Nationalism across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2012.

¹⁰ Earle, Rebecca. *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. Sommer, Doris. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

¹¹ Oscar Ozlak. "The Historical Formation of the State in Latin America: Some Theoretical and Methodological Guidelines for Its Study," in: *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2. (1981), pp. 3-32.

Modernists may argue that national identity is as product of the modernizing liberal project of the late nineteenth century, similar to the French modernization process of building an officially sanctioned, unifying national identity.¹² In Costa Rica, the development of national identity symbols was a process initiated by the creation of the current national flag at the same moment of the foundation of the Republic in 1848. The creation of official symbols of nationalism based on the Filibuster War started during the war itself, including a decree to build statues commemorating the war as early as 1858. The creation of national identity along the social, political, and economic changes of the state explain the transformations and the changing relevance of the Filibuster War as part of the national narrative in moments of national crisis. This dissertation demonstrates that Walker's invasion provoked official and popular unity and a cultural understanding of unification that was both positive and assertive. This new stance distinguished Costa Rica from other Central American nations in two ways: First, citizens, regardless of class or race, viewed themselves as contributors to state and cultural formation, and therefore empowered themselves to participate in a democratic system. Second, national identity did not include the victim myth about the United States being the inevitable and implacable hegemon so prevalent in other parts of Latin America. These arguments will be analyzed in chapters 4 to 7. Third, the Costa Rican experience amends the Eurocentric model of nation-building and national identity formation. To understand this point, it is important to explain the

¹² Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976. Venita Datta. *Heroes and Legends of Fin-de Siècle France. Gender, Politics, and National Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

main historiographical schools of nationalism and how they relate to the subject of this dissertation.

According to Anthony Smith, scholars of nationalism are divided into four schools of thought: nationalists, perennialists, modernists, and postmodernists.¹³ Nationalists and perennialists believe that the nation always existed, and that each nation has a clear identity. In the Costa Rican case, some scholars have proposed the existence of an intrinsic identity since colonial times that differentiated Costa Ricans from the rest of Central America.¹⁴ The problem with this approach is that it applies contemporary notions of identity to the past, forcing false and anachronistic equivalents. A clear example of how a commonly accepted contemporary feature of national identity can be erroneously described as an ancestral national characteristic would be to look to the colonial past to find examples to support the argument that Costa Ricans have always been peaceful and anti-militaristic. Also, as Gellner notes, we should consider that for a nation to exist, it has to fulfill the basic conditions of having a territory and an independent government that correlates to it. Under these terms, we cannot talk with confidence about the existence of Costa Rican nationalism until 1848, when

¹³ Anthony D. Smith. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 180-181.

¹⁴ An example is: José Luis Vega Carballo. *Orden y Progreso: La formación del estado nacional en Costa Rica*. San José: ICAP, 1981.

the Republic was finally founded, even if Independence from Spain was acquired in 1821.¹⁵

The importance of Costa Rican participation in the Filibuster War (1856–1857) is that this event finally showed Costa Ricans that their nation was a viable project. Sovereignty was successfully defended by a massive mobilization of its inhabitants united by a sense of belonging to the same community. While Costa Rica declared its independence from Spain in 1821, it did so only to join the Mexican Empire of Iturbide. Even if this union was no more than a nominal event, the fact that Costa Rica relinquished its independence became clear by 1823, when it joined the Central American Federation. The dissolution of the Federation in 1838 and the final Costa Rican declaration of an independent Republic in 1848 were the first serious attempts to create a Costa Rican nation. Therefore, the foundation of the republic and the Filibuster War are the moments in which Costa Rica finally established a clear national project. Before 1848, Costa Rica was unable to define an identity clearly independent and separate from Central America, Mexico, or even Colombia, all countries to which Costa Rica was annexed or asked to join after Independence.¹⁶ Also, since a national

¹⁵ “Nationalism is primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.” In: Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1. Quoted in: Hobsbawm: *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 9. This does not disregard the need to study pre-1848 nationalistic claims. During the colonial period, as well as during its belonging to the Central American Federation, inhabitants of the province or State called themselves Costa Ricans, showing a distinct identity. Also, between 1821 and 1823, Costa Rica ruled itself by its own constitution. While still very unstable and immature, the existence of a temporary national framework in those years cannot be denied.

¹⁶ David Díaz Arias, “La Invención de las Naciones en Centroamérica, 1821-1950,” *Boletín AFEHC* N°15, published on December 4, 2005. Available at: http://afehc-historia-centroamericana.org/index.php?action=fi_aff&id=367, 22.

economy did not start to develop until the expansion of coffee plantations during the 1850s, we can say that before 1848 there was no Costa Rican project of a nation, because since 1823, energies were directed toward the creation of a Central American national identity.¹⁷ The adoption of September 15th as the national holiday that celebrates Independence is a good example of an effort of Centralamericanization of Costa Rica. This holiday does not celebrate the moment in which Costa Rican achieved its Independence, but the day in which the Guatemalan town council declared its separation from Spain. September 15th was adopted by all members of the Federation as a sign of belonging to the Central American nation.

The approach used in this dissertation resembles the modernist approach that establishes that the nation is a product of the modernization process typical of the nineteenth century. Modernization theory establishes that nations are a modern phenomenon, and that they are intrinsically connected to the process of industrialization, expansion of capitalism, secularism, and, most importantly, the consolidation of a bureaucratic state.¹⁸ In this sense, a modern nation is the product of the twin revolutions: the industrial revolution in its economic aspect, and the French revolution as its ideological framework. My approach varies

¹⁷ Iván Molina Jiménez. *Costa Rica (1800-1850): El legado colonial y la génesis del capitalismo*. Colección Historia de Costa Rica. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002, (295). Arturo Taracena Arriola. "Nación y República en Centroamérica (1821-1865)." In: Arturo Taracena Arriola and Jean Piel, comps. *Identidades nacionales y Estado moderno en Centroamérica*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995, (52). The hiatus 1821-1823, when a glimpse of national spirit can be perceived, will be analyzed on chapter 4.

¹⁸ Umut Özkirimli. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010 (second edition), 72.

slightly in that I do not define the nation as an exclusively modern phenomenon. Instead, I acknowledge that in Latin America, and of course, in Costa Rica, the process of nation formation coincides with the modernization process, and develops according to the features of modernization. The formation of the modern nation-state is a phenomenon occurring in Europe and the Americas mostly during the late nineteenth century when positivism and ideas of order and progress became the hegemonic ideology. This demonstrates that modernization shaped the development of these nations, but not that modernization created them. The Costa Rican case shows that the Filibuster War became a national symbol before the state had introduced the institutions that modernization theory requires for the dissemination of national identity.

I also contest some of the postmodernist understandings of national identity. Postmodernists agree with modernists on the importance of modernization as the moment in which the nation was possible. Anthony Smith's definition of the postmodernist school in nationalism studies establishes that a nation is a product of modernization, a process in which intellectual elites are responsible for selecting, inventing, and mixing past events in order to create an image that reflects contemporary ideals.¹⁹ In Costa Rican historiography, Steven Palmer and Díaz Arias follow this argument and assert that Central American liberal elites of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shaped the past to

¹⁹ Smith. *Myths*, 180.

fit their ideological project.²⁰ In this dissertation, I study the creation of Costa Rican national identity not as something invented, but as something imagined, a subtle differentiation between Hobsbawm's and Anderson's views.²¹ Postmodernist theories study national identity as an artificial product defined by the governing elites in order to reshape society according to their own goals. I contend that it is a stretch of the imagination to believe that presidents, ministers, and newspaper owners held closed-door meetings to create a national hero who would inspire the population to support a war.²² Instead, I propose that the Filibuster War derives its status as the main event promoting official nationalism from its symbolism as well as from its real value. The Filibuster War was a real event that began to shape Costa Rican national identity from the battle, at Santa Rosa. Therefore, it was not an artificial event redefined as an ideological tool, it was an event that shaped Costa Rican consciousness. Changes to the meaning of the Filibuster War were certainly influenced by the state and the economic, political, and intellectual elites, but also by popular culture in a more organic development.

I argue here that Costa Rica, as a nation, would simply not exist without the defeat of Walker. His invasion of Central America posed the greatest threat to

²⁰ Díaz Arias. *La Invención de las Naciones en Centroamérica*, 33. The modernist approach is strong among Costa Rican historians, based on Steven Palmer's pioneer work.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.

²² Steven Palmer. "El Héroe Indicado (o un Estado en Búsqueda de su Nación): Juan Santamaría, la Batalla de Rivas y la Simbología Liberal, 1880-1895." In: Iván Molina Jiménez. *Industriosa y Sobria: Costa Rica en los Días de la Campaña Nacional (1856-1857)*. (South Woodstock, VT: Plumrock Mesoamerican Studies, 2007), 110-129. The scene is described on page 119.

Costa Rican nationhood and identity before or since 1856. Therefore, it is normal to think of the influence and inspiration this historical event has caused on Costa Ricans every time they learn about it. It is true that the current image of Santamaría, Mora, and the Filibuster War is in general a product initiated by intellectuals belonging to *El Olimpo*, but this only reflects the small access the liberal elite provided to the general public to achieve positions from which to influence the rest of the country. I argue that the construction of the nation had to use the Filibuster War because it was the only event in Costa Rican history that was able to coalesce the nation, enforcing a perception of unity. The modernist project of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century needed a narrative on which to base the image of the nation; it is simply impossible to imagine a Costa Rican national identity without the Filibuster War.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several events were used in Costa Rica to build the image of the nation: Independence, the Filibuster War, and the arrival of the Conquistadors are just some of them. Of these, only two were successfully implemented: Independence Day and the Filibuster War. Independence Day is a problematic holiday in the sense that it was an artificial construction, reflecting similar celebrations used on the rest of the Americas. While its implementation was successful, Independence Day falls into the area of invented traditions. The date it is celebrated, September 15th, 1821, reflects an event without connection to Costa Rica and without any input or involvement of Costa Ricans at all. It commemorates the signing of the Guatemalan Independence Act, not Costa Rican Independence. Costa Ricans

signed their Independence Act weeks later, and after doing so, declared December 1st as the date that commemorated this event. Only after its incorporation into the Central American Federation did Costa Rica establish September 15th as its Independence Day, following the suggestions of the Federal Congress. Also, by 1821, Costa Rica did not have a centralized entity that could make a decision for the whole province. This lack of a central authority is reflected on the fact that the city of Heredia declared its political adhesion to León, Nicaragua, for several months after independence was declared. Finally, to declare independence from one country (Spain) and in the same document declare annexation to another one (Mexico), and later become a minor province of a third country (Central American Federation) contradicts any claim of being an independent country between 1821 and the final collapse of the Central American Federation years later.

The Filibuster War, on the other hand, was not an invented tradition. Instead, it defined the identity of Costa Ricans in such a way that it was impossible to live without recognizing its importance. The Filibuster War brought together the nation as one body, while at the same time established the idea that Costa Rica was a viable project of a nation that could defend itself and therefore deserved a place among modern nations. The fact that in 1858 president Mora declared May 1st as a national holiday to celebrate the war and ordered the construction of a monument remembering it tells us how important this event was for Costa Rica. The liberal elites of the late nineteenth century applied another set of ideals, that of modernization, to express what they imagined their country

should look like. They did not invent the Filibuster War, they only followed a successful narrative that preceded them and built on it.

The images of the Filibuster War, in summary, should not be considered as a liberal elite conspiracy directed to create a fictitious narrative in order to justify their rule and their project of a nation. The memory of the Filibuster War has developed from different directions, both organic and institutional, as well as in the shape of pro-localist and nationalist forms, and it has not been free from debate and scandal. More than 150 years later, passing through the crisis of the liberal project, reformist governments, civil war, and social democrat and neo-liberal administrations, the Filibuster War continues to be a source of inspiration for Costa Ricans and a proud symbol of their national identity.

This study adds to Latin American nation-building historiography analyzing the consequences of the Walker invasion in Central America and on the assertive spirit that grounded Costa Rican national identity after the Filibuster War. By doing so, it will demonstrate that both official and popular opinion converged to make the victories over Walker a declaration of Central American and especially Costa Rican self-determination. The Filibuster War, in 1856, became the symbol of the Costa Rican nation-state for two reasons: first, victory over the filibusters showed Costa Ricans that their country was a viable project. Second, it became associated with the expansion of the nation-state, which created the political, social, and economic structure that defined the nation. The process of modernization was not one of transforming peasants into Costa Ricans, but of establishing institutions that regulated the relations between the elites and

small farmers.²³ The idea that the Central Valley equated to the national territory was challenged by the Filibuster War, which forced the mobilization of twenty percent of the population to leave their towns in order to join the national effort that took them for the first time to the Pacific coast, the northwestern province of Moracia (today Guanacaste), and the San Juan river. This allowed Costa Ricans to develop an identity that equated to its official territory, and not only to the cities inside the Central Valley.

Canadian historian Steven Palmer was the first one to present an argument connecting the process of modernization in Costa Rica with the development of a national identity based on the Filibuster War. In 2007, he argued that Costa Rican national identity was spontaneously created in 1885, when the state was mature and modern enough to develop, control, and deliver a national narrative based on the glories of the Filibuster War that served the purposes of the liberal elite.²⁴ This dissertation demonstrates, instead, that the Filibuster War, as a staple of Costa Rican national identity, has been a constant feature since 1856. As a symbol, it has suffered changes due to national and international affairs: at the national level it was influenced by inter-elite factional conflict, localism, and civil war, while U.S. Imperialism and the spread of socialist ideas are international aspects that promoted revisions on the commemoration of the Filibuster War. The fact that the

²³ Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

²⁴ Steven Palmer. "El Héroe Indicado (o un Estado en Búsqueda de su Nación): Juan Santamaría, la Batalla de Rivas y la Simbología Liberal, 1880-1895." In: Iván Molina Jiménez. *Industriosa y Sobria: Costa Rica en los días de la Campaña Nacional (1856-1857)*. (South Woodstock, VE: Plumrock Mesoamerican Studies, 2007), 111-129.

meaning and interpretation of the Filibuster War and its uses has changed can be only attributed to the dynamic features of society. Since the Filibuster War was not an invented tradition, I disagree with Palmer in his assertion that the memory of the war was a late nineteenth century invention. Instead, I argue that the war was a traumatic event that defined the generation that lived its consequences. Therefore, the Filibuster War was a real event that established a specific image of what it meant to be a Costa Rican. The legacy of this imagined identity has, since then, been transformed according to social, political, and cultural changes the nation has suffered.

Theory and methodology

The questions presented above, including those related to the creation of national identity and the consolidation of the Costa Rican nation-state can be answered by the use of theoretical tools developed on the area of collective memory. Concepts like imagined communities, *lieux de mémoire* or sites of memory, invented traditions, cultural imperialism, national identity, and popular culture are the main substance of this study. These theories reveal the interpretations given to the Filibuster War, and the political uses of the past in Costa Rica, and it is no surprise that I rely heavily on these authors and theories. A little explanation of their relevance to my work follows.

The now classic work by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, supports the theoretical background of this work as well as its methodology.²⁵

²⁵ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Anderson's theory focused on the concept of national identity. Instead of classifying what makes a nation and which features are necessary for a nation to be called as such, Anderson reversed the attention, directing it to the idea that a nation is created when the nation considers its own existence. In order to do so, a community has to recognize itself as a cohesive entity, with particular characteristics that makes it different from others. By following Anderson's approach to written nationalism we can argue that a nation becomes a reality once it appropriates a name for itself. This name is not only a geographical, linguistic, or ethnic identifier, it has to be charged with several layers of symbolism and interpretation. The name corresponds to a specific, although dynamic, identity. This identity is dynamic because societies are in constant flow. An imagined community is therefore an artificial and biased interpretation of reality, and as such no less real than any other interpretation. National identity, in this manner, is supported by a national narrative, and this narrative becomes the basis in which a society is structured. By analyzing the transformation of the national narrative associated with the Filibuster War we can discover the changes Costa Rican society experienced.

Anderson's contribution to this dissertation also comes in terms of methodology. His work emphasizes the use of written works that spread visions of the nation. Newspapers and books, because of their broad and constant appeal, are perfect instruments to disseminate values and ideas of the nation. They are broad because they can travel and reach different geographical areas with ease. They are constant because written words carry with them a sense of fixity, and

therefore of continuity and certainty. This dissertation relies heavily on historical works and newspapers as instruments that spread interpretations of the Filibuster War, as well as mirrors in which societies see their beliefs reflected and confirmed.

The importance Anderson gave to printed culture in order to support his argument explains the influence of the press in developing images and narratives of the nation. His view of a Creole nationalism promoted by an imagined community of readers of local newspapers certainly applies to the research approach used in this dissertation. It is important to note that during the nineteenth century, Latin American newspapers (as in Europe and the United States) had a limited circulation, and the influence of the press varied also according to each country in the region.²⁶ For example, while there are arguments that demonstrate how the press in Mexico played an important role in promoting the struggle for independence, Rebecca Earle argues that the same cannot be said in the cases of Colombia, Chile, or Peru.²⁷ On the other hand, according to Carmen McEvoy, the pre-independence newspaper *Mercurio Peruano*, while not necessarily promoting independence, asserted a strong republicanism and civic nationalism showing the

²⁶ Ivan Jaksic. *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. London: University of London, 2002.

²⁷ Rebecca Earle. "The Role of Print in the Spanish American Wars of Independence," in: Ivan Jaksic. *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. (London: University of London, 2002), 9-33.

writers' understanding of the social influence of the press.²⁸ In fact, newspapers served not only a political purpose, but also a didactic one, as Serrano and Jaksic show in the case of Chile in the early 1840s, which can be extrapolated to the Costa Rican case, where an explosion of newspapers coincided with the Education Reform promoted by the state during the 1880s.²⁹

Likewise, Venita Datta bases her study on late nineteenth-century French nationalism on the influence of newspapers as cultural shapers, stating that the “press had the power to create a public out of disparate individuals who shared a common sense of belonging,” contributing to a “homogenization of the public.”³⁰ In her study, the press played an important role in the construction of a national community. This is also present in the Costa Rican case. There is proof that, as early as 1834, newspapers were publicly read and discussed during *Tertulias* or *salon*-like meetings.³¹ This coincides with Maurice Halbwachs' theory on how social frameworks create a sense of communal identity. The discussion of ideas inside a social environment establishes specific narratives that consolidate a collective memory, the basis for a sense of belonging to an imagined community.

²⁸ Carmen McEvoy “‘Seríamos excelentes vasallos y nunca ciudadanos’: Prensa Republicana y Cambio Social en Lima, 1791-1822,” in: Ivan Jaksic. *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. (London: University of London, 2002), 34-63.

²⁹ Serrano and Jaksic. “Church and Liberal State Strategies on the Dissemination of Print in Nineteenth-Century Chile,” in: Ivan Jaksic. *The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. (London: University of London, 2002), 64-85.

³⁰ Venita Datta. *Heroes and Legends of fin-de-siècle France: Gender, Politics and National Identity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 27, 35, 72.

³¹ Patricia Vega Jiménez. *De la Imprenta al Periódico: Los inicios de la Comunicación Impresa en Costa Rica, 1821-1850*. (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 1995), 161.

Narratives of the nation, therefore, help to develop a national community. One of the main goals of the press, especially the one connected to the government, was to spread the official discourse, and with it, official nationalism. As an instrument of official nationalism, the press has been always extremely helpful. In Costa Rica, there was a government monopoly of information through *La Gaceta* and a few other official newspapers during the 1860s and 1870s, which helped to consolidate a common national narrative. My use of newspapers is based on the idea that they have some educational purposes, especially in relation to spreading values of citizenship and social order. Costa Rican journalist Carlos Morales argues that *La Gaceta* of the 1860s and 1870s was so influential that when Costa Rican independent journalism developed during and after the 1880s, it followed the same framework imposed by the government's newspaper.³² During the 1870s and 1880s, official propaganda was also imbued in non-official newspapers, as *El Costarricense*, *El Ferrocarril*, and *El Diario de Costa Rica*, all of them independent newspapers with strong connections to the state.³³

The influence of newspapers grew, of course, with the amount of potential readers. After the 1860s, the liberal project promoted levels of literacy never seen before. By 1870, the first Normal school was created. The amount of elementary schools tripled during President Guardia's administration, from 80 elementary

³² Carlos Morales. *El Hombre que nos Quiso la Guerra: Una Revolución en el Periodismo de Costa Rica*. San José: Ariel Seix Barral, 1981., 27.

³³ Morales, 32.

schools in 1871 to 234 in 1882.³⁴ The Education Reform of 1886, under President Soto, was responsible for the inauguration of several high schools and the expansion of elementary education. The census of 1883 showed a literacy rate of 26% , which grew to 53% by 1896.³⁵ In this manner, Costa Rica achieved the highest level of literacy in Latin America, providing also the larger ratio of teachers per student in the whole region.³⁶ The liberal project used the school system to promote specific values to the population. Once students were able to read, they had an easier access to all printed material, newspapers being the main source. Since most newspapers had a strong connection to the government or to the liberal project in general, their reading reinforced the values taught in school, including, of course, a specific national narrative and the understanding of basic symbols of official national identity.

This dissertation uses all Costa Rican newspapers available, focusing on the most influential ones. Some of the independent newspapers had strong connections to the government and were used in order to spread specific values and ideas. One of the most influential newspapers was *El Diario de Costa Rica*, which appeared for the first time on January, 1885. Its first publication coincided with the consolidation of daily instead of weekly newspapers. This newspaper was strongly influenced by the liberal groups in power, and in 1886 it was the

³⁴ Orlando Salazar Mora. *El Apogeo de la República Liberal en Costa Rica, 1870-1914*. (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 251.

³⁵ Joaquín Bernardo Calvo. *The Republic of Costa Rica*. (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Co., 1890), 166. Salazar Mora, 255.

³⁶ Salazar Mora, 255-256. In 1896, Costa Rica had 3.29 teachers per 100 students, above countries like Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Perú, with 2.83, 2.08, 2.01, and 1.51 respectively.

main promoter of Soto's candidacy to president.³⁷ Although it was not an official newspaper, its director, Joaquín Bernardo Calvo, had a close relationship with Próspero Fernández and Bernardo Soto. Both were elected presidents of Costa Rica during the liberal period. Calvo's father had been a minister during the government of Mora, which explains the interest of the newspaper on promoting the memory of the Filibuster War. The newspaper disappeared in 1886, leaving the stage for other dailies to take over the position of Costa Rica's most important sources of opinion.

La República was another influential newspaper that also showed strong support for the liberal elite. Founded in 1886, this newspaper published the work of some of the most important intellectuals of *El Olimpo*.³⁸ Another newspaper, *La Prensa Libre*, was born in 1889 to coalesce the opposition against the ruling party, and therefore, those opposing the political preferences supported by *La República*. Together, these newspapers became the most important ones during the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Morales, this period demonstrates the undeniable power and influence newspapers acquired in Costa Rican society.³⁹ After the 1914 crisis of the liberal state, other newspapers like *La Información* (1908-1919), *La Tribuna* (1919-1948), *El Diario de Costa Rica* (under new administration, 1919-1965), and *La Nación* (1946-present), succeeded each other as the main daily, always showing

³⁷ Morales, 104.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

³⁹ Morales, 175.

strong political preferences. All these newspapers are at the center of this dissertation, since the influence of their opinions shaped Costa Rican national identity.

Another aspect of Anderson's premise, in relation to printed culture, is also present in the form of novels. Doris Sommer's work on nineteenth-century Latin American novels argues that these works of fiction created a connection between romantic adventures and romantic views of the nation, establishing a desire to belong to the national community following the goals of nation-building projects.⁴⁰ The Costa Rican case is not different, although national literature did develop later than in other parts of Latin America. The first Costa Rican novel, *El Problema*, was not published until 1898. It was soon followed by a series of short stories and novels that reflected the interest on establishing a clearly defined national identity under the direction of a liberal project of nation-state.

The intellectual elite behind *El Olimpo* produced important nationalist works as part of a continuous debate about the shape of Costa Rican national identity. Carlos Gagini, for example, focused on the anxiety produced by U.S. expansionism, and periodically referred to the Filibuster War as an example to follow and a reason for national pride. Others, like Ricardo Fernández Guardia, Cleto Gonzalez Víquez, and Pío Víquez, combined their interest on fiction writing with their profession as historians, politicians, and journalists in order to promote the liberal project of nation-building. As in the case of Gagini, the Filibuster War

⁴⁰ Doris Sommer. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

was also one of the main topics used by these authors to cement a sense of national identity. These authors will also be analyzed as part of the influence of printed culture in the creation of Costa Rican national identity and its connection to the Filibuster War.

There are other authors and theories that deserve some attention. The concepts of repetition and continuity basic for the formation of a sense of continuity with the past, as Eric Hobsbawm stated in *Invented Traditions*. Once a connection to the past is established, traditions are easier to accept, because they appeal to the core values of the nation. An important part of these traditions is their appeal to a communal sense of belonging, which reinforces identification. Narratives and symbols are created to support, interpret, and mark the values and ideals that help a nation to conserve the sense of a distinctive identity.⁴¹ In the case of the Filibuster War, I have established already that it is not an invented tradition, but instead an imagined framework for the nation. Notwithstanding, this process also needs a constant connection with the past, even while it is in constant flux.

The fact that a nation uses symbols to be represented reveals the importance of French historian Pierre Nora and his study of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory.⁴² According to Nora, these sites of memory supplant real events on which memory is based. Specific events become symbols and representations

⁴¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

⁴² Pierre Nora. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. I. Conflicts and Divisions*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii, 1.

of the ideals and values that define the nation. In the large collection of essays included on Nora's edited work on *lieux de mémoire*, several ways of representation, or icons, are analyzed. Among them are myths and legends, statues, parades, street names, national figures, literature, and commemorations. The *lieux de mémoire* representing the nation are the main source of analysis in this dissertation. Their deconstruction serves to explain their importance for the definition of a national identity. In doing so, this dissertation will answer the following questions: Who thought certain symbols were relevant? When did they start to become a part of the national narrative? How long did it take for these symbols to be broadly accepted? Were they contested? Were there any other possible *lieux de mémoire* that were unsuccessful, or that existed only temporarily? By answering these questions, it is possible to understand how the nation has defined itself. Also, we can devise how the memory of the Filibuster War helped the nation to adapt to local and international circumstances. Finally, we can understand what the nation expects from its citizens, and what citizens expect from the state, as well as from themselves as a society.

Another aspect studied in this dissertation is the concept of official history. This idea implies a top-down transmission of national narratives. That is, a unidirectional ideological imposition developed by the state and the governing elites in order to spread a specific set of values over the society they control. To understand how official history is used, it is also extremely relevant to study the reaction of the members of society that do not belong to the elite or to the circles of the state. Gramsci's social division in dominant and subordinate groups serve

to explain the framework used here. It is important to warn the reader that the use of the terms dominant and subordinate are not developed without certain critique, the same kind already analyzed by Carlo Ginzburg on *The Cheese and the Worms*, to which Michel De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* has a lot to add.⁴³

In his famous work on microhistory, Ginzburg states that sources from the medieval period represent the exclusive interpretation of the elites, since only those few that could write and read were able to control archives and official documentation. Therefore, understanding the ideas of common people is complicated by the filter the elites imposed on interpretation. There is one place, according to Ginzburg, in which the dominant and subaltern can be found, which is recorded in the questionnaires of the Inquisition. This is one of the few documents of the medieval period that allows us to take a look at what the subordinate thought. Ginzburg's analysis allows historians to discern a clear subordinate ideology with significant contrasts to dominant thought, challenging Gramsci's idea that subaltern ideology was basically a reflection of an imposed ideology by the dominant groups. The work of Michel de Certeau gives us a modern perspective to this same issue. He argues that there is currently a large silent majority that seems to have almost no input on the construction of society, leaving in a marginal ideological space. Still, this majority produces culture and art in a daily basis through individual actions of everyday life. Buying, cooking, walking, reading, or dwelling are forms to shape society and culture derived from

⁴³ Carlo Ginzburg. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

popular groups, Gramsci's subordinate, or rather, Ginzburg's assertion of an independent and creative subordinate.

I use these concepts to explain the cultural dissonance produced after the abolition of the army and the popular relation to a changing national identity embracing anti-militarism while being stuck with the memory of a traumatic war and a military national hero. Since popular culture is dynamic, as De Certeau states, and its production is not always recorded, as Ginzburg asserts, I analyze celebrations and commemorations of the Filibuster War as the moment in which popular culture takes a preponderant position in the shaping of the meaning of national identity. The active participation of subordinate or marginal groups during the parades celebrating the Filibuster War provide a vantage point to observe how popular culture understands the event, and how close, or not, its interpretation is to official discourse. The nation, after all, as a social construct, is dynamic and ever-changing. The dynamic nature of society relies precisely in the encounter between a dominant and a subordinate narrative, especially in the adjustments both groups have to develop to establish a broadly accepted understanding of their own society.

The national narrative developed in Costa Rica has been clearly shaped by the Filibuster War. While the national discourse is anti-imperialist, it is different from the traditional anti-imperialist discourses of colonized or occupied countries. The difference resides in that former colonies develop a discourse of resistance that defines the nation in opposition to an empire. Costa Rica, instead, defines itself as a modern nation capable to consummate its own project and its own

national identity. This capability was demonstrated when sovereignty was successfully defended during the Filibuster War. This national narrative is a product of what I call Cultural Anti-Imperialism, which opposes or contrasts with the theories of Cultural Imperialism presented by Postcolonial Studies.

Postcolonialism studies present a well-developed theoretical framework to explain the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, or actually, between the empire and the former colony. The problem is that Costa Rica was not colonized or occupied by the United States. In fact, the Costa Rican national narrative is not based on a continuous dependency from the empire, but on its capability to negotiate a space for the development of a national project despite the imperial designs of the United States. The term Cultural Imperialism has been coined to describe the influence an empire asserts over formal and informal colonies through the consumption of cultural production. It explains the power of mass media and marketing, as well as economic intervention used by an empire to reshape the identity of its colonies, forcing them to consume and to become dependent on what the empire produces. I find a problem with both narratives, which lack the insight to explain the Costa Rican case. In this dissertation, I use the term Cultural Anti-Imperialism to explain how the Costa Rican national narrative based on the Filibuster War allowed for the construction of an active discourse for nation-building.

Postcolonialism is a concept derived from the vacuum created by the end of colonial rule in Africa and Asia. It represents a shift from direct rule by a foreign entity to internal colonialism. This process was characterized by the

alliance between small local elites and foreign corporations or governments to continue the economic exploitation and political domination of the colonial period, this time under the framework of an independent nation.⁴⁴ In the Latin American case, postcolonial studies become problematic since the process of decolonization was not the same as in Asia and Africa. Its methodology needs to be redefined for its use on the Latin American context. First, the clear separation between the colonizer and the colonized, so obvious in the African and Asian case, but not so much in Latin America. In Asia and Africa, the colonizer was the elite and the only dominant group. The native was therefore the colonized. This circumstance continued even after independence, when foreigners allied with local elites to continue their social and economic control. In Latin America, instead, the colonizer mixed with the colonized. This mixture varied on each country, but always created a real melting pot.⁴⁵ At the cultural level, this created an identity problem in which Latin Americans realized their connection to the colonized groups, and at the same time, to the colonizer.⁴⁶ The continuous use of the term *Madre Patria* referring to Spain, for example, is a nostalgic remnant used

⁴⁴ Franz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 2005.

⁴⁵ Curiously, although commonly used in the United States, this term cannot describe that country, where different groups have contact but in general do not mix. Following the culinary metaphor, the United States is a fruit salad not a melting pot.

⁴⁶ For example, the issue of the ladino (*mestizo*) identity in Guatemala is analyzed in: Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean-Loup Herbert. *Guatemala: Una Interpretación Histórico-Social*. México: Siglo XXI, 1970. Translated to French: Jean-Loup Herbert, Carlos Guzmán Böckler, and Julio Quian. *Indianité et lute des classes*. Paris: UGE 10-18, 1972.

by creole population that easily extended to the mestizos, which also could recognize their strong western historical and cultural traditions.⁴⁷

Second, in Asia and Africa economic dependency is directly linked to the former colonizer, while in Latin America neither Spain nor Portugal remained as the core, in dependency theory terms, of a Latin American periphery.⁴⁸ Instead, they were immediately substituted as economic powers first by the British, and later by the United States.⁴⁹ The British Empire created a commercial system for Latin America that favored an agricultural exporting model, later complemented by the extraction of raw materials. At the same time, it eliminated local industrial production, creating a dependency on external industry and technology. Political interference at a large scale came later, with the arrival of the United States to the scene, produced mostly as a reaction to nationalist demands after the crisis of the liberal model in the early twentieth century. This system of economic dependency was internally criticized in Latin America after the crisis of 1929, which promoted import-substitution policies accompanied by the expansion of internal markets.⁵⁰

During the twentieth century, U.S. imperialism in Latin America was directed not

⁴⁷ The figure of the *mestizo* has served both to describe the worse and the best of Latin American identity. In an attempt to define a national identity, there exists a historic debate about ethnic identification, focusing either on a European, mestizo, or indigenous identity. Only recently multiethnicity has been analyzed as part of Latin American identity. Some examples are: Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean-Loup Herbert. *Guatemala: Una Interpretación Histórico-Social*. México: Siglo XXI, 1970., Octavio Paz. *El Laberinto de la Soledad*. Penguin Books, 1997., Carlos Fuentes. *El Espejo Enterrado*. Alfaguara, 2010., Severo Martínez Peláez. *La Patria del Criollo*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006. The last three are translated to English.

⁴⁸ Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto. *Dependencia y Desarrollo de América Latina*. Enzo Faletto y Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1969.

⁴⁹ Plus some short periods of French and German interest in the region.

⁵⁰ Cardoso and Faletto, 3-10.

to the continuation of the colonial system under a national structure as was happening in Asia and Africa, but to the destruction of a nascent economic nationalism in the region.

The Costa Rican case, in relation to U.S. expansionism, does not belong to postcolonial studies, neither to subaltern studies.⁵¹ The relationship between Costa Rica and the United States implies the regular complexity of international relations between economic-military powers and much smaller nations, where the smaller nation (Costa Rica in this case) constantly negotiates its position as a sovereign modern nation. Kyle Longley's work on President Figueres points out this dynamic, noting how Costa Rica chose a path of non-confrontation with the empire, standing up on issues relevant to the Costa Rican social democrat project, while openly conceding on issues apparently irrelevant to national sovereignty.⁵² The terms of this relationship and any possible sense of dependency or imperialism, therefore, rely on the eyes of the beholder, in this case, Costa Rica.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said analyzed the phenomenon of the nation as a narrative, and how the "power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism."⁵³ His work analyzed the issue of resistance to imperial advances, but unfortunately Said

⁵¹ Fischer-Tiné, Harald: "Postcolonial Studies," in: *European History Online* (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2010-12-03. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/fischertineh-2010-en> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-20101025210 [2012-06-19]

⁵² Kyle Longley. *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States During the Rise of José Figueres*. University of Alabama Press, 1997.

⁵³ Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xiii.

focused on resistance narratives present on imperial discourse, not on anti-imperial narratives, basing his examples on the works of Shakespeare, Conrad, Dickens, Gide, and Mann. This analysis on Cultural Imperialism is also present in Latin America, as is the case of Ariel Dorfman.⁵⁴ This criticism against imperial design fits well when it comes to study imperial narratives, but it is not adequate for the study of national narratives. According to Said, nationalism is the “restoration of community, assertion of identity, emergence of new cultural practices.”⁵⁵ The Costa Rican case presents the opposite, a literature and newspapers containing anti-imperial narratives that differ from resistance culture in that they create a community instead of restoring it, because they are part of a process of nation building that does not define itself in opposition to its former colonial power.⁵⁶

My analysis does not focus on the Filibuster version of the events, neither on how narratives in the United States continue to emphasize the role of Walker’s mercenaries and allies instead of giving voice to Central American narratives. By doing that I would be analyzing the process of cultural imperialism instead of studying a national narrative. Following Said’s connection between narratives and nations, I argue that to understand the development of Costa Rican national

⁵⁴ Ariel Dorfman. *How to read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in Disney Comics*. London: International General, 1975. (Originally published in Spanish in 1971 as: *Para leer al pato Donald*. Valparaíso: Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaíso, 1971). Later, he expanded his analysis in: *The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds*. Nueva York: Pantheon Books, 1983.

⁵⁵ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 218.

⁵⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 209.

identity it is necessary to focus exclusively on Costa Rican narratives of the war. Cultural Anti-Imperialism is presented here as an active and purposeful creation of a narrative that promotes the development of national identity and a national narrative consistent to values of sovereignty as a natural right, not as a concession. Cultural Anti-Imperialism does not respond to discourses or actions of cultural domination, but to perceived threats against cultural sovereignty. Therefore, it is an organic creation that does not confront but instead disregards the imperial narrative. It takes away the imperial power of defining identity, making relevant the issues that concern the periphery, not the center.

The concept of cultural imperialism has been criticized precisely because its focus on a supposedly omnipotent influence by the empire over the countries that receive its cultural products. Homi Bhabha, for example, argues that the influence of imperial cultural produces a hybridity in which both the dominant and subordinate cultures are affected by the exchange and adoption of each other's cultural features.⁵⁷ Similarly, on his study of the influence of U.S. films shown during the Cold War in Mexico, Seth Fein denies the influence assigned to cultural imperialism "based simply on the aggregate presence of U.S. mass media... ignoring national and local factors" of "political and cultural reception."⁵⁸ The issue of perception is also present in the study of Rockefeller's

⁵⁷ Homi Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. I use Gramsci's terminology freely here, and for clarification only, since Cultural Imperialism in Latin America does not happen between the former colonizer and the former colonized.

⁵⁸ Seth Fein. "Everyday Forms of Transnational Collaboration: Film Propaganda in Cold War Mexico." In: Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. Legrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds. *Close*

health initiatives in Central America.⁵⁹ According to Emily S. Rosenberg, acceptance of these initiatives in Costa Rica are related to a lack of suspicion of U.S. actions, and that in other countries, like Nicaragua, they would have been harder to develop.⁶⁰ While Rosenberg puts emphasis on local perception, it continues to assign importance on imperial power, and not on local culture. Cultural reasons for acceptance of U.S. influence are not related to a lack of suspicion. It would have been too naïve to disregard history and not being suspicious of U. S. intentions, especially during the early twentieth century, a period of strong U. S. imperial design in Central America. The answer relies on the local perception of what could be perceived as an imperial advance and what was international collaboration. Once again, Costa Rica, and Latin America in general, do not have a natural anti-western suspicion because they consider themselves to be part of the western cultural framework. In summary, cultural imperialism considers the influence of cultural features produced by a hegemonic nation and consumed by a subordinate nation. Cultural anti-imperialism analyzes instead the cultural production of a sovereign nation directed to reinforce its national identity against a perceived imperialist threat.

Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 405.

⁵⁹ Steven Palmer. "Central American Encounters with Rockefeller Public Health, 1914-1921." In: Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. Legrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 311-332.

⁶⁰ Emily S. Rosenberg. "Turning to Culture." In: Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. Legrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 508.

With these concepts in mind, this dissertation is divided into six chapters. While there are plenty of works describing the events of the Filibuster War, they tend to be biased, romanticized, and incomplete. Most books published in English do not use Central American sources at all, and in general are based, and therefore support, the Filibuster's point of view. Chapter 2 is a summary of the war, focusing on those events that later became either a *lieux de mémoire* or a contested ground for collective memory. Chapter 3 presents an extensive analysis of the historiography of the Filibuster War. It studies the development of the topic published in the United States, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, France, and Germany. The chapter analyzes how the narrative of the Filibuster War has been shaped and reshaped according to the specific narratives of each nation. It analyzes the political uses of scholarship in the United States, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, and how each work reflects the historical moment in which it was written, and how this narrative shaped the understanding of the past according to the needs of the present.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of the political developments of nineteenth century Costa Rica and explains the rise, fall, and resurgence of the memory of the Filibuster War. Internal elite disputes, localism, and a struggle for the consolidation of the nation-state serve as the context in which the memory of the Filibuster War became the main significant for Costa Rican sovereignty. Since independence was acquired without armed conflict, the Filibuster War became the moment in which the existence of the nation was put to test. After 1856, the war became a symbol of Costa Rica's right to exist as a country that can defend its

principles and its place as a free nation. This moment coincides with the first real efforts to establish the presence of a strong nation-state and the institutionalization of Costa Rica. The first obstacle was localism, a typical Latin American issue during the nineteenth century. The political structure, based on liberal ideas promoted in the capital, San José, in close alliance with Alajuela, suffered constant pressure from the conservative stronghold of Cartago, the old colonial capital. This confrontation defined the Costa Rican nineteenth century. The consolidation and use of the memory of the Filibuster War as a symbol of the nation-state serves as a parameter to measure the success of the struggle to create a centralized state and an institutionalized nation. This chapter also includes an analysis of the process of nation-state formation in the region, which brings a clue of the particularities of Costa Rican nationalism.

The Filibuster War, as a traumatic event, has haunted Costa Ricans since the middle of the nineteenth century. The unexpected appearance of the filibusters, the sudden mobilization of the whole country to defend its sovereignty, the cholera epidemic that decimated the population, and the brutal end to President Mora's life after the war ended deeply marked Costa Rican collective memory. One of the legacies of the war was a constant fear that these events might repeat. Any kind of external intervention or threat to sovereignty has been immediately answered by a rise of nationalism and calls for mobilization against the invader. The phenomenon dates as far back as 1873, when the government of Tomás Guardia confronted the possibility of an invasion from Nicaragua. This fear created the Myth of the Return of the Filibuster, which

continues to be used constantly in Costa Rican politics. Chapter 5 analyzes the initial uses of collective fear to filibusterism from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. While in most cases this myth has been associated with real organized invasions, as in 1873, 1878, 1885, 1921, and 1955, it has also served as a warning alert against non-military interventions. The rise of U.S. expansionism, for example, was considered a threat to Costa Rican sovereignty, and promoted the reaction of unions, newspapers, and student organizations against the imposition of cultural imperialism. It is important to note that this dissertation analyzes these reactions from the standpoint of cultural anti-imperialism, a term used here to describe a response against perceived threats to sovereignty. This concept separates itself from cultural imperialism since it analyzes real and non-real threats in the same manner. Perception, not reality, is what motivates reaction. Therefore, whether certain actions taken by the United States or other agents were directed to influence or not Costa Rican politics, economy, or culture is irrelevant. What is important is how these actions were interpreted. In any case, the Filibuster War was successfully recalled many times to awaken awareness of possible perils for the nation. This chapter analyzes several of these cases.

Chapter 6 analyzes the conflict between official history and popular culture. Juan Santamaría, the Costa Rican national hero, symbolizes the struggle of the common citizen that rises to protect the nation. Because he was not a president, or a general, Santamaría is a unique hero in that he does not represent the elite or the state, but the effort of the community and the value of the most

humble of its members. Therefore, Santamaría is a popular hero par excellence. The abolition of the army in Costa Rica, in 1948, created a conflict in the symbolism of the Filibuster War. How to celebrate a war in a country without army? How to celebrate a military national hero in a country without soldiers? While the government continued to appeal to military images during the speeches delivered each April 11th, changes in the celebration of traditional parades unveil the development of a new discourse created by the subordinate groups. To find meaning in the commemorations of the Filibuster War outside of its anachronistic military symbolism, popular culture imposed its views during the annual parades of April 11th, one of the few arenas where common citizens can express themselves without much government intervention. The result is a transformation of the way Santamaría is celebrated.

The centenary of the Filibuster War was an important event in Costa Rican history, solidifying national identity through the narrative of the Filibuster War. The civil war of 1948 was the result of a radical polarization of politics during the 1940s, and it marked the behavior of a whole generation. In 1955, exiled Costa Ricans, and members of the opposition, organized an invasion to Costa Rica, counting on the support of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. A battle around the Santa Rosa hacienda was decisive to defeat the invaders. In 1956, the government used the centenary of the Filibuster War to hold the first celebration of March 20th, the anniversary of the original battle of Santa Rosa in 1856. The goal was to establish a connection between the events of 1856 and the invasion of 1955. Chapter 6 analyzes the attempt by the government to create an invented

tradition, and the resistance it confronted from different social actors as newspapers, opposition parties, and common citizens. It shows how the commemorations were built, as well as the government's inability on trying to impose values on a society heading in a different direction. As Nora, Halbwachs, and Hobsbawm asserted, the creation of new traditions is possible especially when society faces an identity crisis. When a community has a strong understanding of itself it becomes really hard to impose new values and ideals.

After 1956, Costa Rica experienced a period of stability and growth. The Filibuster War was commemorated every year, and new symbols as Francisca Carrasco, a female hero, were added to the pantheon of Filibuster War figures. Fervor diminished and commemorations became mostly a repetitive circumstance. The fact that the army was abolished also stripped the Filibuster War of its military importance, leaving a half-empty commemoration. The 1970s, a period of strong anti-imperialism in Latin America saw a resurgence of nationalism based on the images of the Filibuster War and its struggle against U.S. expansionism. This became even more evident during the first decade of the twentieth century with the political polarization produced by the signing of CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement). The commercial agreement between Central America and the United States was considered by large sectors of Costa Rican society as a violation of the constitution, a threat to sovereignty, and a sell-out of the country's resources. The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the resurgence of Juan Rafael Mora as hero and leader during the Filibuster War, as well as a defender of Costa Rican national sovereignty. Recent

conflicts with Nicaragua related to border disputes have also helped to revive the myth of the Return of the Filibuster.

The political use of the past and the enforcement of official nationalism have a long story.⁶¹ They show that national identity is the product of state officers developing narratives that favor the head of the state or the state itself. The goal is to create official narratives to spread specific values or ideas in order to define and redefine a society's understanding of itself. As Maurice Halbwachs demonstrates, collective memory is a dynamic process that constantly forms and reforms meanings for the individuals that are members of a society. The advantage of official history is that it can permeate more than one of the communities in which an individual participates, and therefore influences individuals by using multiple sources. What is lost on the analysis of official history is that the individual is influenced by all and each of the communities that s/he belongs to. If only one of these communities does not share the official narrative we have to recognize that alternative versions can spread from the bottom up, and that small non-official communities also have a say on how history is interpreted. Chapters 2 and 5 analyze examples of moments in which official history had to concede that other groups were also able to transform and define the interpretations of history.

The memory of the Filibuster War in Costa Rica shows exceptional features that deserve further analysis. It is the only case in the Americas in which

⁶¹ Richard L. Kagan. *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Independence Day is not the most important holiday of the nation. It is also the only case in which the birth of the nation is not derived exclusively from its founding moment. The case of Santamaría as national hero also contrasts with most national heroes in the West, which are always representatives of the elites, either political or military leaders (Washington, Bolívar, San Martín). Finally, the fact that Costa Rica won the Filibuster War shows an exceptional case in which a small country was able to defeat imperial advances. The Costa Rican state had always tried to ingratiate itself with the countries considered powers, especially with the United States. Still, the war is not forgotten, and it definitively shapes Costa Rica's view of itself. The victory over Walker did not only establish the right of Costa Rica to exist as a nation, it also gave the country sufficient confidence to demand world recognition. This process translates also to international politics and to the attitude of Costa Ricans toward foreigners. While seeking to avoid conflict, Costa Rica has always established its own position and sense of place, asking (and receiving) equal treatment in the international arena.⁶²

⁶² Kyle Longley. *The Sparrow and the Hawk. Costa Rica and the United States during the rise of José Figueres*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), x.

Chapter 2

SCHOLARS, MYTH, AND INTERPRETATION

The events of the Filibuster War have awakened the interest of scholars and writers from all around the world in the last hundred and fifty years. Publications on the topic come mostly from the United States, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, and on a much smaller scale also from Mexico, Argentina, France, and Germany. Most accounts show a bias and a need for interpreting the Filibuster War according to local or national discourses. During the nineteenth century, for example, most books about the Filibuster War were published in the United States. These publications were a product of the connection between the Filibuster War and a romanticized revival of Manifest Destiny, U.S. expansionism, and a nostalgic approach to antebellum society. Walker's failure also served as a mirror to look into the growing myth of the Lost Cause. After the year 2000, instead, most publications came from Central American sources, which coincided with the commemorations of the 150th anniversary of the Filibuster War, as well as the development in the late twentieth century of museums and other institutions that support research on the topic. This chapter analyzes the most important works on the Filibuster War, unveiling trends or specific ideological agendas. It also explains the changing or biased interpretations of the war developed since 1856. The analysis of each work and each author help to establish a clear periodization of the tendencies in the literature of the Filibuster War.

Filibuster War Period (1855-1860)

This first period is characterized by publications coming exclusively from the United States. Their emphasis is on presenting Walker as a visionary part of a civilizing mission, following the then fashionable ideology of Manifest Destiny. The first work written about the Filibuster War was published in 1856, while the war was still in progress.⁶³ *Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua* was written by a witness and actor of the Filibuster War, William Vincent Wells. Both Walker and Wells worked together as journalists at the *Alta California* newspaper of San Francisco. Later, Walker became the editor of that paper. The *Alta California* did in fact finance the publication of Wells' book. In 1854, Vincent Wells visited Honduras to acquire rights for gold exploitation.⁶⁴ His adventures and the establishment of business connections in Honduras gained him the support of the U. S. government, which granted him the position of Consul-General in Honduras.⁶⁵ This appointment did not deter Wells from taking sides during the Filibuster War. He openly supported Walker's endeavors. Wells also had a close friendship with Byron Cole, another friend of Walker, who convinced Castellón, leader of the Liberal party of Nicaragua, to sign the contract that brought Walker

⁶³ William Vincent Wells. *Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua: A History of the Central American War*. (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1856). Published in German: *Walker's Expedition nach Nicaragua und der Central Amerikanische Krieg, Nebst der Vollständigen Diplomatischen Correspondenz*. (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1857).

⁶⁴ William Vincent Wells. *Explorations and Adventures in Honduras*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), xiii. Published in Spanish: William V. Wells. *Exploraciones y aventuras en Honduras*. Tegucigalpa: Banco de Honduras, 1960 (San José: EDUCA, 1978, 1982).

⁶⁵ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, i.

to Nicaragua.⁶⁶ Wells' book starts by describing Walker's early life, including his failed filibustering attempt in Sonora and Baja California in 1853. Further chapters expand on the figure of Walker, describing Walker's arrival to Nicaragua and his transformation into the "Liberator of Central America."⁶⁷ The book ends abruptly, just after the second battle of Rivas, on April 11th, 1856, due in part to the fact that Wells wrote the book in less than two weeks, finishing it in June 1856.⁶⁸

The book is mostly a propagandistic pamphlet. In it, Wells admits that most of the material was provided by Walker himself. The goal was to gain support for Walker's cause, using racist ideas connected to Manifest Destiny and an Anglo-Saxon sense of superiority. This is reflected in several passages, in which he explains that "the decadent descendants of the early Spanish colonists must succumb and give place to the superior activity and intelligence of the Anglo-Saxon."⁶⁹ For him, the term Manifest Destiny was not just a myth; it was an honorable objective he hoped would become a reality, especially in Mexico and Central America, following the examples of Florida (1812), Texas (1836), and California (1848).⁷⁰ Wells makes clear that Walker was inspired by Narciso Lopez's failed expedition to Cuba and the slaveocratic elite of the southern United

⁶⁶ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 41.

⁶⁷ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 49.

⁶⁸ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, iii-iv.

⁶⁹ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 13.

⁷⁰ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 13-14.

States. With their support, Walker wanted to transform Central America into a slave state; annexing it to the United States, and with that, gaining the upper hand for the anti-abolitionists.⁷¹

Wells' book represents the archetypical Filibuster War period account: romantic, pro-Manifest Destiny, adventurous, and presenting clearly biased sources for its propaganda. Wells' battle accounts are in general a little sketchy. In the case of the first battle of Rivas, Wells mentions the burning of a house by the Legitimists, which corresponds to Emanuel Mongalo's feat, but most of the information given is not based on facts and, instead, takes the rather romanticized style of a novelistic account. The battle of Granada, for example, in which Walker was able to capture the Legitimist capital, is described as the "Sebastopol of Nicaragua," comparing it to recent events during the Crimean War.⁷² About the connection between the filibusters and the United States, Wells describes the help given by the CAT (Compañía Accesoría del Tránsito, or Transit Accessory Company) to Walker to reinforce and arm the mercenaries. According to Wells, the CAT offered its steamers to Walker to transport new recruits from the United States to Nicaragua, and, at least in one case, allowing for the shipment of large quantities of weapons and ammunitions.⁷³ Wells also assures that no attempts were known "to have been made on the part of the United States Government to

⁷¹ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 23–24.

⁷² Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 66.

⁷³ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 83.

search the steamers,” showing the support given by the government for the Manifest Destiny mission in Central America.⁷⁴

After a couple of chapters focusing on the implementation of Walker’s policies, Wells moves to an outcry against the British government, accusing it of wanting to intervene against the design of Manifest Destiny, much in the same way U.S. newspapers were representing Central American affairs during the years before and after the signing of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850 between the United States and the United Kingdom. Also in connection to the British, Wells mentioned the exchange of letters between Lord Clarendon and the Costa Rican government, especially in relation to any possible British support for Costa Rica, as well as an inquiry into the acquisition of weapons by Mora’s government in 1854. The narrative then jumps to the Costa Rican declaration of war and the first confrontations between Costa Ricans and filibusters.

The account of the battle of Santa Rosa is very picturesque. Instead of starting with the analysis of military movements or with possible consequences of the battle, Wells begins by chastising Colonel Schlessinger, the commander of the filibusters, predisposing the reader to blame him for the defeat. Schlessinger’s appointment as commander in charge of the invasion of Costa Rica is described as “a most unfortunate one.” The reason given for the defeat at Santa Rosa was that Schlessinger was not part of the Anglo-Saxon race destined to triumph. “In the first place,” says Wells trying to explain the defeat he is about to narrate, “he was

⁷⁴ Wells, *Walker’s Expedition*, 84.

a German... in the next, a Jew.”⁷⁵ Wells’ romanticized version of the battle of Santa Rosa described all attempts made by the filibusters as noble and valiant. When it comes to the result of the confrontation, Wells does not hide his impression that the battle of Santa Rosa was “the most disgraceful contest connected with the American name, or known in the history of arms in this continent.”⁷⁶

The romantic approach reflecting the viewpoint of the filibusters was commonplace in the book. When describing the second battle of Rivas, Wells defined the filibusters as having “some of the noblest spirits, in the exhibition at this point of fearless and undaunted courage, (who) fell martyrs in the cause of Democracy.”⁷⁷ As in his account of other battles, Wells personalizes the heroism of the filibusters using their names to commemorate their courage, while the enemy is always displayed as an indistinguishable mass. This style allows Wells to dehumanize the Central Americans. Also, whenever Central Americans were able to execute a successful movement, or to hold the filibusters, it was because they “were evidently Englishmen and Germans,” unable to recognize any positive feature of the locals. Strangely enough, the second battle of Rivas was described by Wells as a filibuster victory, announcing that April 11th, 1856 would always live in the mind of Costa Ricans. The date has been remembered, only not in the way Wells predicted.

⁷⁵ Wells, *Walker’s Expedition*, 153–154.

⁷⁶ Wells, *Walker’s Expedition*, 162.

⁷⁷ Wells, *Walker’s Expedition*, 179.

An interesting detail in the account is Wells' admission of having carried letters of introduction to Castellón, which demonstrates the disregard he had for his position as representative of the U.S. government, a supposedly neutral actor during the Nicaraguan civil war. The support for the filibusters by known politicians as Pierre Soulé, Lewis Cass, Courtland Cushing, and John B. Weller, Wells argues, justified Walker's actions.⁷⁸ Wells lauded Walker as the Liberator of Central America, a grey-eyed man destined to bring progress and democracy to the region. In his book, Wells hoped that Anglo-Saxon Manifest Destiny would enlighten and regenerate the people of Central America, and called for new recruits for the Filibuster War. A few years later, Wells retracted, stating that his support for Walker was a mistake, and that he wished he could burn all the copies of his book in existence.⁷⁹

Support for Walker was not lacking in the United States during the Filibuster War. Newspapers such as the *New York Daily Times* (which changed its name to *New York Times* in 1857), *Frank Leslie's Weekly*, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and the *San Francisco Herald*, as well as several independent authors, wrote propaganda pieces based on racial and religious diatribes in favor of the

⁷⁸ Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 217–237.

⁷⁹ In an online edition of Wells book on Walker, a scan from an original edition owned now by Harvard University Library, a note is found in the blank pages before the introduction, possibly written by the former owner of the book, Charles A. Cutter, from Cambridge. The handwritten note says: "In a letter written in November, 1865, -just before the publication of his *Life of Samuel Adams*, - the author says of this work: It was written when I knew less and thought less than I do now, I hope. I never mention it, and should be glad if the whole edition were destroyed. I have no longer any sympathies with such men as Walker." http://books.google.com/books?id=t0sxUVTZmTQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:%22William+Vincent+Wells%22&hl=en&ei=ywcuToTdAYjYgOfcl8yBCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false

filibustering adventure, definitely imbued by Manifest Destiny's ideology. Wells' work was just the first of many bombastic proclamations in favor of filibustering. One example is Anna Ella Carroll's book *The Star of the West*, published also in 1856. Her book compiles a series of essays against the Catholic Church, and in support of Protestant ideals.⁸⁰ Touting the glory of Protestantism, Carroll was not shy about the goals she saw fit for her countrymen, stating that "we, then, my countrymen, have a mission to perform, out of our country; we have to throw our weight...over the countries of the world, and to guard with a vigilant eye the principles of Protestantism and Americanism, that our own strength shall increase, our own resources expand..."⁸¹ According to Carroll, Protestantism had an agent, a savior, "a light from heaven has now guided a son of our American republic...to deliver that misguided people." No other than "General William Walker...has commenced...to renovate that land."⁸² Carroll's account of Walker's upbringing is extremely romantic, describing him as a precocious fighter for freedom and religion. As part of the idea of Manifest Destiny, the author believed that individual adventures were a representation of real freedom, and that the government of the United States could not be trusted, since its goal was to cut the aspirations of regular people, which contravened Providence's designs of mission

⁸⁰ Anna Ella Carroll. *The Star of the West; or National Men and National Measures*. Boston: James French and Co., 1856.

⁸¹ Carroll, 170.

⁸² Carroll, 172–173.

and destiny. The interference of the government, according to the author, was the only thing responsible for Walker's failure in Mexico in 1853.⁸³

What Walker found in Central America was chaos, according to Carroll. She described the internal wars in Central America as proof of their inability to self-govern, which represented the perfect excuse for intervention. Also, she misrepresented the situation as a war between Spaniards or whites against a Black and Indian enemy. Typical of her anti-Catholic discourse, she claimed that the Church sided with anti-democratic forces in Nicaragua. The first battle of Rivas is depicted as an unfair battle, where the ability of the filibusters was just too much for their enemy. The account describes Rivas as an absolute victory for Walker, contradicting all other historical accounts.

It is clear that Carroll was following Wells' account, while adding her own style to the interpretation of the events. She mentioned the existence of a gold exploring company that served as a liaison between Walker and the Nicaraguan government, which could only be taken from Wells' account. Also, Carroll's naming of the battle of Granada the "Sebastopol of Nicaragua" is not a mere coincidence.⁸⁴ Her description of the battle of Santa Rosa also plagiarizes excerpts of Wells' account. In the second battle of Rivas, she also follows Wells' account, including the fictional existence of German and French forces on the Costa Rican side. Her approach is even more ideological than Wells'. About the supposed French siding with Costa Rica, she stated that "it was by those foreign Jacobins,

⁸³ Carroll, 175.

⁸⁴ Carroll, 181.

who had joined the despot's army in Central America to put down liberty and trample upon human rights, that most of our American citizens were killed.”⁸⁵ To be fair, the Costa Rican government did in fact receive support from the German community residing in Costa Rica, mostly in economic terms, but also with the presence of a physician and an engineer among the troops. Only a few German-Costa Ricans participated actively during the war, most of them of civilian background.⁸⁶ Carroll's work is representative of several similar accounts during the period of the Filibuster War.⁸⁷ These books are valuable as sources of myths in the United States about the justification and attitudes toward the war.

The figure that inspired the former two books, William Walker himself, did not publish an account of the war until 1860, just months before his fatal

⁸⁵ Carroll, 201.

⁸⁶ Luko Hilje. *Karl Hoffmann: naturalista, médico y héroe nacional*. (Santo Domingo de Heredia: Inbio, 2006). Also: Raúl Arias Sánchez. *Los Soldados de la Campaña Nacional, 1856-1857*. (San José: EUNED, 2007). Luko Hilje Quirós. “Los Alemanes de la Carta.” *De Cuando la Patria Ardió*. (San José: EUNED, 2007), 125-129.

⁸⁷ Similar works were published during the Filibuster War period. See: An Officer in the Service of Walker. *The Destiny of Nicaragua: Central America as It was, Is, and May Be*. (Boston: S. A. Bent and Co., 1856). Also: Peter F. Stout. *Nicaragua: Past, Present, and Future. Its Inhabitants, Customs, Mines, Minerals, Early History, Modern Filibusterism, Proposed Inter-Oceanic Canal and Manifest Destiny*. (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, 1859). Both works have a clear propagandistic approach, describing Nicaragua and Central America as a new land of opportunities, full of gold and exuberant women, much in the same way Europeans saw the Americas, especially the United States. At the same time, both works describe Walker and his filibuster adventure as part of the Manifest Destiny dream, with Central America depicted as a damsel in peril that needed to be rescued and regenerated by U.S. citizens. Only U.S. presence would bring progress and democracy. In 1860, two more accounts of the war were published. The first by Laurence Oliphant, renowned adventurer and writer who visited Nicaragua in 1856. See: Laurence Oliphant. *Patriots and Filibusters, or Incidents of Political and Exploratory Travel*. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1860). The second, a long epic poem: Samuel F. Wright. *Adventures in California and Nicaragua, in Rhyme: a Truthful Epic*. (Boston: Alfred Mudge and son, 1860).

adventure in Honduras.⁸⁸ For any researcher interested in the Filibuster War, Walker's book is one of the most important sources, not only because it presents a firsthand account of the events, but also because the filibuster ideology is reflected in his work. It is so far, the most republished book related to the Filibuster War. After being published for the first time in 1860, Walker's book was reprinted in the United States in 1971, and again in 1985.⁸⁹ The book was translated into Spanish as early as 1883, by Fabio Carnevalini, and was published in the Nicaraguan newspaper *El Porvenir*. His translation is more of a summary of Walker's book than a real translation. Carnevalini, an Italian immigrant living in Nicaragua since 1856, admitted in the preface that he lacked enough knowledge of both English and Spanish to present a coherent rendition of the work, which did not stop him in his effort to bring the book to Spanish readers.⁹⁰ Years later, in 1924, Costa Rican historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia, considering that Carnevalini's work was not sufficient for a serious study of the Filibuster War, published a complete translation of Walker's book. Since then, both works have been reprinted several times.⁹¹

⁸⁸ William Walker. *The War in Nicaragua*. (New York and Mobile, Alabama: S. H. Goetzl and Co., 1860).

⁸⁹ Detroit: B. Ethridge, 1971.; and Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985. There seems to be a French version: Angers, France: Armell, 1900.

⁹⁰ William Walker. *La Guerra de Nicaragua: Escrita por el General William Walker en 1860*. (Managua: Tipografía de El Porvenir, 1884), v. trad. Fabio Carnevalini.

⁹¹ Translated by Fabio Carnevalini: *Managua: Tipografía El Porvenir* (1883, 1884), *Managua: Banco de America* (1975), *Managua: BANIC* (1993). Translated by Ricardo Fernández Guardia: *San José: Imprenta Maria V. de Lines* (1924). *Managua: Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centro Americano* (1967), *San José: Educa* (1970, 1975).

With some imprecision and biases, *The War in Nicaragua* is an account of the Filibuster War that serves as propaganda for Walker's cause. Walker's clear writing chronicles the period of the war from his arrival in Nicaragua in June 1855 up to his surrender on May 1st, 1857. Walker uses a strange third person or omniscient approach to his writing, revealing a psychological detachment with the events of the war, and even with himself, preferring to talk about *Walker* as if he were a recent acquaintance. This psychological dissociation has been mentioned by several authors, although Alejandro Bolaños Geyer has been the only one to present a study of his personality.⁹²

Walker gives the impression of being fair on his account, especially when accepting his defeats, both during the first battle of Rivas as well as during the battle of Santa Rosa, although he is fast to blame others as cowards. In both cases, he justifies the result of the battles on the desertion of an important commander. According to Walker, filibusters native from the United States were always the only ones to stand the attack and behave gallantly and bravely during the confrontations, while Nicaraguan allies and French and German filibusters are responsible for most failures. At the same time, when Central Americans were successful against the filibusters, he described Germans and Frenchmen recruited by his enemy as the only ones able to defeat him. The reasoning behind some of his most important decisions, such as the executions of Mayorga and Corral, showed an impulsive behavior and lack of preparation, although they were

⁹² Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. *William Walker: El Predestinado*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2003.

disguised as needed in order to show military and leadership skills in front of his subordinates.

The most important chapter, and the one that deviates a little from other accounts, is the one related to his administration as President of Nicaragua. Chapter eight describes Walker's main goal as the introduction and consolidation of an Anglo elite in Central America.⁹³ For that purpose, Walker decreed the use of both English and Spanish in his official newspaper. The decree "tended to make the ownership of the lands of the State fall into the hands of those speaking English," Walker states.⁹⁴ The new laws established under Walker gave a clear advantage to those used by the legal system in the United States, especially when it came to registration of property. Walker's purpose was to reorganize labor and society. Therefore, on September 22nd, 1856, Walker issued a decree making slavery legal in Nicaragua. This confirmed the Central American belief of Walker's intentions. For Walker, the main purpose of the decree was to bring to the attention of the slaveocracy of the southern United States the hope of a new slave state. He wanted the South's support for his cause. His argument was that "for the re-establishment of African slavery there depended the permanent presence of the white race in the region."⁹⁵ As a justification, Walker presented the Cuban case, which, according to him, owed all its prosperity to the institution of slavery. In a clash between two worlds, Walker explained that the order and

⁹³ Walker, 251.

⁹⁴ Walker, 252.

⁹⁵ Walker, 256.

progress of a civilization was based on the control it had over a subjugated group. In his defense of capitalism, Walker presented slavery as the main institution to foment the creation of elites who would support the clear organization of a society. For him, freedom and democracy were pure so long as they were relative. In Walker's mind, "it is difficult to conceive how capital can be secured from the attacks of the majority in a pure democracy unless with the aid of a force which gets its strength from slave labor."⁹⁶ For Walker, as for many members of the Southern slaveocrat elite, a democracy that allowed for universal suffrage and civil rights was flawed.

So, if African slavery was to provide the labor force needed for white capitalism, the majority of the Latin American population, people of mixed race, was irrelevant. The only solution for Walker was to eliminate the *mestizos* from the region. The indigenous people were, according to Walker, similar in many ways to the Africans and would be easily forced into slavery.⁹⁷ Walker was aware of the conflict between free labor supporters and slaveholders that had existed for some decades in the United States. A moment of crisis was approaching as each new state of the Union had to confront the problem of selecting which kind of economic (and human) system it would endorse. Nicaragua and Central America represented the opportunity for Southern expansion before the beginning of the inevitable civil war in the United States. Walker understood that the South needed additional slave states to gain the upper-hand over non-slave representation in

⁹⁶ Walker, 260.

⁹⁷ Walker, 261.

Congress. Failing to achieve this, the plantation states in the South would either have to emancipate the slaves or go to war with the North. The decree of September 22nd, 1856, only confirmed the worst fears of the Central American states. After all, imposed slavery violated an important principle upon which their national independence and identity rested.

After Walker's execution in September, 1860, publications about the Filibuster War ceased.⁹⁸ The filibusters' defeat was one reason for the lack of interest in the United States for topic, although there were still some small efforts to revive the Nicaraguan adventure.⁹⁹ A more important reason was the Civil War, promoted precisely by the lack of success of the southern states to incorporate new slave states into the Union. The failure to incorporate Nicaragua or any Central American nations led to the South's decision to sever ties with the North to protect slavery as an institution. Walker's defeat was a very important factor that influenced the beginning of the Civil War in the United States.

First Central American accounts (1865–1889)

In Central America, meanwhile, political factors influenced the decision to bury the memory of the Filibuster War. In Costa Rica, President Mora established a holiday and promoted the building of a monument to celebrate the victory over

⁹⁸ The only exceptions being a French work on Walker, and a fiction short-story: Auguste Nicaise. *Les filibustiers américains: Walker et l'Amérique Centrale*. (Paris: L. Hachette, 1861). Albany Fonblanque. *The Filibuster: A Story of American Life and Other Tales*. (London: Ward and Lock, 1862). Fonblanque's is a fictional account criticizing filibuster adventures.

⁹⁹ One of Walker's main officers, Charles F. Henningsen, created the *Arizona, Mexican and Central American emigration and colonization association*, in 1859, with his own filibustering goals in mind. See: *New York Times*, Feb. 21, 1859, page 4. April 25, 1859, page 5. May 5, 1859, page 1.

the filibusters. He was overthrown in 1860, which interrupted these projects. His political enemies decided to erase all traces of Mora's greatness by silencing all references to him and the Filibuster War. In Nicaragua, the opposite reason, national unity, made silence necessary. On September 12th, 1856, Conservatives and Liberals signed a treaty that put aside their differences to unite against the filibusters. After the war, and in order to keep internal peace based on national unity, references to the war were considered unpatriotic, since it kept the memory fresh of the initial Liberal responsibility for bringing Walker and his filibusters to Nicaragua. To keep unity and peace, the Filibuster War had to be overlooked.

After the war, Nicaragua created a provisional consensus government, with a co-joined presidency, formed by Máximo Jeréz representing the Liberal Democratic Party, and Tomás Martínez for the Conservative Legitimist Party. After approving a new constitution in 1858, Martínez was elected president, and he was reelected in 1862 for a second term.¹⁰⁰ In 1865, Jerónimo Pérez published his *Memorias para la Revolución de 1854*, the first Central American history of the Filibuster War.¹⁰¹ Pérez, a journalist and writer, placed the Filibuster War within the context of the Nicaraguan Civil War. For that reason, the title of his book refers to the beginning of the conflict between Conservatives and Liberals,

¹⁰⁰ Xiomara Avendaño Rojas. *Elecciones Indirectas y Disputa de Poder en Nicaragua: el lento camino hacia la modernidad*. (Managua: Lea Grupo Editorial, 2007), 83, 102–104. Arturo Cruz Sequeira. *La República Conservadora de Nicaragua, 1858–1893*. (Managua: Fundación Vida, 2003), 73–80.

¹⁰¹ Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Zelaya, ed. *Obras Históricas del Licenciado Jerónimo Pérez*. (Managua: Banco de América, 1975), vii. The book was published in 1865 as *Memorias para la historia de la Revolución de Nicaragua y la Guerra Nacional contra los filibusteros: 1854 a 1857*. Managua: Imprenta del Gobierno., and 1871 (Managua: Imprenta del Orden), and then, under the supervision of Chamorro, reprinted in 1928 and 1975.

which led later to the Filibuster War. His work is divided in two sections, the first from the beginning of the Civil War to Walker's consolidation of power, and the second from the Central American intervention to Walker's defeat in May 1857. Pérez's work is not commonly used as a reference for scholars interested in the Filibuster War. Pedro Chamorro, who edited Pérez's work in the twentieth century, attributed this to the fact that the book presented personal and biased views of the events.¹⁰² The critique is unfair, though. Pérez used several primary documents for his work, including publications for the Costa Rican *Boletín Oficial*, as well as letters and other documents he collected while being part of the Septentrion Army under General Martínez during the Filibuster War. His position as editor of the Conservative newspaper *El Telégrafo Setentrional*, and his appointment as President Martínez's personal Secretary and War auditor during the Filibuster War gave him access to sensitive documents.¹⁰³ His work is reliable, and there is little trace of an expected Conservative bias in his book. His accusations against Liberals focus mostly on the figure of Máximo Jeréz, blaming him for the fall of Nicaragua at the hands of the filibusters. The critique is certainly justified, although a little risky because of the strong sense of national unity developed at the time of the publication of his *Memorias*. His attacks against Jeréz were certainly also related to the Liberal leader's

¹⁰² Chamorro, viii.

¹⁰³ Pérez, 4.

conspiracies against his former co-president, General Martínez, including a failed armed insurrection in 1865.¹⁰⁴

After Pérez, the next effort to remember the Filibuster War was made by an Italian immigrant to Nicaragua, Fabio Carnevalini, who in 1883 translated Walker's *War in Nicaragua* into Spanish.¹⁰⁵ This makes Carnevalini's work the first translation to Spanish of any work related to the Filibuster War originally published in English. Also, it is the first time that an original pro-filibuster book published in the United States was available to the Central American public. Interestingly enough, no translation to English of any of the Central American versions of the war have ever been published in the United States or translated into English. This forms part of the traditional self-centered approach of most U. S. scholars when it comes to analyzing topics that involve research in other languages or the study of versions provided by sources outside of the United States. Carnevalini recognizes the limitations of his work, mainly due to his lack of complete fluency in English. Still, he was able to understand most of Walker's account, and with that, produced a book that summarized the main parts of the *War in Nicaragua* in general terms. Carnevalini's book provoked a reaction among Central American scholars that led to increased analysis of the war and greater attention to the regional defeat of the interloper.

In Costa Rica, the oligarchic elite that overthrew Mora in 1860 held power

¹⁰⁴ Cruz, 79.

¹⁰⁵ William Walker. *La Guerra de Nicaragua: Escrita por el General William Walker en 1860*. Managua: Tipografía de El Porvenir, 1884, trad. Fabio Carnevalini.

for ten years, until General Tomás Guardia, a former hero of the Filibuster War (see chapter 2) and a *morista* (follower of Mora) took control of the government after a military coup on April 27th, 1870. Guardia stayed in power until 1882, and his ascension marked the arrival of a liberal elite that governed for the next seventy years. Guardia was the first veteran of the Filibuster War to become president of Costa Rica, but not the only one. Próspero Fernández, president from 1882 to 1885 and Guardia's successor, was also a veteran of the war, and a military man. After his death, Bernardo Soto became the next president. Soto was not a veteran, being too young to have participated in the war, but he was a military man, and part of a younger generation of the Guardia-Fernández clique. Soto was the son-in-law of Próspero Fernández, and the widow of Fernández was the younger sister of Tomás Guardia. The three leaders insisted on rescuing the memory of the Filibuster War and of President Mora, a memory they sometimes used for their own benefit.

The Costa Rican government received Carnevalini's publication of Walker's book in 1884 as an affront.¹⁰⁶ On April 9th, 1886, and as part of the official efforts to consolidate the memory of the Filibuster War, President Soto signed a decree charging historian Lorenzo Montúfar with writing a Costa Rican version of the war.¹⁰⁷ Soto's interest in promoting a Costa Rican interpretation of events is obvious in the decree:

¹⁰⁶ Carnevalini's translation was originally published in 1883 as a series of leaflets inside the newspaper *El Progreso*. A book version of his work was published the following year, 1884. The latter publication must be the one that arrived into Costa Rica.

¹⁰⁷ Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centro América*. Guatemala: Tipografía La Unión, 1887.

“the national wars from the years 1856 and 1857 against the filibusters constitute one of the most notable periods in the political life of Costa Rica, and one of the periods in which the patriotism of its sons reached great recognition. For this reason, the State is interested in conserving its memory free of errors and distortions. Taking into account, moreover, the urgent necessity to write the *historia patria* in order to save it from oblivion, the recent translation and publication of *The War in Nicaragua* by William Walker, being a product of biased criteria unfavorable to our cause, containing errors and opinions prejudicial to the memory of those campaigns, show the need to immediately start the writing of its history.”¹⁰⁸

Montúfar based his work mostly on Pérez’s *Memorias* and Carnevalini’s translation of Walker’s book, as well as a broad use of archival documents provided by the Costa Rican government: letters, proclamations, treaties, military reports, decrees, etc. This is the first book to use sources from both U.S. and Central American accounts, although it is important to note, once more, that Carnevalini’s translation did not reflect all the details of Walker’s account. Montúfar’s book differs from Pérez also in that it is mostly concerned with the incidents related to the Filibuster War, and not the Nicaraguan Civil War. From a total of fifty-three chapters, only nine are dedicated to the situation in Central America before the arrival of Walker.

Montúfar was a Guatemalan Liberal. For that reason he went into exile in Costa Rica several times during his life, whenever political turmoil affected his native country. In his book, titled *Walker en Centro América*, the author shows his preference for a united Central America, a traditional dream of liberal Federalists opposed to conservative Localists. In fact, Montúfar identified Nicaragua’s

¹⁰⁸ Secretaría de Guerra. Acuerdo No. XLI, April 9th, 1886. In: Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centro América*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), inside cover.

separation from the Union in 1838 as the cause for all the internal problems that country suffered.¹⁰⁹ With regard to the Nicaraguan Civil War, he blamed the Legitimists for several irregularities and for trying to perpetuate themselves in power, a position opposite to Pérez's version.

Concerning the main events of the Filibuster War, Montúfar does not deviate significantly from the account given by Pérez and Walker. He makes no mention of Mongalo, the Nicaraguan hero during the first battle of Rivas, and his description of the Santa Rosa battle confirms previous depictions of a cowardly and undisciplined Schlessinger and a fast and decisive Costa Rican victory. In the case of the second battle of Rivas, Montúfar is the first historian to express doubt about Juan Santamaría's feat, a controversy that continues to be present in Costa Rican historiography.¹¹⁰ The lack of battle reports mentioning Santamaría by name made the author take a conservative approach about elevating the Alajuelan soldier to the level of hero. The rejection of Santamaría by Montúfar was responsible for most of the Costa Rican work on the Filibuster War during the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, raising an interest in that country to clarify the history of the war. The publication of *Walker en Centro América* also matches an important moment in which the Costa Rican government, as part of their projects of consolidation as a nation-state, emphasized the cult of heroes. In 1885, Juan Santamaría became the key figure of the Filibuster War in Costa Rica. After that year, statues and new holidays

¹⁰⁹ Montúfar, (2000), 17.

¹¹⁰ Montúfar, (2000), 243.

inspired by the Filibuster War made his heroism the most important event for the Costa Rican national narrative.

In the meantime, in Nicaragua Conservatives were still in power, as mentioned above. This was not an obstacle for the publication of a liberal version of the history of the Filibuster War. In 1889, José Dolores Gámez published his *History of Nicaragua*, which included a large volume on the Filibuster War.¹¹¹ His approach is very similar to Montúfar's account. An important fact is that Gámez takes a new and more nationalistic point of view. According to Aldo Díaz Lacayo, editor of the 2006 version of Gámez's work, the traditional Nicaraguan term applied to the war against Walker, *La Guerra Nacional*, used to describe the Central American alliance against Walker, the region becoming a mythical single nation to symbolize a total rejection of Walker's invasion. National divisions were suspended as Central Americans confronted the immoral assault of a pro-slavery mercenary. In his book, Gámez alters this symbolic understanding and centers exclusively on the dismemberment of Nicaragua. For Gámez, *Guerra Nacional* referred only to his nation, Nicaragua, reflecting its struggle for national unity and survival.¹¹²

As in the case of Montúfar, Gámez's book also responded to the intervention of the state as promoter of the writing of *historia patria*. As part of the process of building a Nicaraguan nation-state, in 1888 President Carazo called

¹¹¹ José Dolores Gámez. *Historia de Nicaragua desde los tiempos prehistóricos hasta 1860, en sus relaciones con España, Mexico y Centro América*. Managua: Tipografía El País, 1889.

¹¹² José Dolores Gámez. *La Guerra Nacional*. (Managua: Aldilà Editor, 2006), 6-7.

for a contest to promote the creation of a book on the history of Nicaragua, which Gámez won. His main sources are letters, Central American, U.S., and other international newspapers, and archival documents he was able to collect, some of them never having been published before. In his account, the actions at Santa Rosa and Rivas are barely mentioned, focusing instead on the events that portrayed Nicaraguan actors. While these works about the Filibuster War were important, they did not constitute a body of work that could compete with the twentieth-century Central American historiography of the Filibuster War.

Rescuing Walker: The Romantic Filibuster and U.S. renewed expansionism (1886–1919)

While Central American governments were involved in the process of nation-state consolidation, the United States was in a decades-long process of recovery from the Civil War. The 1860s and 1870s were mostly silent about the Filibuster War, but the 1880s and 1890s was a period in which expansion was seen again with favorable eyes in the United States. This trend was confirmed during the period that includes the war between the United States and Spain in 1898 to the occupation of the Panama Canal in 1903. The tendency of publishing romantic stories of bravery and gallantry in the name of democracy and freedom under Anglo-Saxon dominion became popular once again.

In 1886, C. W. Doubleday published his memoirs of the Filibuster War, being the first of a long list of publications on this topic to emerge during the late

nineteenth century.¹¹³ In his *Reminiscences of the Filibuster War*, Doubleday presented himself in idealistic terms, defining his filibustering adventure as a “Quixotic espousal of the *people’s cause*.” His enthusiasm to see the people freed from the tyranny of a dominant ecclesiasticism is described much in the same way Carroll did thirty years before.¹¹⁴ A review of Doubleday’s book published in 1886 by the weekly literary supplement *The Nation*, described it as “fascinating...full of the spirit of adventure and recklessness of danger of a born fighter...”¹¹⁵ Indeed, behind the classic diatribe of Manifest Destiny, Doubleday made clear his support for U.S. involvement in Latin America, especially for the construction of an interoceanic canal for the exclusive benefit of U.S. commerce “combined with the implied though unwritten code of American sentiment commonly known as the Monroe Doctrine.” To accomplish this, a United States protectorate should be created in the land where the canal should be built, meaning an exclusive control of the canal by the U.S. military and for commercial expansion.¹¹⁶ The message of the book was clearly a part of a larger narrative the press, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, tried to promote, as it is shown by the fact that the last pages of the book were dedicated to advertisement for other books of the same

¹¹³ C. W. Doubleday. *Reminiscences of the Filibuster War in Nicaragua*. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1886.

¹¹⁴ Doubleday, iii.

¹¹⁵ *The Nation*. Vol. XLIII, Number 1109. Thursday, September 30, 1886. Page i.

¹¹⁶ Doubleday, 219–223.

series, *The Naval War of 1812*, and *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, both by Theodore Roosevelt.¹¹⁷

About the Filibuster War itself, Doubleday gives us an interesting account of Walker's imperialist plans, which are absent in all other works. Doubleday remembers taking a walk on a Nicaraguan beach with Walker during the days before his takeover of Granada. In a long conversation, Walker told Doubleday that his goal was first to convince the Nicaraguan oligarchy of the need for Walker's presence. Then, once in control of the country, create an alliance with the Church in order to gain the support of the common people. His next step was to conquer the rest of Central America, and once this was achieved, move on toward Mexico. The Central American Empire, created by Walker, would then ask for support from the Southern states in the U.S. to impose the Monroe Doctrine to avoid any European intervention against Walker's empire. The imposition of slavery and a strong connection with the Church were Walker's main economic and political objectives.¹¹⁸ It is not clear if this account is fictional or based on a real conversation, but in any case, Doubleday's account presented Walker's real goals.

The 1890s were a prolific period for this kind of account, and other works soon followed Doubleday's publication. In 1891, for example, James Jeffrey Roche published *The Story of the Filibusters*, a book that also included an account of the life of David Crockett, which exemplifies, once again, the production of

¹¹⁷ Doubleday, 227–228.

¹¹⁸ Doubleday, 165–166.

myths by pro-filibuster writers.¹¹⁹ Roche's book was not exceptional, except in its popularity, and his account was based mostly on Walker's and Wells' accounts, and followed their style and opinions.

In 1896, Virginian judge Daniel Bedinger Lucas published a book titled *Nicaragua, the War of the Filibusters*.¹²⁰ His account is, again, mostly based on Walker's *War in Nicaragua*. In his book, Lucas shows some sympathy for Walker, although there is also some criticism against the filibuster. The judge acknowledges that Walker was originally a hero of Manifest Destiny and U.S. expansionism, but states that after his takeover of Granada, he decided to forgo any idea of annexation, betraying in this way his original goals. Lucas also asserts that while Walker professed democratic republican ideals, his final goal in Nicaragua and Central America was to impose a military republic. Finally, Lucas argues that Walker's justification of slavery fell into legal problems, since on one hand he supported the Nicaraguan constitution of 1838 because it granted him and his filibusters automatic Nicaraguan citizenship, but at the same time the document prohibited slavery, which presented a contradiction in the adoption of that constitution.

A renewed interest in expeditions against Cuba during the late nineteenth century was responsible for the return of a romanticized version of the filibusters' story. The new spirit of imperialist expansionism in the United States started just

¹¹⁹ James Jeffrey Roche. *The Story of the Filibusters, to Which is Added the Life of Colonel David Crockett*. London: T. Fisher Unwin Co., 1891.

¹²⁰ Daniel Bedinger Lucas. *Nicaragua, the War of the Filibusters*. Richmond, VA: 1896.

before the Spanish-American war in Cuba (1898). It then continued until the creation of Panama as an independent republic, the construction of an interoceanic canal there, and the imposition of a U.S. protectorate status over the Canal Zone. The publication of fiction books romanticizing the image of the filibusters was common during his period.¹²¹ Even greater was the amount of memoirs written, both fake and real.¹²²

The most interesting case is the story of the filibuster Clinton Rollins, whose adventures were published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* each Sunday between October 31st, 1909 and February 6th, 1910. Rollins's story, published in

¹²¹ Albany Fonblanque. *The Filibuster: A Story of American Life and other Tales*. London: Ward and Lock, 1862. Joaquin Miller. *Songs of the Sierras*. Toronto: The Canadian News and Publishing Co., 1871. Charles John Cutcliffe Wright Hyne. *The Filibusters: A Romance*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1900. George Manville Fenn. *Fitz the Filibuster*. UK: 1903. John P. Wilson and William Lorraine. *The Filibuster: A Comic Opera*. Boston: M. Witmark, 1905.

¹²² James Jeffrey Roche. *The Story of the Filibusters, to which is added the life of Colonel David Crockett*. London: T. Fisher Unwin Co., 1891). In Spanish, translated by Manuel Carazo: (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1908; Editorial Aurora Social 1956; Imprenta Nacional, 1980; and Universidad de Costa Rica, 2006). Daniel Bedinger Lucas. *Nicaragua, the War of the Filibusters*. Richmond, VA: 1896. John M. Bass. *William Walker*. *American Historical Magazine*, 1898. James Jeffrey Roche. *By-Ways of War: The Story of the Filibusters*. Boston: Small, Maynard, and Co., 1901. Richard Harding Davis. *Soldiers of Fortune*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897. Richard Harding Davis. *Real Soldiers of Fortune*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906, 1910. Alexander Powell. *Gentlemen Rovers*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913. James Wilson Grimes Walker. *Ocean to Ocean: An account, personal and historical, of Nicaragua and its People*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1902. James Carson Jamison. *With Walker in Nicaragua or reminiscences of an Officer of the American Phalanx*. Columbia, MO: E. W. Stephens Publishing Co., 1909. In Spanish, translated by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer: Managua, 1977. Eleanore Callaghan Ratterman. "With Walker in Nicaragua: The Reminiscences of Eleanore Callaghan Ratterman." *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, Volume 1, Number 1, March 1915, 315-330. Fanny Juda. "California Filibusters: A History of their Expeditions into Hispanic America", by Fanny Juda. In: *The Grizzly Bear: Official organ of the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West* Vol. XXI., No. 4; Whole No. 142 : (February 1919). Henry Clint Parkhurst. "Filibustering with Walker", *San Francisco Chronicle*. (October 31st, 1909 to February 6th, 1910).

fifteen articles, describes his participation on William Walker's filibuster army in Nicaragua, and is one of the very few personal accounts by a filibuster published in both Spanish and English.¹²³ In the newspaper series, Rollins described in detail his arrival with Walker to Nicaragua, his fighting in the battles of Rivas and Granada, and even the end of Walker's adventures. The only problem with Clinton Rollins is that he never existed. The articles were written by Henry Clint Parkhurst, who was never a filibuster, and was only a child living in Iowa when Walker's expedition invaded Nicaragua. The detailed research by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer proves that although several scholars considered Rollins' story as a reliable source, the account itself is mostly plagiarized from Walker's own book, as well as from Doubleday's and Roche's versions.¹²⁴

U.S. academic works (1905–2002)

While both fictional works and eyewitness accounts continued to be published, an academic tradition emerged in the United States in the early twentieth century. This tradition is characterized by a serious attempt at exploring the reasons that promoted the development of filibuster adventures, how Walker was able to become a serious threat to Central American and Latin American sovereignty, his connections in the United States, and the consequences of his intervention.

In 1905, during the euphoria in the United States over Spain's defeat in the

¹²³ Guillermo Figueroa and Arturo Ortega. *Clinton Rollins – William Walker*. Managua: Editorial Nuevos Horizontes, 1945.

¹²⁴ Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. *El Filibustero Clinton Rollins*. Masaya: 1976.

Spanish-American War and the 1903 takeover of Panama's canal zone, William O. Scroggs published his first article describing Walker's connections to steamship capitalists in New York and San Francisco. Scroggs, a sociology and economics professor at Louisiana State University, recognized the romantic view of Walker's adventure prevalent in the United States and decided to analyze the topic. According to Scroggs, Walker's ideals were influenced by "the Anglo-American's love of excitement and adventure, (the) belief that it is the manifest destiny of his race to control the whole American continent, and the desire of the slave states for a southward expansion of American territory."¹²⁵ But Scroggs' main argument and the basis of his research was that Walker's campaign would have been impossible without an army, and that his army would not have existed without the support of an economic group that could transport soldiers, weapons, and goods to Nicaragua.¹²⁶ Scroggs revealed that Charles Garrison, manager of the Transit Accessory Company (CAT) in San Francisco, granted free passage and loans to the filibusters. He also found that Garrison's agent, C. J. McDonald, was authorized to give Walker a loan of \$20,000, a deal approved by Charles Morgan, manager of the company in New York. Cornelius Vanderbilt, another colluder and member of the company's board, approved an open recruiting of soldiers for the service of Walker. Also, he approved a lower-than-normal price for steamer tickets –sometimes free-, that went to filibusters destined to join

¹²⁵ William O. Scroggs. "William Walker and the Steamship Corporation in Nicaragua." *American Historical Review*, 10:4, July 1905, 792–811.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Walker. Scroggs downplays Vanderbilt's involvement, justifying his actions on his ignorance of Walker's real goals. But Vanderbilt did not oppose the filibusters until Walker, Garrison, and Morgan worked against Vanderbilt's economic interests. Vanderbilt only reacted when these three men joined to destroy the CAT, takeover its grants, and create a new company of steamers in Nicaragua with them as owners, which tells us that his interest was focused exclusively on financial, and not moral, concerns. One of the main consequences of Scroggs's article was the creation of a myth that still prevails among some scholars in which Vanderbilt is considered directly responsible for the fall of Walker.¹²⁷

Scroggs' academic interest in Walker continued with the publication in 1909 of an article titled "William Walker's Design on Cuba," in which he analyzed what Walker's ultimate goal would have been had he successfully conquered Central America. According to Scroggs, this was the annexation of Cuba to his Anglo-Saxon dominated slave republic.¹²⁸ In 1916, Scroggs published a book, titled *Filibusters and Financiers*, an account of Walker's filibuster adventures.¹²⁹ Scroggs cited the works of Pérez and Montúfar, the most important Central American sources at the time, but he did not use any Central American newspapers or archival sources. While Scroggs' work had an academic ring to

¹²⁷ This idea is actually borrowed from Richard Harding Davis. *Soldiers of Fortune*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897, a typical romanticized pro-filibuster work. Davis was a reporter of Hearst's *New York World*.

¹²⁸ William O. Scroggs. "William Walker's Design on Cuba." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sep., 1914), pp. 198–211.

¹²⁹ William O. Scroggs. *Filibusters and Financiers: The Story of William Walker and his Associates*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916.

it), he failed to excise himself from some of the Manifest Destiny's ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority expressed in the romantic books he criticized in his first article. The reason given by Scroggs for supporting the filibusters is that with Walker's death, Central America lost its chance of becoming an Anglo-Saxon dominated republic, since its "heterogeneous population had demonstrated its inability to govern itself or prevent its own political dissolution, (it) certainly needed the introduction of a new element to set things in order."¹³⁰

It took several years for another serious study of the Filibuster War to be published in English. In 1937, journalist and writer Laurence Greene published his book *The Filibuster*, a biography of Walker that did not offer much new to the literature.¹³¹ His heavy reliance on Walker and Scroggs, and his use of Wells, Doubleday, and other filibuster accounts contrasts with an absolute absence of Central American sources, and a clear bias against Central American characters in his version of the story. His account repeats some of the concepts presented by Scroggs, including Vanderbilt's intervention as the main force able to defeat Walker, and an open antipathy against the British and French governments for their diplomatic support for Costa Rica.

Some decades later, Albert Z. Carr wrote one of the most relevant books on Walker. In 1963, he published *The World and William Walker*, a book that

¹³⁰ Scroggs, *Filibusters*, 396.

¹³¹ Laurence Green. *The Filibuster: the Career of William Walker*. New York, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1937.

analyzes Walker in his context as well as his mindset.¹³² The first half of the book focuses on Walker's life before his arrival to Nicaragua, as well as some of the personal issues that influenced his thought. The second part focuses on the events of the Filibuster War. Carr's research is detailed, acknowledging Walker and Scroggs as his main sources, but including various Central American sources as Montúfar and Pérez, but also some more recent ones, as Obregón Loría, Rodríguez Beteta, and Alemán Bolaños.¹³³ Still, his narration of the events of the war follows closely the erroneous political understanding of the region expressed by Walker and Wells. An example is the use of terms like *serviles* to describe the conservative forces in Central America, a term related to the Independence period, not to the 1850s. Another mistake was to consider the Salvadorian and Costa Rican governments as conservatives, or as mere tools of the British Empire, when in fact they were the only two liberal governments during the war. Carr also follows Scroggs' lead on giving too much weight to Vanderbilt's actions in the result of the Filibuster War. While Walker and Scroggs are important sources that inform scholars in the United States, some of them are unable to transcend their concepts. Although he employs Central American sources, Carr delivers just another account of William Walker's adventures, instead of writing a history of

the Filibuster War itself. His work, though, provides some important explanations

¹³² Albert Z. Carr. *The World and William Walker*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

¹³³ Gustavo Alemán Bolaños. *Centenario de la Guerra Nacional de Nicaragua contra Walker*. Guatemala, 1956., Rafael Obregón Loría. *La Campaña del Tránsito, 1856-1857*. San José, Costa Rica: 1956. Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta. "Trascendencia de la Guerra Nacional de Centro América." *Revista de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala*, 30:1-4, (1957) 7-92.

of the political, cultural, and diplomatic context of the war.¹³⁴

Finally, the work of Robert E. May shifted the focus, in U.S. scholarship, from Walker as an adventurer to an analysis of the context that made him partially successful. In 1973, May published *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire*, and in 2002, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*.¹³⁵ May was able, in *The Southern Dream*, to expand on Scroggs' work, analyzing Walker's financial connections in the United States, while also presenting an examination of the political and cultural context of the southern United States before the Civil War. For May, this period is important to understand how Walker's adventures were seen as the hope for a possible expansion of slave societies. Also, the filibustering invasion promoted the idea of the creation of a slave Confederation that would include the Caribbean and Central America in case of Southern secession. In *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, May expands on this topic and delivers an outstanding work, locating the filibuster phenomenon in its own cultural, political, and economic context, as well as establishing its connections with the war between the United States and Mexico, and the U.S. Civil War. His work explores the

¹³⁴ Other books published include: Edward S. Wallace. *Destiny and Glory*. New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1957. Frederic Rosengarten. *Freebooters must die! The Life and Death of William Walker, the Most Notorious Filibuster of the Nineteenth Century*. Wayne, PA: Haverford House, 1976. Noel B. Gerson. *Sad Swashbuckler: The Life of William Walker*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1976. Charles H. Brown. *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

¹³⁵ Robert E. May. *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973; The University of Georgia Press, 1989. Also: Robert E. May. *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America*. Chapel Hill: The North Carolina University Press, 2002.

general filibuster problem, not only in Central America, but also in Cuba and Mexico.

Central America, commemoration and national identity (1895–1958)

Central American scholarship of the Filibuster War is strongly attached to commemorations. A large majority of the Central American publications related to the war have been released in direct connection to the celebrations of the first centenary of the war, in 1956, and the commemoration of the 150th anniversary in 2006. Relevant are the constant translations to Spanish from U.S. sources, showing a greater interest to explore foreign perspectives of the war than the one demonstrated by most scholars in the United States.¹³⁶ As in the United States, though, most works are romanticized versions, not of Walker and the filibusters, but of the Central American effort to defeat the invaders, with a clear intention to reinforce a sense of national identity.

Serious scholarship about the Filibuster War started much earlier than in the United States, as we saw in the cases of Jerónimo Pérez and Lorenzo Montúfar. Both historians used archival sources, documents, and newspapers, memoirs of Central American soldiers, and even, in the case of Montúfar, a

¹³⁶ William Walker. *La Guerra de Nicaragua: Escrita por el General William Walker en 1860*. (Managua: Tipografía de El Porvenir, 1884), v. trad. Fabio Carnevalini. Managua: Banco de America, 1975, Managua: BANIC, 1993. Translated by Ricardo Fernández Guardia: San José: Imprenta Maria V. de Lines, 1924. Managua: Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centro Americano, 1967, San José: Educa, 1970, 1975; James Jeffrey Roche. *Historia de los Filibusteros*. translated by Manuel Carazo: San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1908; Editorial Aurora Social 1956; Imprenta Nacional, 1980; and Universidad de Costa Rica, 2006. James Carson Jamison. *Con Walker en Nicaragua*. Translated by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer: Managua, 1977. Guillermo Figueroa and Arturo Ortega. *Clinton Rollins – William Walker*. Managua: Editorial Nuevos Horizontes, 1945. William O. Scroggs. *Filibusteros y Fianncieros*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. Frederic Rosengarten. *William Walker y el ocaseo del filibusterismo*. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymurás, 1997, 2002. Horace Bell. *La expedición de Walker a Nicaragua: confesiones de un filibustero*. Guatemala: Imprenta Valenzuela, 1956.

translation of Spanish of Walker's version to support their accounts.¹³⁷ It is noticeable that Pérez's book has a strong bias in favor of the Conservative Party of Nicaragua, which was the governing entity during most of the second half of the nineteenth century in that country. Montúfar's, instead, has a strong liberal bias, due to his own ideological preferences, but also because this was the dominant current in Central America, with the exception of Nicaragua, at the time publication. Even so, the main reason behind Montúfar's work on the Filibuster War was the reaction of the Costa Rican government against the publication of Walker's account in Spanish by Carnevalini. Taken as an affront, Costa Rica commissioned the work to Montúfar as part of an effort to counter the filibuster's version of the war.

In 1895, as part of the ceremonies related to the unveiling of a statue commemorating the Central American victory over William Walker and his filibusters in San José, Costa Rica, the first purely Costa Rican accounts of the war were published.¹³⁸ First, Francisco Rodríguez Camacho published a short book that presented three vignettes focusing on the battle of Santa Rosa, the battle of Rivas, and the Transit Route campaign.¹³⁹ This book was followed by a

¹³⁷ This is Carnevalini's weak translation of *The War in Nicaragua*, published in 1883 in Nicaragua.

¹³⁸ Although Montúfar's work was commissioned by the Costa Rican government, the book was finally published in Guatemala. The author was also Guatemalan. His work is also considered to be Central American in spirit, and not exclusively Costa Rican. *Las Fiestas del 15 de Setiembre de 1895, celebradas con motivo de la inauguración del Monumento Nacional erigido en San José a los heroes del 56 y 57*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1897.

¹³⁹ Francisco Rodríguez Camacho. *Glorias de Costa Rica: Pinceladas sobre las guerras de Centro América en los años de 1856 y 1857*. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1895.

memoir of the celebrations, which included documents related to the war, as well as a small account of the war written by Joaquín Bernardo Calvo, then Costa Rican Ambassador in the United States.¹⁴⁰ Calvo's work was republished in 1909, this time in a book format.¹⁴¹ In it, the author wrote a short summary of the main events concerning Costa Rica during the war, as Walker's takeover of Nicaragua, the Costa Rican declaration of war, the battle of Santa Rosa, the battle of Rivas on April 11th, 1856, the cholera epidemic, the campaign of the Transit Route, and the final siege of Rivas and surrender of Walker. Calvo's work concludes as it starts, with a call for Central American and Latin American union. His sources include the classics, such as Montúfar, Gámez, and Pérez, as well as Carnevalini's translation of Walker's book, and James J. Roche's *Soldiers of Fortune*. Calvo also provides information extracted from the diary of two Costa Rican soldiers. One of them was José María Bonilla, whose account was published in the local newspaper *El Comercio* as a series of articles between April and May of 1887. The other diary belonged to Major Máximo Blanco, not yet published at the time.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Las Fiestas del 15 de Setiembre de 1895, celebradas con motivo de la inauguración del Monumento Nacional erigido en San José a los héroes del 56 y 57*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1897.

¹⁴¹ Joaquín Bernardo Calvo. *La Campaña Nacional contra los Filibusteros: breve reseña histórica*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1909.

¹⁴² *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 62, April 14th, 1887. p.3 *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 63, April 16th, 1887. P. 3. *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 64. April 19th, 1887. P. 3. *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 66, April 23rd, 1887. P. 3. *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 68, April 28th, 1887. P.3 *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 71, May 5th, 1887. P. 3. *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 73, May 10th, 1887. P. 3-4. *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 76, May 17th, 1887. P. 3. *El Comercio*. Year 1, number 81, May 28th, 1887. p. 3. Maximo Blanco's Diary was finally published by the *Revista de los Archivos Nacionales*, Year III, Number 7 and 8.

An early Central American interest in U.S. sources of the war produced a series of translations to Spanish of these works, starting with Carnevalini's work on Walker's *War in Nicaragua*. In Costa Rica, this had to wait until 1908, when a translation to Spanish of James Jeffrey Roche's *Story of the Filibusters*, translated by Manuel Carazo Peralta, was published.¹⁴³ The introduction, written by historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia, reflects the Costa Rican concerns at the time in relation to the myth of Vanderbilt's supposed decisive action against Walker created by Scroggs and reproduced by others. Also, Fernández Guardia shows the controversy ensuing in Costa Rica at the time in relation to the real existence of Juan Santamaría. In 1924, Fernández Guardia published another important translation to Spanish from a filibuster account, the *War in Nicaragua*. The Costa Rican historian decided that it was necessary to have a real translation of Walker's book, since Carnevalini's had always been sketchy and incomplete.¹⁴⁴

Other works during the first half of the twentieth century include two short accounts about Walker in Nicaragua, and another one about the priest Augusto Vijil, a controversial figure because of his support for Walker's government. It is important to note that during this period Costa Rica was constantly involved in commemorations related to the Filibuster War, which promoted most of the

¹⁴³ James Jeffrey Roche. *Historia de los Filibusteros*. Versión castellana de Manuel Carazo Peralta. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1908.

¹⁴⁴ William Walker. *La Guerra de Nicaragua*. Traducción de Ricardo Fernández Guardia. San José: Imprenta de María v. de Lines, 1924.

publications related to that topic in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁵

The year 1914 celebrated the centenary of the birth of President Juan Rafael Mora. In 1915, April 11th was designated as an official holiday to celebrate the battle of Rivas in 1856, and the figure of Juan Santamaría. In 1929, the statue of Juan Rafael Mora was unveiled. In 1931, Costa Rica celebrated the 100th anniversary of Juan Santamaría's birth. Finally, in 1941, a book commemorated the 50th anniversary of the unveiling of Juan Santamaría's statue. At the same time, this period also marked a strong controversy related to the existence of Juan Santamaría, whom some have accused of being a mere legend without archival evidence. Of special significance is Teodoro Picado Michalski's book, the first one to approach the conflict from the point of view of diplomatic efforts, as well as Manuel de Jesús Jiménez and Faustino Víquez's compilation of primary

¹⁴⁵ Manuel de Jesús Jiménez y Faustino Víquez. *Documentos relativos a la Guerra Nacional de 1856 y 1857 con sus antecedentes*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1914., Juegos Florales de 1914. *Fiesta dedicada a la memoria del prócer don Juan Rafael Mora ex-presidente de Costa Rica con motivo del centenario de su nacimiento. 15 de setiembre de 1914*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1914. *El Centenario del benemérito de la patria ex-presidente de la república general don Juan Rafael Mora. 1814-1914*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1915. *Memoria de las fiestas cívicas celebradas en Alajuela el 11 de abril de 1916. 60 aniversario de la batalla de Rivas, en la cual inmortalizó su nombre Juan Santamaría*. San José: Imprenta y Litografía del Comercio, 1916. Comité Central Permanente Pro Mora-Cañas. *Apuntes y Documentos*. San José: Imprenta y Litografía Monerva, 1918. Teodoro Picado Michalski. *Antecedentes de la Guerra Nacional: apuntes para nuestra historia diplomática*. San José: Alsina, 1922., Liceo de Costa Rica. *Dos documentos históricos*. San José: Lehmann, 1924. Luis Dobles Segreda. *El Libro del Héroe*. San José: 1926., Eladio Prado. *Juan Santamaría y el libro de defunciones de la Campaña Nacional*. San José: Lehmann, 1926. *Juan Rafael Mora. Cuestión Mora y Aguilar. Exposición de uno de los hechos que motivaron los sucesos del 14 de agosto*. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1929. Carlos Jinesta. *Juan Rafael Mora*. San José: Alsina, 1929. Lucas Raúl Chacón. *Biografía del expresidente de la república general benemérito de la patria D. Juan Rafael Mora*. San José: Imprenta San José, 1929. Carlos Jinesta. *Epinicio. Juan Santamaría*. San José: Alsina, 1931. Instituto de Alajuela. *Libro del centenario de Juan Santamaría. 1831 -29 de agosto- 1931, y algunas otras páginas cívicas de Alajuela*. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1931. Víctor Manuel Sanabria. *Los muertos en la Campaña Nacional de 1856 y 1857*. San José: Lehmann, 1932. Alarmvogel. *En el 50 aniversario de la erección del monument de Juan Santamaría*. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1942.

documents, which made accessible to the general public a series of important letters, official documents, newspaper cuts, and other archival documents related to the war. During this period the first book related to the Filibuster War published outside the United States and Central America appeared. Published in Argentina, it was also clearly inspired by the commemorations of 1931.¹⁴⁶

Faithful to its commemorative approach, the proximity of the year 1956, centenary of the war against the filibusters, promoted a vast and important series of publications related to the topic of the Filibuster War across Central America. As a prelude to the commemorations of the centenary of the war in Nicaragua, a controversy about the figure of Máximo Jeréz drew a lot of attention.¹⁴⁷ Jeréz was a liberal who originally supported the arrival of the filibusters in 1855, but he was also one of the first members of the Democratic Party to denounce Walker and sign the patriotic treaty of September 12th, 1856, uniting liberals and

¹⁴⁶ Ricardo Fernández Mira. *Juan Santamaría. El soldado, héroe de Costa Rica*. Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Contreras, 1937. Other books published in this period and not connected to the commemorations are: Olmedo Alfaro. *El Filibustero Walker en Nicaragua*. Panama: Editorial La Moderna, 1932. Salvador Calderón R. *Alrededor de Walker*. San Salvador: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1929. Olmedo's book is a short account based on Montúfar's work, but it also contains a study of Sandino, and another one about the Panama Canal. His intention is to associate these three events as part of an anti-imperialist narrative. Calderón's work is not well structured, but it uses most sources available at the time (Walker, Wells, Roche, Pérez, Scroggs, Jamison, *El Nicaraguense*, *The Panama Herald*, and archival sources from the Honduran Central Library).

¹⁴⁷ This connection was originally described by Raúl Piedra, in: Raúl Aguilar Piedra. "La Guerra Centroamericana contra los Filibusteros en 1856-1857: una aproximación a las Fuentes bibliográficas y documentales." *Revista de Historia*, 51-52 (enero-diciembre 2005), 463-528. San José/Heredia: Universidad de Costa Rica/Universidad Nacional, 2005. A revised version was published in 2008 in the electronic bulletin of AFEHC: Raúl Aguilar Piedra. "La Guerra Centroamericana contra los Filibusteros en 1856-1857: una aproximación a las Fuentes bibliográficas y documentales", *Boletín AFEHC*, 36, June 4th, 2008. http://afehc-historia-centroamericana.org/index.php?action=fi_aff&id=1947

conservatives against the filibuster threat.¹⁴⁸

Back in Costa Rica, in 1952, President Otilio Utae ordered the creation of the *Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857* in order to publish archival documents and recent research related to the Filibuster War. Starting in 1954, the Comisión published a series of booklets that described the most important military events of the war in Costa Rica. The first volume of the series was a reprint of Joaquín Bernardo Calvo's work published originally in 1897, *La Campaña Nacional*.¹⁴⁹ The second was dedicated to Juan Santamaría, including documents already known and extracted from Dobles Segreda's *El Libro del Héroe*, published originally in 1926.¹⁵⁰ The third booklet is arguably the most important, since it is a collection of archival documents about the war, most of them, though, already published elsewhere. The next three booklets follow the same format, basically putting together documents already published, one for the battle of Santa Rosa, another one for the battle of Rivas, and finally one for the campaign of the Transit Route of 1856 and 1857.¹⁵¹ The *Comisión* was also

¹⁴⁸ Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. *Máximo Jeréz y sus contemporáneos*. (Managua: Editorial La Prensa, 1937, republished in 1948). Sofonías Salvatierra. *Máximo Jeréz Inmortal: comentario polémico*. (Managua: Tipografía Progreso, 1950). Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. *Don Sofonías Salvatierra y su comentario polémico*. (Managua: Editorial La Prensa, 1950).

¹⁴⁹ Joaquín Bernardo Calvo. *La Campaña Nacional contra los filibusteros en 1856 y 1857, una reseña histórica*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954. Published as No. 1 by the Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857, and republished in 1955.

¹⁵⁰ Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856-1857. No.2. *Juan Santamaría*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954.

¹⁵¹ Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856-1857. No. 3. *Proclamas y Mensajes*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954. Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856-1857. No. 4. *La Batalla de Santa Rosa*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954. Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856-1857. No. 5. *La Batalla de Rivas*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955. Comisión de Investigación Histórica

responsible for two compilations of documents titled *Crónicas y Comentarios*, and *Proclamas y Mensajes*, as well as a reprint of two more books presenting documents and comments related to the Filibuster War, and, finally, a book dedicated to exploring the figure of President Juan Rafael Mora.¹⁵²

Beside the *Comisión*'s efforts, independent scholars published other books related to the war.¹⁵³ From this period, two works are important to note. Armando Rodríguez Porras published in 1955 a book on President Juan Rafael Mora, focusing on the president as a historical figure, instead of serving as an elegy like most works before.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, Rafael Obregón Loría published an account of the Transit Route campaign, much more extensive than the one published by the *Comisión*. These two works show the development of a maturing scholarship on the Filibuster War in Costa Rica.

The centenary commemorations promoted a renewed interest, in Nicaragua, to publish on the topic of the Filibuster War. This started with the two

de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. No. 6. Segunda Campaña. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955.

¹⁵² Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. *Crónicas y Comentarios*. San José: Imprenta Universal, 1956. Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. *Proclamas y Mensajes*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954. Francisco Montero Barrantes. *Campaña Nacional*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955. This is an extract from Montero's *Elementos de Historia* published in 1892. Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. *Documentos relativos a la Guerra contra los filibusteros*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955. Octavio Castro Saborío. *Laude, evocación de Mora; el hombre, el estadista, el héroe, el mártir*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1956.

¹⁵³ Teresa Masís Rojas. *Breve introducción para el estudio de la Guerra contra los filibusteros, 1856–1857*. San José: Lehmann, 1956.

¹⁵⁴ Armando Rodríguez Porras. *Juan Rafael Mora Porras y la Guerra contra los filibusteros*. San José: Imprenta Las Américas, 1955.

books studying the life of Máximo Jeréz.¹⁵⁵ They were followed by a large work by Ildelfonso Palma Martínez titled *La Guerra Nacional*, the first extensive Nicaraguan work to focus exclusively on the Filibuster War. Although it often reveals the aficionado spirit of its author, it is an important effort, especially because it uses both pro-liberal and pro-conservative sources.¹⁵⁶ Palma Martínez is also author of the *Oda a San Jacinto*, an epic poem to the battle of September 14th, 1856.¹⁵⁷ This poem fits into the common approach of many works during this period, being heavily influenced by *historia patria* and written to present a political opinion or an elegy celebrating a hero.¹⁵⁸

The centenary also promoted publications in other Central American countries that had traditionally not shown much interest in commemorating the Filibuster War. In Guatemala, Marco Soto Valenzuela won second place in a national contest promoting the history of the Filibuster War, resulting in the publication of his book.¹⁵⁹ Also coinciding with the centenary, Gustavo Alemán Bolaños and Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta published each a book on the allied armies of Central America during the Filibuster War, work sponsored by the Guatemalan

¹⁵⁵ José Dolores Gámez. *Corona fúnebre del General Máximo Jeréz*. Managua: Tipografía Progreso, 1956. Published originally in Honduras in 1882. Sofonías Salvatierra. *Síntesis de la personalidad histórica de Máximo Jeréz*. Managua: Tipografía Progreso, 1955.

¹⁵⁶ Ildelfonso Palma Martínez. *La Guerra Nacional: sus antedecentes y subsecuentes tentativas de invasión*. Managua: 1956.

¹⁵⁷ Ildelfonso Palma Martínez. *Oda a San Jacinto*. Managua: 1956.

¹⁵⁸ Sofonías Salvatierra. *El mayor peligro hace un siglo para Centroamérica*. Managua: Tipografía Progreso, 1957.

¹⁵⁹ Marco A. Soto Valenzuela. *Guerra Nacional de Centroamérica*. Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1957.

army in a conscious effort to congratulate itself on an environment of Central American unity.¹⁶⁰ In El Salvador, Angelita García Peña published an important series of documents that complemented those already in circulation.¹⁶¹ Also a Salvadorian contribution, and also coinciding with the centenary, Dueñas Van Severen authored a book on the filibusters in Nicaragua.¹⁶² Honduras, showing an even smaller interest than the rest of the Central American republics, also joined the centenary commemorations with a short account of the war emphasizing the contributions of Honduran General Florencio Xatruch.¹⁶³ Out of Central America, the centenary promoted a work on the battle of San Jacinto, published in México.¹⁶⁴ Finally, the centenary also promoted the translation of filibusters' accounts into Spanish.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Gustavo Alemán Bolaños. *Centenario de la Guerra Nacional de Nicaragua contra Walker: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras en la contienda. Homenaje de Guatemala a los ejércitos aliados de Centroamérica, 1856-1857*. Guatemala: Editorial del Ejército, 1956. Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta. *Trascendencia nacional e internacional de la Guerra de Centro América contra Walker y sus filibusteros*. Guatemala: 1960.

¹⁶¹ Angelita García Peña. *Documentos para la historia de la Guerra Nacional contra los filibusteros en Nicaragua: contribución a la historia de Centro América*. San Salvador: Editorial Ahora, 1958.

¹⁶² Ricardo Dueñas Van Severen. *La invasion filibustera de Nicaragua y la Guerra Nacional*. San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1958. Although a Salvadorian, his book was originally published in Costa Rica. The following year it was published also in El Salvador, with another Salvadorian reprint in 1962 and 1997.

¹⁶³ Guillermo Mayes. *Campaña Nacional centroamericana contra los filibusteros en Nicaragua, 1856-1956*. Tegucigalpa: Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1956. Also: Angel Zúñica Huete. *Recordatorio del General Florencio Xatruch: military centroamericano de los ejércitos nacionalistas unidos contra el filibusterismo de William Walker en Nicaragua, año 1857*. Comayagüela, Honduras: Imprenta Gómez, 1956.

¹⁶⁴ Ernesto de la Torre Villar. *La batalla de San Jacinto, Nicaragua, 1856*. México: Instituto de Geografía e Historia, 1957.

¹⁶⁵ Horace Bell. *La expedición de Walker a Nicaragua: confesiones de un filibustero*. Guatemala: Imprenta Valenzuela, 1956.

Institutional efforts in Nicaragua and Costa Rica: Research and publications (1965–present)

After the celebration of the centenary, the production of works related to the Filibuster War continued, but at a much slower rate, showing how commemorations provided an incentive for research and publication on the topic. In Nicaragua, the support of the Banco de América, and the interest on the topic developed by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer, were the most important promoters of research in Nicaragua after 1956. In Costa Rica, it was the creation of the Museo Juan Santamaría that established the institutional framework needed for the continuous support to research and publication.¹⁶⁶

The Banco de América, under a series titled Colección Cultural, sponsored the publication of a large series of books about Nicaragua, especially in the historical field. The *serie histórica* starts with the translation to Spanish of William O. Scroggs *Filibusters and Financiers*. The series also includes the *Historia de Nicaragua*, by José Dolores Gámez, the complete works of Jerónimo Pérez, Carnevalini's old translation of Walker's account, and *La Ruta de Nicaragua* by David Folkman, a book that analyzes the importance of the Transit

¹⁶⁶ Several works were published between the centenary commemorations and the institutionalization of publications, for example: Alejandro Hurtado Chamorro. *William Walker: ideales y propósitos*. Managua: 1965. Chester Zelaya. *Emanuel Mongalo y Juan Santamaría: dos heroes, dos hechos históricos*. San José: Universidad de Costa Rica, 1970. Enrique Guier. *William Walker*. San José: 1971. Alejandro Barberena Pérez. *El héroe nacional: biografía de José Dolores Estrada*. Managua: Librería Cultural Nicaragüense, 1971. Víctor Manuel Arroyo. *Acusación ante la historia: Estados Unidos y la Campaña Nacional, 1856-1857*. Editorial Presbere, 1983.

Route in the history of that country.¹⁶⁷ Another series important for our study is the *serie fuentes históricas*, a publication dedicated to primary sources. Some of the titles include the first translation into Spanish of the diary of John H. Wheeler, U.S. ambassador in Nicaragua during the 1850s and an open supporter of Walker. It also includes the diplomatic documents of José de Marcoleta, Nicaraguan ambassador in Washington during the Filibuster War. Finally, the Banco de América reproduced a bilingual facsimile edition of entries for Nicaragua and the Filibuster War originally appeared in the *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and the *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization* for the years 1856 and 1857.¹⁶⁸ The effort of the Banco de América was one of the most ambitious in the area of Nicaraguan history, and the documents and books it published are of vital importance to the study of the phenomenon of the Filibuster War.

As director of the Colección Cultural of the Banco de América, Alejandro Bolaños Geyer was able to accumulate a large quantity of archival documentation from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the United States. Although a physician by profession, and therefore without the academic background of a historian, Bolaños Geyer produced the most important individual research in the field so far.

¹⁶⁷ William O. Scroggs. *Filibusteros y Financieros*. Managua: Banco de América, 1974. José Dolores Gámez. *Historia de Nicaragua*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. Jerónimo Pérez. *Obras Históricas Completas*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. William Walker. *La Guerra de Nicaragua*. Trad. de Fabio Carnevalini. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. David I. Folkman. *La Ruta de Nicaragua*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975.

¹⁶⁸ John H. Wheeler. *Diario de John Hill Wheeler*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. William C. Jones. *Documentos Diplomáticos de William Carey Jones*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. José de Marcoleta. *Documentos diplomáticos para servir a la historia de Nicaragua*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. Joseph N. Scott. *Testimonio de Joseph N. Scott*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. *La Guerra de Nicaragua según Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975. *La Guerra de Nicaragua según Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization*. Managua: Banco de América, 1975.

His work is reflected in the Banco de América collection, but also in other personal publications. Among them is a five volume work on William Walker, a translation of James Jamison's *With Walker in Nicaragua*, and a study that unmasked the account of the fictional filibuster Clinton Rollins. He also edited a bilingual facsimile version of William Walker's newspaper, *El Nicaraguense*, published originally in Granada between 1855 and 1856.¹⁶⁹

A similar effort has been developed in Costa Rica since 1980, when the Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, located in the city of Alajuela, Costa Rica, opened its doors in its new location. Since then, it has become the single most important institution focused exclusively on the preservation of the collective memory of the Filibuster War. The institution was originally created after the commemoration of Juan Santamaría's 100th birthday, in 1931, and survived for a few years in a small classroom ceded by the Instituto de Alajuela, the main high school in the city. It was not until 1974 that the institution was formally created with the support of the national government. Currently, it occupies a large building that once served as a fort when Costa Rica still had an army. Since its formal creation, a budget has been assigned for the purpose of divulgation and research. The museum includes an extensive library, the best one when it comes to the Filibuster War. It has also promoted the publication of several books on

¹⁶⁹ Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. *El filibustero Clinton Rollins*. Masaya: 1976. James Carson Jamison. *Con Walker en Nicaragua*. Masaya: 1977. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. *William Walker: the grayed-eye man of destiny*. Lake St. Louis, MO: 1988. *El Nicaraguense*. Bilingual facsimile. St. Charles, MO: 1998. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. *William Walker: El predestinado*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2003.

the topic, including a reediting of the classic works by Montúfar, Obregón Loría, and Carlos Meléndez, as well as more recent works by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer, Iván Molina, and Patricia Fumero.¹⁷⁰

Among new publications from the Museo, *Elite, negocios y política en Costa Rica*, by Carmen Fallas Santana is one of the most important.¹⁷¹ This book is representative of the best Costa Rican scholarship in connection to the Filibuster War. In it, Fallas Santana analyzes the figure of Juan Rafael Mora from an economic and political standpoint, leaving the military aspects aside. Fallas studies the formation of the nation-state in Costa Rica during the times of President Juan Rafael Mora, between 1849 and 1859. Costa Rica was then governed by an elite group associated with an agro-exporting liberal economy, dedicated mostly from coffee production. Mora, in his attempt to consolidate a central government, established a state monopoly of liquor production and distribution and promoted the creation of a central bank. As part of this process,

¹⁷⁰ Carlos Meléndez Chaverri. *Juan Santamaría: una aproximación crítica y documental*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1982. Armando Rodríguez Porras. *Juan Rafael Mora y la Guerra contra los filibusteros*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1986. Annie Lemistre Pujol. *Dos bronceos conmemorativos y una gesta heroica*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1988. Rafael Obregón Loría. *Costa Rica y la Guerra contra los filibusteros*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1991. Patricia Fumero. *El monumento nacional, fiesta y develización*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1998. Lorenzo Montúfar Rivera. *Walker en Centro América*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000. Carlos Meléndez Chaverri. *Santa Rosa: un combate por la libertad*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2001. Carmen Fallas Santana. *Elite, negocios y política en Costa Rica*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2004. Juan Rafael Quesada Camacho. *Clarín Patriótico: La Guerra contra los Filibusteros y la nacionalidad costarricense*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2006. Víctor Acuña Ortega. *Filibusterismo y destino manifiesto en las Américas*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2010. Also see the series of booklets “Colección 11 de Abril”, which include some primary sources, as well as short essays by Carlos Meléndez, Chester Zelaya, and Robert E. May.

¹⁷¹ Carmen Fallas Santana. *Elite, negocios y política en Costa Rica*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2004.

Mora modernized and expanded the army, which became handy once the danger Walker and his filibusters represented became obvious. Due to the expenses of the war, and the sacrifice imposed on the elite, some of its members created political instability for Mora's government, which ended with his overthrow. After trying to recover power, Mora was executed, an abnormal and traumatic event in Costa Rican history.¹⁷² Carmen Fallas Santana's book is somewhat controversial, especially among admirers of Mora and those who prefer the immaculate image of the hero over the complexities of real life. In her book, Fallas Santana exposes a problematic political elite more interested in power and money than in the fatherland, but also a Mora who could be selfish, a little authoritarian, and possibly even corrupt.

A recent book that expands on the analysis of the Filibuster War is *Filibusterismo y Destino Manifiesto en las Américas*, edited by Víctor Acuña Ortega.¹⁷³ The book, published in 2010, compiles articles by some of the most important current authors on the topic of the Filibuster War, including Frances Kinloch, Carmen Fallas Santana, Víctor Acuña Ortega, Antonio de la Cova, Michel Gobat, Amy Greenberg, and Justin Wolfe. The articles, a result of a symposium celebrated in 2007, present a variety of topics. Carlos Granados promotes the idea of the Filibuster War as having three layers: the global context,

¹⁷² By using the term *trauma*, I describe the silence about Mora and the Filibuster War imposed by the anti-Mora elite for more than a decade, in reference to the theories developed by, among others, Dominick LaCapra, in: Dominick LaCapra. *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

¹⁷³ Víctor Acuña Ortega. *Filibusterismo y destino manifiesto en las Américas*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2010.

the U.S. context, and the Central American context, and that it is necessary to understand all three in order to explain what the Filibuster War really represented. Granados makes the same assumption as Raúl Piedra, thinking that U.S. historiography is less local than the one created in Central America. As it will be demonstrated later, U.S. sources show no interest at all in Central American sources, nor do they understand the consequences of Walker's invasion in Central America in the global context. Antonio de la Cova, on the other hand, analyzes the figure of Coronel Henry Titus, and his adventures as filibuster and pro-slavery fighter in Cuba, Kansas, and Nicaragua. Other aspects of the war are also included in the book, such as common daily life in Nicaragua during Walker's occupation, public health during the war, and Walker's reception in New Orleans after his defeat in 1857.

More commemorations (2005–2007)

The Banco de América and the Museo Juan Santamaría have provided the institutional support needed for the development of a history that deviates from *historia patria*. But commemorations feed the Historia Patria and vice versa. For the 150th anniversary of the Filibuster War in 2006, a large number of works were published. Some of them returned to the romantic and patriotic style of *historia patria*, while others continued the new path of academic discipline and research that became the norm a few decades before.

Reprints were one of the main results of the commemorations, in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The University of Costa Rica Press released a large collection of books between 2005 and 2007 directed to commemorate the

Filibuster War. Some of the most important works reprinted include Dobles Segreda's book on Juan Santamaría (originally published in 1926), Calvo's work on the filibuster war (1909), including the first translation to Spanish of Roche's *Story of the Filibusters* (1891, 1909), as well as Carlos Jinesta's *Epinicio* (1931). The UCR Press also published the campaign diary of Faustino Montes de Oca, an officer during the Filibuster War.¹⁷⁴ The Universidad Estatal a Distancia sponsored a collection titled *Biblioteca del 56*. The books published were all new additions to the historiography of the war. From this collection it is important to acknowledge the work of Rafael Angel Méndez's *Imágenes del Poder*, an analysis of the image of Juan Santamaría and the controversy about his existence.¹⁷⁵ In it, Méndez traces the story of how Santamaría became the main symbol of the war, the controversy about his existence, and the validity of his legend. Méndez concludes that there were several Juan Santamarías from Alajuela in the Costa Rican army, a common name at the time, which sparked confusion since there was no archival information about any of them dying during the battle of Rivas. His most important contribution is the finding of new evidence that demonstrates the existence of more records that mention a Juan Santamaría who died during the battle.

Another important book of the collection is Raúl Arias Sánchez's study of

¹⁷⁴ Clotilde Obregón Quesada, ed. *Diarios de Faustino Montes de Oca Gamero*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2007.

¹⁷⁵ Rafael Angel Méndez. *Imágenes del Poder: Juan Santamaría y el ascenso de la nación en Costa Rica, 1860–1915*. San José: EUNED, 2007.

the Costa Rican soldiers.¹⁷⁶ He presents data that helps to understand the structure and dynamics of the Costa Rican army, its size, weaponry, and the composition of the army. The Editorial Costa Rica also joined the commemorations with the reprinting of *Proclamas y Mensajes* and *Crónicas y Comentarios*, two volumes of archival documents originally published for the centenary commemorations. The same press also published a new compilation of accounts of the war and campaign diaries by Elías Zeledón Cartín. All these documents had been published before in newspapers, journals, and magazines, but it is of great value for researchers and the general public to have them reprinted and compiled in a single volume.¹⁷⁷ The 150th anniversary also allowed for independent publications, including a controversial book on Juan Rafael Mora, and a study about Karl Hoffmann, general surgeon of the army, and the support for the war received by the government from the German-Costa Rican community.¹⁷⁸

In Nicaragua, the 150th anniversary marked the return to an exclusively commemorative kind of publication, with the reprinting of some classic works, as those by Palma Martínez and Gámez. Gámez's book is in fact an excerpt of his *History of Nicaragua*, from which the editor, Aldo Díaz Lacayo, published only the chapters related to the Filibuster War. Lacayo also reprinted some of Sofonías

¹⁷⁶ Raúl Arias Sánchez. *Los Soldados de la Campaña Nacional, 1856–1857*. (San José: EUNED, 2007).

¹⁷⁷ Elías Zeledón Cartín. *Crónicas de la Guerra Nacional, 1856–1857*. San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2006.

¹⁷⁸ Armando Vargas Araya. *El lado oculto del Presidente Mora*. San José: Editorial Juricentro, 2007. Luko Hilje Quirós. *Karl Hoffmann: naturalista, médico y héroe nacional*. Santo Domingo de Heredia: Inbio, 2006.

Salvatierra's works, and a booklet about Walker's surrender.¹⁷⁹ In 2006, Francisco Bautista Lara published a book celebrating the 150th anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto.¹⁸⁰ This publication includes a series of articles analyzing the war from various aspects, including some fictionalized accounts. The commemorative productions include a narration of the war in CD format.¹⁸¹ Finally, the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica, an institution under the auspice of the Universidad Centroamericana, in Managua, published a special edition of the *Revista de Historia* commemorating the 150th anniversary.¹⁸² Most of the articles by Robert E. May, Víctor Acuña Ortega, Frances Kinloch, and Justin Wolfe were early versions of those published in 2010 in *Filibusterismo y destino manifiesto en las Américas*.

New historical approaches (1972–present)

The study of the Filibuster War has experienced a shift connected with changes in the field of history. Starting in the 1970s, there was a shift toward interest in historical aspects outside the realm of the military, as well as an abandonment, although not absolute, of both the romantic views of Walker's adventures and the nationalistic uses of figures like Santamaría, Mora, Dolores Estrada, and Andrés Castro. These contributions continue to define the field of

¹⁷⁹ Sofonías Salvatierra. *La Guerra Nacional*. Managua: Aldilà, 2006. Clemente Guido Martínez. *La rendición de William Walker*. Managua: Lea Grupo Editorial, 2006.

¹⁸⁰ Francisco Javier Bautista Lara. *A 150 años de la batalla de San Jacinto*. Managua: Lea Grupo Editorial, 2006.

¹⁸¹ Eduardo Estrada Montenegro. *William Walker: Ilusiones Perdidas*. Managua: Editorial Digital Gorky, 2006.

¹⁸² *Revista de Historia*. A 150 años de la Guerra Nacional. Numbers 20-21, 2006. Managua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica. Universidad Centroamericana, 2006.

study of the Filibuster War. In 1972, Hebe Clementi, an Argentine historian, published an analysis on the formation of Latin American national identity. She found three moments in which the sovereignty of Latin American nations was put to test, provoking a reaction to external attack that resulted in the creation of a sense of national identity. Her argument is clearly based on the idea that identity exists when we are able to create the image of the other. Clementi presented the war against Walker and Manifest Destiny as the first of those three moments, signaling the war as a moment of Latin American unity.¹⁸³

In the United States, the work of Robert E. May on southern expansion and its goal of creating a slaveocratic empire opened the doors for a study on filibustering beyond the mere retelling of the story.¹⁸⁴ May's work envisioned new approaches that could explain the importance of Walker's adventure in the destiny of both Central America and the United States. Recently, other works, centered on aspects of cultural history, have taken new and different directions to understand Walker and the filibusters. Using the approach of gender studies, Amy Greenberg presented in 2005 a study of the U.S. nineteenth-century macho ideals, and the use of discourses of masculinity to promote ambition and recklessness in the adventurers.¹⁸⁵ Another optic of the cultural influence that promoted filibustering is provided by Brady Harrison, who in 2004 published an analysis of

¹⁸³ Hebe Clementi. *Formación de la Conciencia Americana*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Pléyade, 1972.

¹⁸⁴ Robert E. May. *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.

¹⁸⁵ Amy Greenberg. *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

U.S. literature and the influence of the pro-Manifest Destiny writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and others on the filibusters.¹⁸⁶

In the Central American case, Clotilde Obregón Quesada wrote in 1993 an interesting study that analyzed the strategic importance of the San Juan River and the Transit Route in the geopolitical disputes between the United States, Great Britain, and to a lesser degree, France and Spain. Her work is essential for understanding the Filibuster War in its global context.¹⁸⁷ The political conflicts and dynamic of the Costa Rican elite during and after the war was the main topic of Carmen Fallas Santana, as mentioned above. In 1993, Canadian historian Steven Palmer awakened interest on the topic of the invention of the figure of Juan Santamaría as a Costa Rican national hero.¹⁸⁸ This article produced serious thinking and discussion, especially in the area of cultural history of the Filibuster War, promoting a still growing body of publications on the topic.

Historiographical works

The first effort to categorize the literature related to the Filibuster War was done in 1933, when Hermann Bacher Deutsch created a rather simple annotated bibliography of the Filibuster War, possibly more as an attempt to catalog the sources than as a real analysis. Still, it can be considered as the first effort directed

¹⁸⁶ Brady Harrison. *William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

¹⁸⁷ Clotilde Obregón Quesada. *El río San Juan en la lucha de las potencias (1821-1860)*. San José: Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1993.

¹⁸⁸ Steven Palmer. "Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880–1900." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 25:1, Feb. 1993, 45–72.

to study the historiography of the war.¹⁸⁹ The works of María Molina de Lines and Francisco Núñez, both published in 1955, as well as Enrique Chávez Zelaya's work from 1956 continued to develop a deeper analysis of the sources.¹⁹⁰ Their works are partial and focus exclusively on Nicaraguan and Costa Rican sources. Also, they are fairly incomplete since they do not include the large quantity of publications produced after the commemoration of the first centenary of the Filibuster War.

Recently, Costa Rican authors have established a more reliable structure and analysis to the historiographical development of the Filibuster War. First, Raúl Aguilar Piedra, historian and former director of the Museo Juan Santamaría in Alajuela, published in 2005 a long article focusing on the general sources extant for the study of the Filibuster War.¹⁹¹ Aguilar Piedra establishes the first detailed historiographical study of the Filibuster War, and includes both Central American and U.S. sources. The relevance of his work relies on the creation of a

¹⁸⁹ Hermann Bacher Deutsch. *William Walker Chronology*. New Orleans: 1933. Hermann Bacher Deutsch. *Annotated Bibliography of William Walker in Nicaragua*. New Orleans: 1933.

¹⁹⁰ María Molina de Lines. "Apuntes para una bibliografía de la Campaña Filibustera de 1856-1857 de Costa Rica y Nicaragua", *Revista de Historia de América*, 40 (December, 1955), 175–208. Francisco María Núñez. *Bibliografía de la Campaña, 1856–1857*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955. Enrique Chávez Zelaya. *Bibliografía de William Walker y el desarrollo de la Guerra Nacional contra los filibusteros en Nicaragua y Costa Rica en 1856–1857*. Guatemala: Departamento de Relaciones Públicas del Ejército, Subcomité de Propaganda, 1956.

¹⁹¹ Raúl Aguilar Piedra. "La Guerra centroamericana contra los Filibusteros en 1856–1857: una aproximación a las fuentes bibliográficas y documentales." *Revista de Historia*, 51–52 (enero-diciembre 2005), 463–528. San José/Heredia: Universidad de Costa Rica/Universidad Nacional, 2005. A revised version was published in 2008 in the electronic bulletin of AFEHC: Raúl Aguilar Piedra. "La Guerra centroamericana contra los Filibusteros en 1856-1857: una aproximación a las fuentes bibliográficas y documentales", *Boletín AFEHC*, 36, June 4th, 2008. http://afehc-historia-centroamericana.org/index.php?action=fi_aff&id=1947

structure that allows for the understanding of the tendencies of each publishing tradition. Aguilar Piedra divides the works related to the Filibuster War into three categories: the filibuster tradition, the U.S. tradition, and the Central American tradition. The first one is memorialist and testimonial, the second is academic and scientific, and the third one is fragmentary and nationalistic. The filibuster tradition, according to Aguilar Piedra, includes the memoirs of the filibusters and other participants of the war, like the works of Wells and Walker, and the publications of Oliphant, Jamison, and Doubleday. Aguilar Piedra includes in the list the work by Jeffrey Roche, who did not participate in the war, nor was he a witness of it, but the former director of the Museo Juan Santamaría considers him as a pro-Walker voice, and his work as a history of the filibusters from the filibuster point of view.¹⁹²

For Piedra, Roche's book also works as a link between the filibuster and U.S. traditions. The U.S. tradition, according to Aguilar Piedra, is mainly academic and scientific. He divides this tradition into three more sections: a memorialist-filibuster tradition, an aficionado tradition, and a professional tradition. In the United States, he says, both aficionados and professionals have based their studies on the filibuster tradition, which influences both their work and interpretations. Although Aguilar Piedra mentions important authors, such as William Scroggs and Robert May, it is not clear who he considers as being part of the aficionado tradition, and who can be considered a professional, and how much each of them is influenced by a pro-filibuster narrative. His assertion of the U.S.

¹⁹² Aguilar Piedra, *Revista de Historia*, 470.

tradition as being academic and scientific relies on the fact that many scholars during the twentieth century added archival research to the known sources. But, while some scholars definitely deserve Aguilar Piedra's praise, for example William Scroggs, Albert Z. Carr, and Robert May, in reality only a few of them presented serious research and significant results. Most of them simply repeated Walker's story, including its original romantic style, while others continued to support a pro-filibuster or pro-Anglo myth. In any case, the constant and purposeful ignoring of Central American sources can only result in biased and incomplete works.

Finally, Aguilar Piedra analyzes the Central American tradition, considering it fragmentary and nationalistic. That is, a scholarship that does not take into account the larger context and that is interested mostly in the local or national aspects of the war. Montúfar's work is saved from this accusation, but Aguilar Piedra does not recognize the effort of Central American scholars. As shown in this chapter, both U.S. and Central American traditions have an extensive amount of sources that are fragmentary, nationalistic, and romantic. Both traditions, as well, have seen a recent effort to diversify and broaden their approaches. In the Central American case, it is important to note Clotilde Obregon's study of the San Juan River as an example of works that analyze the events in a global context.¹⁹³ Bolaños Geyer's books on Walker also present the most extensive analysis on the subject ever published.

¹⁹³ Clotilde Obregon Quesada. *El Río San Juan en la lucha de las potencias, 1821-1860*. San José: EUNED, 1993.

A second historiographical work of importance is the one developed since 2006 by Víctor Acuña Ortega, a Costa Rican historian, and professor at the University of Costa Rica.¹⁹⁴ Acuña Ortega is aware of the theories related to the concept of collective memory and establishes a division of the historiography of the war in those terms. Using a geographical division, the author explains that U.S. historiography should be divided into five periods. The first one corresponds to the period of the war during the 1850s. The second reflects the work of former filibusters at the service of Walker. The third consists of books published during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, when the United States took the role of a world power. These works usually have a propagandistic purpose. The fourth period includes the works published between World War I and the 1970s, when Walker became the example of U.S. thirst for adventure, courage, and ambition. Finally, the fifth period starts during the Vietnam War, when academic studies began to appear.

For Acuña Ortega, Central American historiography is limited to Nicaraguam and Costa Rican scholarship. He argues that both nationalist traditions should be divided into two periods. The first one corresponds to works published by witnesses or participants of the war, while the second period is

¹⁹⁴ Víctor Acuña Ortega. "Memorias Comparadas: las versiones de la Guerra contra los filibusteros en Nicaragua, Costa Rica y Estados Unidos (siglos XIX-XXI)." *Revista de Historia. A 150 años de la Guerra Nacional*. Numbers 20-21, 2006. (Managua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica. Universidad Centroamericana, 2006), 5-21.; Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega. "La Campaña Nacional: Memorias Comparadas." *11 de Abril*, No. 16. *Cuadernos de Cultura*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2009).; Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega. "Walker en Centroamérica según la historiografía filibustera, 1856-1860", in: Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, ed. *Filibusterismo y Destino Manifiesto en las Américas*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2010), 205-224.

defined by those considered to be secondary sources.¹⁹⁵ What differentiates the Nicaraguan from the Costa Rican historiography is the local and regional urgencies to enter the war, the nationalist intentions of the authors, and the stories selected to create nationalist images.

In 2010, Acuña Ortega presented a study that focused exclusively on U.S. historiography, established a revised new periodization.¹⁹⁶ According to his new analysis, Acuña Ortega argues that the historiography of the Filibuster War produced in the United States should be divided into three periods. First, there are those books published during the war, between 1856 and 1860; second, the memoirs written after the war by those present during the conflict; and third, all studies published by historians, aficionados, journalists, etc. In the same study, he presents a second possible division, based on the intention of the author. First, he establishes a period of propaganda and justification. Second, a period in which publications tried to rescue the memory of the events. Third, he describes a period of imperial propaganda, between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. A fourth period starts after World War I and ends in the 1970s, being characterized by romantic accounts that have entertainment as their primary goal. Finally, the last period is defined by works of historical research, mostly academic in nature. It is noticeable that the latter periodization is basically a slight revision of his original division published in 2006 and 2009. A problem with this analysis is the use of the time periods,

¹⁹⁵ Acuña Ortega. *11 de Abril*, 31.

¹⁹⁶ Acuña Ortega. *Walker en Centroamérica*.

instead of traditions, as Aguilar Piedra does. This is due mostly to the fact that some of the divisions used are not defined by a clear chronological period. For example, the academic tradition in the United States starts, according to Acuña Ortega, during the 1970s. This leaves out the work of William Scroggs, published between 1905 and 1916, a problem that Acuña Ortega acknowledges but does not resolve.¹⁹⁷

Finally, there is a third historiographical work connected to the Filibuster War by another Costa Rican historian, Iván Molina Jiménez.¹⁹⁸ In 2008, he published an article that explores exclusively the Costa Rican tradition. Molina Jiménez establishes a thematic analysis, finding three main currents. First, he describes a group of publications that focuses specifically on the Filibuster War of 1856 to 1857. A second group of publications that refers to social, economic, political, or cultural aspects of the war. The third group studies the war as the basis for the creation of the Costa Rican national identity, and therefore is interested in the process of nation-state formation and consolidation, as well as the invention of the nation. Molina Jiménez presents a detailed, critical, and well analyzed work. A problem with the article is its unexpected inclusion of works from the U.S. tradition, such as those by Robert E. May and Michel Gobat, that are out of place and do not belong in his article. On the other hand, his analysis of unpublished works, especially Costa Rican theses and dissertations, is extremely

¹⁹⁷ Acuña Ortega, *Walker en Centroamérica*, 208.

¹⁹⁸ Iván Molina Jiménez. "La Campaña Nacional (1856-1857): investigación histórica y producción literaria." In: Iván Molina Jiménez and David Díaz Arias. *La Campaña Nacional (1856-1857): historiografía, literatura y memoria*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2008.

helpful and relevant.

As seen above, this chapter feeds on the historiographical tradition of Aguilar Piedra, Acuña Ortega, and Iván Molina, with clear variations. Presenting a clear periodization of the works related to the Filibuster War is difficult, since sometimes there is no clear chronological separation. Instead, I divided the historiography of the Filibuster War in two currents, one in the United States and the other one in Central America. In the United States, the Filibuster War period (1856–1860) presents a series of books that serve mainly as propaganda, describing Walker and his filibusters as agents of the ideals and values associated with Manifest Destiny. A second period can be established between 1886 and 1919, when most accounts are romantic reminiscences about the filibusters, seen as an inspiration for the renewed expansionist attitude of the United States, which included the takeover of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898, and the threat of Theodore Roosevelt's administration to Central American and Caribbean sovereignty. Finally, the academic period in the U.S. tradition runs from 1905 to the present, including the early works of William Scroggs, which coincide chronologically with some of the most recalcitrant and chauvinistic publications of the expansionist period.

In contraposition to the tradition of the United States, the first Central American publications about the Filibuster War (1865–1889) are serious works that present a strong historical analysis as well as the use of archival sources. A second division includes the works published in connection to commemorations,

starting in 1895 and continuing to the present. This chapter divides them in two periods both for the sake of style as well as due to the gap established between the commemorations of 1956 and 2006. It is clear that during the period 1895–1956 the Filibuster War was taken seriously as a symbol of national identity. During those years, especially in Costa Rica, any date was used to commemorate the war, including the centenary of the birth of President Mora, the centenary of the birth of Juan Santamaría, and the anniversaries of the unveiling of statues. Between 1956 and 2006, commemorations were reduced to the annual parade of April 11th, which is reflected in the much smaller number of publications on the topic. The exception becomes the third division in the Central American tradition, which includes the publication of works sponsored in Nicaragua by the Banco de América and Bolaños Geyer's efforts, and in Costa Rica the works sponsored by the Museo Juan Santamaría. The institutional tradition started in 1965 is a constant intellectual effort to reprint old and valuable sources, some of them translated from English, and also the publication of new important research and analysis on the topic of the Filibuster War.

It is important to note that both currents tend to be localist in their analysis, although Central America has shown more interest in studying the versions published in the United States than vice versa. Some academic works on both traditions show some interest in the international and global context of the war, as is the case of Scroggs and May, but also of Montúfar and Clotilde Obregón. There are still many gaps to study regarding this aspect, and certainly there is no comprehensive account written yet. Finally, it is important to note that

fictional and romanticized versions have been continuously published in both traditions since the nineteenth century. Since they do not pretend to be real accounts, they have not been included in this chapter, deserving instead a separate literary analysis.

Chapter 3

THE FILIBUSTER WAR

One of the goals of this dissertation is to explain the development of collective memory and its importance in the construction of national identity. Before doing so, an explanation of the main events of the Filibuster War is needed to preface why particular heroes were chosen and national narratives rearranged. This chapter presents a summary of the Filibuster War, from the arrival of William Walker to Nicaragua, in June 1855, to his initial surrender in Rivas, on May 1st, 1857. It will also include a short background of the period analyzed as well as a little epilogue about filibustering in Central America. Collective memory in general, and official memory in specific, are selective. The story described below focuses on the events and people that have been aggrandized to serve national narratives. While the events of the Filibuster War have been told many times, this chapter helps the reader to focus only on the events exalted in national memories, avoiding the need to consult other sources while reading this dissertation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Some classic accounts of the Filibuster War are: Walker, William. *The War in Nicaragua*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985. An Officer in the Service of Walker. *The Destiny of Nicaragua: Central America as it was, is, and may be*. Boston: S. A. Bent and Co., 1856. Doubleday, C.W. *Reminiscences of the Filibuster War in Nicaragua*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1886. Jamison, James Carson. *With Walker in Nicaragua or reminiscences of an Officer of the American Phalanx*. Columbia, MO: E. W. Stephens Publishing Co., 1909. Green, Laurence. *The Filibuster: the Career of William Walker*. New York, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1937. Brown, Charles H. *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980. In Spanish: Bolaños Geyer, Alejandro. *William Walker: El Predestinado*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2003. Pérez, Jerónimo. *Obras Históricas del Licenciado Jerónimo Pérez*. Managua: Banco de América, 1977. Calvo, Joaquín Bernardo. *La Campaña Nacional contra los Filibusteros: breve reseña histórica*. San José: Tipografía Nacional, 1909. Gámez, Jose Dolores. *Historia de Nicaragua desde los tiempos prehistóricos hasta 1860, en sus relaciones con España*,

In 1823, two years after independence from Spain, the Imperial provinces of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica united under the framework of the Central American Federation. The republic lasted less than two decades, started its collapse in 1838 when Nicaragua decided to separate. By the 1850s, Central America had been independent from Spain's authority for about thirty years. The memory of the short-lived Central American Federation created after the colonial debacle was still fresh. In fact, some Central American leaders sought to reunite the region. At the same time, the issues that destroyed the federation were still reason for conflict. Nicaragua was involved in a civil war between Conservatives (Legitimist Party) and Liberals (Democratic Party), a remnant from the days of the Central American union.

Contemporaneously in the United States, the glories of Manifest Destiny were still celebrated, especially since the conquest of half of Mexico in 1848. The frontier ideology prevalent at the time allowed for Anglo-Saxon descendants to view other ethnic groups as subhuman, justifying violence and the takeover of land. After all—they argued—Mexicans were not better than indigenous peoples, they were all *greasers*, and would be better served if Anglo-Saxons took control of their territory.²⁰⁰ The discourse of Manifest Destiny insisted that progress could

Mexico y Centro América. Managua: Tipografía El País, 1889. Obregón Loría, Rafael. *Costa Rica y la Guerra contra los Filibusteros*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1991. Montúfar, Lorenzo. *Walker en Centroamérica*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000.

²⁰⁰ During the nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxons used the term as a racist slur. The filibusters used the term when referring to Central Americans. See: Meléndez Chaverri, Carlos. *Santa Rosa: Un Combate por la Libertad*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2001.

not be stopped, and that Providence had called the Anglo-Saxon race to dominate the world: Anglo-Saxons were the only ones that could regenerate the races and cultures considered to be in decay, and bring civilization to those that never saw it before.²⁰¹

As a concept, Manifest Destiny has been a very malleable ideology. Due to its clear racist framework, it became a justification for the expansion of slavery in the United States. The crisis that promoted the Civil War in the United States was the result of a clash between expansionist slaveholders and those who supported the creation of a large free labor force. The balance of power could only be tipped in favor of slaveholders by the annexation of new slaveholding territories. This strategy was used to annex Texas and had proven extremely successful. In the United States more generally, a political clash between abolitionists and slavers was reaching its peak in an uneasy Congress. For every new state that joined the Union, a conflict rose to decide whether it would be a Free State or a Slave State, as happened in Kansas in 1856. Each newly established state would also add representatives to Congress, which made the issue even more important.

²⁰¹ For studies on Manifest Destiny ideology, see: Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981. Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest Destiny and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995. Woodward, Steven. *Manifest Destinies: America's Westward Expansion and the Road to the Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. For Manifest Destiny and its application to Central America, see: May, Robert. *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002. May, Robert. *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. Acuña Ortega, Víctor. *Filibusterismo y destino manifiesto en las Américas*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2010.

A strong believer of Manifest Destiny, William Walker, a native of Tennessee, earned his epithet as “King of the Filibusters” from his adventure in Baja California and Sonora in 1853, when he invaded Mexico and called for the creation of an independent republic under the protection of the United States. His intention was to become a new Sam Houston, but Mexican militias forced him out of the country. Walker returned to the United States defeated, where he was tried for breaking the neutrality laws that forbade U.S. citizens from invading any country with which the United States was at peace. However, the trial was merely a farce, Walker was acquitted.

At the same time, Nicaraguan political affairs were also at a standoff and civil war confronted two parties struggling for power, the Democratic or Liberals, and the Legitimists or Conservatives. The Legitimist government of Fruto Chamorro was confirmed in power after the approval of the new constitution of 1854. During the process of establishing the new constitution, prominent members of the Democratic Party were arrested or sent to exile. On May, 1854, liberal forces returned from exile and disembarked at the port of Realejo with the goal of overthrowing the conservative government. Democratic leaders, like Máximo Jeréz, Máximo Espinoza, and Francisco Castellón were convinced that the only way for them to win the civil war was to introduce an outside element to the strife.²⁰² This coincided with a recently awakened filibuster interest in Central America. Adventurers such as Henry L. Kinney and Joseph W. Fabens were

²⁰² Ildelfonso Palma Martínez. *La Guerra Nacional: Sus antecedentes y subsecuentes tentativas de invasión*. (Managua: Fundación Hugo Palma-Ibarra, 2006), 35-45.

actively trying to conquer the Nicaraguan Atlantic region, a disputed area where the Nicaraguan state was unable to exercise control. At the same time, Byron Cole, a friend of Walker, arrived in 1854 to survey the situation in Nicaragua and possibly hire mercenaries for any of the belligerent forces. He was approached by Francisco Castellón, a leader of the Democratic Party in Nicaragua and both men signed a contract in which Cole promised to provide three hundred mercenaries for the liberals. The reward was a monthly salary for each soldier of fortune during the length of the war and some acres of land once the liberals won.²⁰³ Cole returned to California and offered the contract to his friend, William Walker.²⁰⁴ Walker did not immediately accept the offer, since the contract violated the stipulations of his *bête noire*, the neutrality law. Therefore, Cole returned to Nicaragua to sign a new contract. The new dispositions established the filibuster enterprise as a colonizing concession. Instead of mercenaries, the filibusters were considered in this document as colonizers. For that purpose, the new contract established that each filibuster would receive the same land promised in the first contract, but now, instead of interpreted as a reward for military services, the land was granted in advance as personal property. To avoid the neutrality laws, the contract gave Nicaraguan nationality to the mercenaries along with the right to bear weapons.

²⁰³ Jerónimo Pérez. *Obras históricas del Licenciado Jerónimo Pérez*. Managua: Banco de América, 1977 (1865), 121.

²⁰⁴ William Walker. *The War in Nicaragua*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985 (1860), 24. Byron Cole was one of the owners of the newspaper *San Francisco Daily*, edited by Walker.

Walker also wanted to secure his position due to the strong competition he had. Not only was Kinney already operating in Nicaragua, but other Democratic leaders had also signed similar contracts. Máximo Jeréz and Thomas Fisher signed a contract that promised five hundred mercenaries. Máximo Espinosa signed another contract with C. C. Hornsby and Julius De Brissot that ceded control of the Castillo de San Juan, a fortress that controlled the San Juan River and the transportation route in the country. These two contracts were also offered to Walker, but due to legal reasons, he decided to agree only with the colonization concession provided by Cole.²⁰⁵

On May 4th, 1855, Walker and fifty-eight filibusters left San Francisco, California, on board a brig called *Vesta*. Most of the mercenaries had important military experience. Some of them participated as filibusters under Narciso López's expeditions to Cuba; others were veterans of the war against Mexico. Some had even been under Walker's command during the 1853 filibuster adventure in Baja California and Sonora.²⁰⁶ The little army arrived on June 16th at the port of Realejo, Nicaragua.

The first battle of Rivas.

Walker's filibusters were organized as a separate division of the Democratic army, and on June 27th, left Realejo with orders to attack the southern city of Rivas. The importance of the city was clear: it controlled the *Vía del*

²⁰⁵ Pérez, 121. Walker, 25-27. Henry Crabb, a friend from childhood, helped Walker to connect with Fisher. In 1857, Crabb led a filibuster adventure against the town of Caborca, Sonora.

²⁰⁶ Walker, 32.

Tránsito (Transit's Route), the most important trade and military route in Nicaragua. The route was mostly covered by water, and it connected the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans. With the California Gold Rush, there was a need for fast transportation that could connect both sides of the country. Since no railroad was yet available, the best east-west route was to take a steamer from either New York or New Orleans to the San Juan River that ran along the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Devised as the best place to build an inter-oceanic canal since colonial times, the San Juan River could support mid-size vessels. The river entered into the Nicaragua Lake. Passengers then disembarked at La Virgen port, took a stagecoach to the port of San Juan del Sur, just a few miles away, and embarked on another steamer for San Francisco. To control Rivas was also to control the free arrival of filibuster reinforcements coming from the United States. Therefore, Walker's first objective was to control the transit route.

General Trinidad Muñoz, Commander-in-Chief of the Democratic army, opposed the presence of Walker. It seemed that Muñoz thought that it was one thing to fight against the Conservatives, but an entirely different thing to give away the whole country to a foreigner. Initially, Muñoz tried to divide Walker's mercenaries among the different batallions of the army, something Walker rejected immediately. Later, while Walker waited for Nicaraguan forces to join him for the attack on Rivas, Muñoz sent information of Walker's presence and plans to the Legitimists. When Walker arrived to the city of Rivas, the local authorities, having been forewarned, had organized their defense and were expecting reinforcements from San Juan del Sur.

The first battle of Rivas, on June 29th, 1855, was Walker's first participation during his Central American campaign. Also, it was Walker's first defeat. A specific act of heroism by a young teacher named Emanuel Mongalo became a symbol of resistance, gaining a place both in history and the collective memory associated with the war. There is, however, one controversial issue relating to this battle. The first battle of Rivas was part of the civil war between Nicaraguan conservatives and liberals, and not necessarily a confrontation between nationalists and filibusters. The danger that Walker posed for Central American sovereignty was not yet clear for Nicaraguans. For this reason, the battle is not often celebrated and possesses only a marginal place in the memory of the Filibuster War.



Figure 1. Map of the Transit Route. Includes Costa Rican and Nicaraguan most important cities and sites during the Filibuster War.

For this battle, Walker's strategy was to push forward to take the main Plaza of Rivas,²⁰⁷ located in the center of the city. In Latin American cities, the main plaza is usually connected to power and authority, since the main official and religious buildings are always located around it. When Walker entered Rivas, the local forces retreated to the plaza to defend the town. While Walker advanced, Conservative reinforcements arrived from San Juan del Sur, attacking him on his left flank. The Democratic regiment abandoned Walker and escaped to the south, looking for asylum in Costa Rica. The filibusters looked for refuge behind the strong adobe walls of the houses, and the decision was taken by the Legitimists to burn them down to force the filibusters' retreat. Nicaraguan historian Jerónimo Pérez described the battle in the following terms:

“Walker showed up on the early morning of the 29th, achieving some advantages at the beginning and caused a noticeable damage to the Legitimist forces, particularly when he enclosed himself on the house of Máximo Espinosa, from where he was expelled only after many valiant efforts, especially those of the distinguished young men Manuel Mongalo, who, without any kind of protection, approached the house applying the fire that would burn it down.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Walker, 50.

²⁰⁸ Pérez, 123. All translations from Spanish to English are mine. I try to respect the original punctuation and phrasing as much as possible, as long as it does not affect comprehension.

The fact that the feat of a common soldier was registered, and his name remembered, exemplifies the importance this event held for the Legitimists. While the first battle of Rivas created the first hero of the Filibuster War, the consolidation of the memory of the event took some time to become recognized by the Nicaraguan State.²⁰⁹ The rise of the figure of Mongalo will be analyzed later in detail. For now, suffice to say that his feat was remembered and kept alive by local memory in Rivas, and possibly by his association with a later hero of the war, the Costa Rican Juan Santamaría. Currently, his name resonates as one of the greatest Nicaraguan heroes of the Filibuster War.

The rise of Walker

When Walker arrived at the port of El Realejo on June 16th, 1855, he and all his filibusters immediately received a naturalization document that granted them Nicaraguan citizenship, as stipulated in the contract signed with Castellón.²¹⁰ His first encounter with the Conservatives resulted in a defeat, known as the first Battle of Rivas, on June 29th, described above. Walker found some internal resistance from General Trinidad Muñoz, who seemed to know well the real intentions of the filibuster. Muñoz in fact had tried to divide Walker's forces and divide the mercenaries among the different battalions already existing.

²⁰⁹ In the accounts written by liberals Montúfar and Gámez, the feat of Mongalo is not mentioned at all. See: Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centroamérica*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000 (1887). Also: José Dolores Gámez. *La Guerra Nacional*. Managua: Aldilà Editor, 2006 (1889).

²¹⁰ Document #106, Nicaragua Honors Walker with the appointment of Colonel, June 20th, 1855. Document #108, A Naturalization Letter is given to Walker's companions, June 20th, 1855. Comisión..., *Documentos Relativos*, 168-170.

If Muñoz would have succeeded, Walker would have been unable to control his own army and decide his own strategy. Castellón, acting with an extreme interest in Walker, allowed him to keep his forces intact and even strengthenws them with constant reinforcements coming from the United States.

Interested exclusively on keeping the Transit Route open for the arrival of more filibusters, Walker concentrated on taking Rivas. Therefore, after his defeat, he moved to occupy the two ports that allowed the arrival for reinforcements, San Juan del Sur, on the Pacific coast, and La Virgen, a port that looked into the Nicaragua Lake. Although Castellón insisted on Walker working with Muñoz in a joint attack against the Legitimist forces, the filibuster saw that “so far as the Falange (*Phalanx*) was concerned it was idle for them to waste their energies and strength on a campaign which did not bring them toward the Transit road.”²¹¹ Walker arrived at San Juan del Sur on August 29th, and finding no resistance or even a sign of Legitimist forces, he took over the town. He then proceeded to the port of La Virgen, where, on September 3rd and after defeating a small group of Legitimist forces in a skirmish, was able to occupy it. While Walker worked his way to take over the Transit Route, he was also released of the authorities that tried to control him. General Muñoz had died after a battle against the Legitimists in El Sauce, and Castellón fell victim to the implacable universal foe of the cholera epidemic. Walker bid his time, his forces growing in numbers with the arrival of more filibusters through the Transit Route.

²¹¹ Walker, 75.

Before attacking Rivas again, Walker had to wait first for enough reinforcements from the United States.²¹² On October 3rd, the steamer *Cortés* brought thirty-five men to join the filibuster army. Most of them were veterans of the war against Mexico, others were with Walker on his failed attempt to conquer Baja California in 1853.²¹³ These reinforcements were increased by the joining of a Democratic division under José María Valle. Then, Walker made his most audacious move. With the reinforcements, Walker took over a steamer property of the Accessory Transit Company (ATC). On October 13th, in a bold action, Walker navigated north through the lake and surprised the city of Granada, the capital of the Legitimists.²¹⁴ Unexpectedly, even for Walker, the core of the Legitimist army under General Martínez had left the city to confront a Democratic division at Pueblo Nuevo, leaving the main Conservative city unprotected.²¹⁵

The abandonment of Granada by General Martínez was the result of General Ponciano Corral's decision to move to Rivas to attack Walker and eliminate the threat the filibuster presented from the south. While Corral moved south, Martínez had to confront the threat of Democratic forces closing in on Granada. It does not seem plausible that Walker was aware of the situation, but his arrival to Granada coincided with the military abandonment of the city, making it easy prey for his filibuster army. His disembarking and advance to the

²¹² Walker, 105.

²¹³ Walker, 106.

²¹⁴ Walker, 111.

²¹⁵ Walker, 112.

main square were totally unopposed. Three Legitimists and one filibuster death were the total casualties at the end of the scuffle.

Granada was taken and Walker took as hostages all the members of the elite of the most important city in Nicaragua, including the great majority of the Legitimist leaders. To make his intentions clear, Mateo Mayorga, Minister of Foreign Relations, was shot by a firing squad under Walker's orders on October 22nd, 1855. In this manner, Walker attempted to force the remnant of the Legitimist forces under General Corral to agree for a meeting and arrange their surrender. He did not have to wait long. Corral arrived in Granada the next day and signed a treaty that created a new government in Nicaragua, with Patricio Rivas as president and Walker as General of Division of the Nicaraguan army and its Commander-in-Chief. An article of the treaty confirmed the acceptance by the Conservatives of the Nicaraguan citizenship granted to the filibusters by the Liberals. Also, Corral had to relinquish all weapons and ammunitions.²¹⁶ By November 4th, the remnant of the Legitimist army was disbanded, leaving the filibusters as the only military force in the country.²¹⁷ The filibuster *coup* was accomplished.

Walker showed more concern about keeping the Transit Route than celebrating his recent military victory. After taking Granada, Walker admitted that “the possession of the Transit was intrinsically more important to the Americans

²¹⁶ Walker, 125–126. Pérez, 143-146. Document #173, Rivas and Walker Govern Nicaragua. Comisión..., *Documentos Relativos*, 263–265.

²¹⁷ Walker, 133–134.

(filibusters) than the occupation of a town forty or fifty miles from the line of travel across the Isthmus.”²¹⁸ This illuminates Walker’s plan of taking over Nicaragua and transforming it into an Anglo-Saxon dominated province.

Control of the Transit Route served only as long as it permitted the arrival of more filibusters. Receiving more filibusters was part of the main plan of creating a larger Anglo-Saxon force that could topple the local elites, similar to the events that preceded the annexation of Texas in 1845. Walker twisted the meaning of the original contract signed with Castellón, which was directed to gain military support from a group of mercenaries, not for the occupation of the country by foreign elements. But according to Walker, the contract he signed to intervene in Nicaragua allowed him to indefinitely continue the “policy Castellón adopted of introducing an American element into Nicaraguan society.”²¹⁹

During his occupation of Granada, Walker met some of his most important allies. Father Augusto Vigil, a liberal priest, later became a representative of Walker’s regime for the United States; Fermín Ferrer later became provisional president of Walker’s regime; and finally, U.S. ambassador John H. Wheeler worked to convince his government to recognize and help in any way possible the filibusters’ enterprise. In fact, Wheeler served as Walker’s agent in the negotiation with the remnant of the Legitimist army, led by Ponciano Corral, who was still stationed at Rivas.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Walker, 118.

²¹⁹ Walker, 118.

²²⁰ Walker, 120.

On October 23rd, Corral ceded to Wheeler's arguments and arrived to Granada, where he signed a peace treaty with Walker establishing a new provisional government. Patricio Rivas, a moderate conservative, was handpicked by Walker as the new president of Nicaragua. The position was not new for Rivas, who had served for two short periods as president of Nicaragua in 1839 and then again in 1840. The real power, though, remained in the hands of Walker, who was designated according to the treaty as Commander-in-Chief of the new Nicaraguan National army and promoted to General of division.²²¹ Part of the deal established retained an article of the 1838 constitution that allowed any foreigner to become citizen of Nicaragua with a simple expressed wish.²²² Walker wanted to introduce as many filibusters as possible to Nicaragua, granting them the same rights to property and vote that the natives had. The agreement also established that the state had to pay all obligations of money and land to the filibusters according to Castellón's contract. According to the treaty, both the Democratic and Legitimist armies were disbanded, and "the Americans thus remained the chief military defense of the government."²²³

Suspicion about Walker's real intentions continued to raise concerns in Central America. Ponciano Corral kept communication with representatives of the other Central American States, announcing the demise of Nicaragua, and the need for the region to unite in a common front to stop the invaders. Unfortunately for

²²¹ Walker, 132.

²²² Walker, 126.

²²³ Walker, 134.

the Legitimist general, on November 5th, Walker captured some of Corral's correspondence. One of the letters warned Honduran president Santos Guardiola of the danger the filibusters presented to the sovereignty of Central America. In it, Corral suggested that the presidents of the region should take immediate action: "if they delay two months there will not then be time...Nicaragua is lost; lost will be Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, if they let this get body."²²⁴

It is important to note that nineteenth-century Central American politics was characterized by a constant conflict between conservatives and liberals. The strife was responsible for the demise of the Central American Federation, and it continued to pester the region for decades. Santos Guardiola had recently become president of Honduras with the help of Guatemalan conservative caudillo, José Rafael Carrera, who invaded Honduras to overthrow the liberal regime of Trinidad Cabañas. Therefore, Corral's call for help could be interpreted as a call to help his conservative comrades. His letter, however, also mentions El Salvador, at that time a bastion of liberalism. Corral's letter should be interpreted as a warning for all of Central America, regardless of ideology.

The discovery of Corral's correspondence signaled his doom. Walker arrested him and a court composed in full by U.S. filibusters (Col. Hornsby, Col. Fry, and Col. French) sentenced Corral to death by a firing squad. Arguing a conspiracy, Walker rounded up and arrested most of the Legitimist leaders. A plea by the local elites moved Walker to soon release the majority of them,

²²⁴ Walker, 135-136.

keeping a citizen named Narciso Espinoza in prison, accused ironically, of plotting “to introduce foreign troops into the State.”²²⁵ On November 10th, John Wheeler, U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, officially recognized Walker’s regime, without having notified the U.S. government.

After these events, Walker worked on creating the conditions for the institutionalization of his transformation of Nicaragua. He established the first bilingual newspaper in the country, *El Nicaraguense* (sic), which became the official voice of the filibuster government. A decree of colonization was signed in November, 1855 granting two hundred and fifty acres to each new adult immigrant arriving from the United States. The next step was to secure the transportation of the new elements needed by Walker. With that in mind, he proceeded to abolish the original charter between the Nicaraguan government and the Accessory Transit Company (ATC) for the exploitation of the Transit Route. His justification was based on real issues, since the original ATC charter promised the annual payment of ten thousand dollars to the Nicaraguan government, plus 10% of all profits, which the Company had failed to do for years. The real reason, of course, was the establishment of a new charter that would grant the use of the Route to people close to Walker. This would also assure that the flow of filibusters would not stop. After all, as Walker celebrated,

²²⁵ Walker, 140.

“the control of the Transit is, to Americans, the control of Nicaragua: for the lake...furnishes the key to the occupation of the whole State.”²²⁶

Walker’s policies were successful in attracting reinforcements from California. In his book, *The War in Nicaragua*, he mentions the constant arrival of new mercenaries. He reports that on October 3rd, 1855, 35 men arrived from San Francisco to join his forces.²²⁷ On October 17th, sixty more filibusters arrived.²²⁸ In December, more than 300 filibusters arrived from California.²²⁹ According to Walker, by March 1856, his *American Phalanx* was composed by more than 600 mercenaries. This number increased to 850 on March 9th, 1856, when more soldiers arrived, led by Cuban mercenary Domingo Goicouria. Walker, however, had a tendency to minimize his numbers, maybe for dramatic effect. In reality, as scholars have proved, by March of 1856 there were more than two thousand mercenaries at his service. At least five thousand and possibly close to eleven thousand were brought to Nicaragua in the term of two years.²³⁰

²²⁶ Walker, 157.

²²⁷ Walker, 106.

²²⁸ Walker, 120.

²²⁹ Walker, 151, 158.

²³⁰ Alejandro Bolaños estimates that 5.200 filibusters arrived to Nicaragua between June 1855 and May 1857, based on numbers mentioned by Walker and other authors. In: Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. *William Walker: El Predestinado*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2003), 433-436. Joseph N. Scott, the main agent of the CAT in Nicaragua, estimates that twelve thousand volunteers arrived from New Orleans, New York, and San Francisco using the CAT steamers in order to join Walker’s efforts. From those, eleven thousand joined the army. In: Joseph Newton Scott. *El Testimonio de Scott*. (Managua: Banco de América, 1975), 141–142.

During this time, Walker tried to consolidate his hold of Nicaragua. His Minister of Foreign Relations, Máximo Jerez, sent letters to other Central American countries asking for the recognition of Walker's regime. El Salvador was the only replier, establishing some conditions for recognition, but conservative Honduras and Guatemala, and liberal Costa Rica kept silent. Walker had to admit that "it was clear that the clauses in the treaty which secured and encouraged the presence of the Americans in Nicaragua were not acceptable to the neighboring Republics."²³¹

Walker was considered a threat to sovereignty, and "the journals of Costa Rica were particularly virulent" against the filibusters, as Walker recognized.²³² Indeed, since September, 1855, the Costa Rican official newspaper *Boletín Oficial* had been writing incessantly against Walker. Only two weeks after Walker's takeover of Granada, the Costa Rican newspaper declared Walker's forces as being mere "adventurers," led by an "annexationist caudillo."²³³ There was a definitive fear of Walker, considered an agent of the U.S. government sent to conquer Central America to create a new state by annexing the whole region. The memory of what happened with Texas, and the expansionist attitude against Latin American territories demonstrated by the United States in 1848 was still fresh. On September 26th, 1855, a warning was uttered in the *Boletín*: "the tide is

²³¹ Walker, 159.

²³² Walker, 159–160.

²³³ *Boletín Oficial*. Year 2, Number 132. San José, September 26th, 1855. Page 1 (97).

growing and it threatens with wrapping us all with its bloody waves.”²³⁴ On September 29th, the *Boletín* dropped the adjective of adventurers, exchanging it for “filibuster-annexationist,” and Walker was not depicted anymore as just a military commander of the Democratic party, but a filibuster, a word that negatively resounded in Latin American lore since pirates started to roam the Caribbean in the seventeenth century.²³⁵

The Costa Rican government was busy in their continuous efforts to modernize the country after its declaration as a Republic in 1848. As part of the consolidation of the Nation-State promoted by President Juan Rafael Mora, the government adopted a policy of solidification of the institutions, especially the army. For that, the Costa Rican government approached the British crown to purchase the most modern weaponry. In May of 1855, at the same time Walker left San Francisco, the Costa Rican ambassador in London informed the Minister of Foreign Relations, Joaquín Bernardo Calvo, that ammunition and parts were already on their way to Costa Rica.²³⁶

On May 19th, Luis Molina, Costa Rican ambassador in New York, sent a letter to his government quoting a note published in the *San Francisco Placer Times* three weeks before, stating that “the night before, celebrated colonel Walker embarked with 75 or 100 men in order to take part of the conflict in

²³⁴ *Boletín Oficial*. Year 2, Number 132. San José, September 26th, 1855. Page 2 (98).

²³⁵ *Boletín Oficial*. Year 2, number 136. San José, September 29th, 1855. Page 1 (101).

²³⁶ J. Wallerstein to Bernardo Calvo, London, May 1st, 1855. Document #89, England sends war material to Costa Rica. Comisión..., *Documentos Relativos*, 143–144.

Nicaragua.”²³⁷ Therefore, the Costa Rican government was well aware of who Walker was and what his intentions were. The fact that another filibuster expedition led by Henry L. Kinney had just failed helped the government to understand the threat of such adventures.

Central America wakes up

The news of Walker’s takeover of Granada, and especially his military control of Nicaragua, were received with certain disbelief in the rest of Central America. The first denouncement came from Nicaragua on October 25th, when former president Estrada wrote an open letter to the Central American governments, assuring that “as long as the filibuster William Walker keeps the control of the armed forces of the Republic, independence, sovereignty, and freedom of Nicaragua and all of Central America will be seriously compromised.”²³⁸ Costa Rica put itself under alert. The following day, the Governor of Moracia (today Guanacaste, borders with Nicaragua), the northernmost province of Costa Rica, sent a note to San José, warning of the filibuster victory in Nicaragua and asking for instructions.²³⁹

The executions of both Mayorga and Corral were strongly chastised in Costa Rican newspapers. In the issue published on November 2nd, the *Boletín*

²³⁷ Luis Molina to Joaquín Bernardo Calvo, Washington May 19th, 1855. Document #95, Walker’s leave for Nicaragua is announced. Comisión..., *Documentos Relativos*, 151.

²³⁸ Pérez, 146. Document #175, Protest, October 25th, 1855. Comisión..., *Documentos Relativos*, 268-269.

²³⁹ A. Carrillo to Minister of Government, Liberia October 26th, 1855. Document #179, Governor of Moracia asks for Instructions. Comisión..., *Documentos Relativos*, 273.

Oficial still had doubts about the news of the “barbaric execution of the distinguished Minister D. Mateo Mayorga.”²⁴⁰ On November 5th, the Costa Rican gazette was finally able to confirm the death of Mayorga. The sources described “his death as the most barbaric, the most iniquitous that could have been performed. His death was born from a moment in which filibuster rabies, mixed with liquor, promoted the ferocity of those soulless beings.”²⁴¹ The death of Corral was not reported until November 17th, in an article warning that after eliminating any Nicaraguan that could represent a threat to Walker, Costa Rica would be next.²⁴²

Costa Rica was indeed the first of the Central American countries to take the news of the filibuster takeover of Nicaragua to the international diplomatic field. On November 8th, Foreign Relations Minister Joaquín Calvo sent a letter to his French and British colleagues, denouncing the barbarity of the filibusters and the danger of their existence for the continuous sovereignty of Costa Rica. In that letter, Calvo tried to convince the British and French governments to send at least one war vessel each to protect the Costa Rican port of Puntarenas. The request assured that this was the only way to ensure that manner the goods stored there

²⁴⁰ *Boletín Oficial*, Year 2, Number 143, November 2nd, 1855. p. 2 (142).

²⁴¹ *Boletín Oficial*, Year 2, Number 144, November 5th, 1855. p. 1 (145).

²⁴² *Boletín Oficial*, Year 2, Number 148, November 17th, 1855. p. 2 (162).

owned by French and British businessmen would be secure. The goal, however, was to secure Costa Rica from any naval incursion from the filibusters.²⁴³

The Costa Rican decision to intervene in Nicaragua was finally taken due to a November 14th note sent to San José by the Governor of Moravia, detailing Corral's execution. On November 20th, Juan Rafael Mora, president of Costa Rica, publicly proclaimed:

“Costa Ricans:

Peace, that venturous peace that joined to your persevering labor has increased our credit, our richness, and our happiness, is now being perfidiously threatened.

A band of upstarts, the scourge of all peoples, condemned by the justice of the American Union, not happy already with what they have to satiate their voracity, are planning to invade Costa Rica in order to find in our wives and daughters, in our houses and haciendas, joy for their ferocious passions, ailment for their unstoppable greed...

Alert Costa Ricans!, do not yet interrupt your noble deeds, but prepare your arms...

Here, invaders will never find parties, spies, or traitors... Here they will only find siblings, real siblings, irrevocably resolved to defend the Fatherland as if it was the holy mother of everything they love, ready as well to exterminate up to the last of their enemies.”²⁴⁴

President Mora's announcement is a clear indication of a developing nationalism in Costa Rica. The language used in his speech reflects the main concerns the filibusters represented for the sovereignty of the recently founded Republic. The invasion promoted a sense of union in what had been a loosely organized state, making regional inhabitants see themselves as citizens, soldiers,

²⁴³ Joaquín Bernardo Calvo to the French Foreign Relations Minister, and to Count Clarendon, British Minister of Foreign Affairs, November 8th 1855. Document #199, *Comisión...*, *Documentos Relativos*, 304–308.

²⁴⁴ *BO*, Year 2, Number 149, November 21st, 1855. p. 1. (165).

and brothers in arms. Mora's call to defend family and property appealed to the nature of the Costa Rican small farmer, inciting bravery among the soldiers in order to protect their homeland. Finally, by vilifying the foreigner, Mora creates a sense of the other as something opposite to the Costa Rican. By defining the filibuster, the President is intrinsically defining what the Costa Rican is not, and by consequence, what the Costa Rican is, stating the principles of a sense of national identity.

Mora's proclamation of November, 1855, is not a call to arms, but a strong warning about the imminence of war. The goal is to allow time for the soldiers and the economic elites to create the social and economic background to support the war efforts. Scholars have observed that economic reasons were considered by Mora before his move against the filibusters. The main income for the State and for Costa Ricans in general was provided by coffee production, the months between November and February being used for the recollection and processing of coffee beans. Therefore, the future Costa Rican soldiers had to get their hands busy with coffee first, in order to provide the economic basis for the war.²⁴⁵

In the meantime, Walker continued his policy of "speedy increase of the American element in the government."²⁴⁶ To ensure that the new arrivals from the United States promptly received their 250 acres, Walker appointed Joseph W.

²⁴⁵ José A. Fernández Molina. *El Ejército Expedicionario costarricense en la Campaña Nacional. Campesinos/milicianos en la disyuntiva entre la obediencia y el grano de oro*. X Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, Managua, 2010.

²⁴⁶ Walker, 144.

Fabens as the person in charge of operations. Fabens had been a faithful ally in Walker's former competitor filibuster, Henry L. Kinney.²⁴⁷ Either purposefully or by accident, the presence of Fabens sent a clear message: for Costa Ricans, it confirmed that Walker was just another filibuster, but one who accomplished what others had not, and therefore, very dangerous. For those in the United States who supported filibuster adventures, this represented a continuation of the expansionist plan. The colonizer decree of November 1855 attracted new recruits and by February Walker had tripled the size of his filibuster army.²⁴⁸

Costa Rican public opinion continued to attack Walker. He described, "the most violent invectives against the domestic policy of Nicaragua had been published in the official journal of Costa Rica."²⁴⁹ Indeed, on November 14th the *Boletín Oficial* described the behavior of the filibusters in Nicaragua as something "unheard of: robberies, arson, assassinations, abuse of innocent women, barbaric rapes, persecutions, beatings, and a thousand other atrocities, without any respect for sex, age, class, or person."²⁵⁰ According to the *Boletín Oficial*, the goal of the filibusters was to "found a new Republic in Nicaragua, substituting in that privileged soil one race for another, in order to add later, as it happened in Texas, one more star" to the U.S. flag.²⁵¹ Behind this, the newspaper warned, there was a

²⁴⁷ Walker, 144.

²⁴⁸ Walker, 159.

²⁴⁹ Walker, 163–164.

²⁵⁰ BO, Nov. 14, 1855. p. 2 (158).

²⁵¹ BO, January 9th, 1856. p. 3 (315).

more sinister objective: to “introduce in these (countries) the odious institution of slavery.”²⁵²

Aware of the growing tensions, Walker sent a representative to Costa Rica. On February 9th, 1856, Louis Schlessinger, a multilingual Austro-Hungarian with military experience in Europe, traveled to Costa Rica to talk to president Mora.²⁵³ Considering Schlessinger Walker’s agent, the Costa Rican president ordered the governor of the port city of Puntarenas to halt his or any other filibuster agent from disembarking. The rebuffed Schlessinger returned to San Juan del Sur, swearing to take revenge on Costa Rica.²⁵⁴ Schlessinger evidently believed he had rights bestowed to him by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny to enter a foreign nation, manipulate or defeat it, and inflict retribution against resisters. This incident marked Costa Rica’s first taste of Manifest Destiny insult and promoted its own nationalist response.

It is possible that the news of Schlessinger’s attitude encouraged Mora to move his army, instead of waiting for a surprise attack from the filibusters. On February 25th, Mora convoked the Congress to a special session to discuss the filibuster problem. The next day, Congress decreed an authorization for the Executive to “take arms to the Republic of Nicaragua in order to defend its

²⁵² BO, January 9th, 1856. P. 4 (316).

²⁵³ BO, February 26th, 1856. P. 2 (174).

²⁵⁴ BO, February 26th, 1856. P. 3 (368).

inhabitants from the ominous oppression of the filibusters,” either by itself or in the company of the other Central American republics.²⁵⁵

On March 1st, Mora published a second proclamation, a declaration of war:

“Compatriots!

To arms! The moment I predicetd has arrived. Let us march to Nicaragua to destroy the impious phalanx that has reduced that nation to opprobrious slavery. Let us march for the freedom of our brothers...

We will not fight for a piece of land, not for acquiring ephemeral powers, not for miserable conquests, nor for the sake of sacrilegious parties...

Brothers of Nicaragua, stand up, destroy your oppressors...

Peace, justice, and freedom for us all! War, only to the filibusters!”²⁵⁶

Mora’s second proclamation is more than just a call to arms. The Costa Rican President established in it the ideological framework for the war against Walker. Central American sovereignty, but especially Costa Rican sovereignty, were at the center of his message. The war was clearly directed to expel the common danger of Anglo American expansionism, along with its values of financial greed, chauvinism, and racism. The result was the military mobilization of the country, and its consequence, the development of the modern Costa Rican national identity.

Battle of Santa Rosa, March 20th, 1856

Mora signed a decree raising the army to 9000 soldiers and imposed a war tax directed at property owners, most of them coffee growers.²⁵⁷ At the same time,

²⁵⁵ BO, February 27th, 1856. P. 1 (175).

²⁵⁶ BO, March 1st, 1856. P. 1 (176).

Walker prepared an assault on all conservatives in Nicaragua with the goal of stripping them of any privileged position, and appropriating all their lands. His plan was to accuse the Legitimist Party of treason and conspiracy, and take all property belonging to the most important members of that party. Instead, he was distracted by the news he received on March 11th of Schlessinger's treatment in Costa Rica, and started to prepare for war. Later that same day, Walker received Mora's declaration of war and answered by immediately issuing his own proclamation of war against Costa Rica, calling for his army to prepare to invade that country.²⁵⁸ Walker appointed Schlessinger commander of the battalion that invaded Costa Rica. The forces led by Schlessinger were formed by the best of Walker's forces, according to the filibuster's own account of the events.²⁵⁹ The rest of the army was divided, sending some troops to Rivas, as well as to the San Juan River, to Castillo Viejo, and the mouth of the Sarapiquí River (see figure 1). Walker's strategy was to hold the Costa Ricans south of the border, to secure filibuster reinforcements coming from the United States through the Transit Route.²⁶⁰ Schlessinger and his soldiers left thinking they would reach San José and take control over Costa Rica in a couple of weeks.

²⁵⁷ Carlos Meléndez Chaverri. *Santa Rosa: Un combate por la libertad*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2001), 9.

²⁵⁸ Walker, 181.

²⁵⁹ Walker, 182.

²⁶⁰ Walker, 182.

The Costa Rican army vanguard, composed by 2500 soldiers, left San José on March 4th led by the president's brother, General José Joaquín Mora. On the 12th, after leaving the Central Valley, they reached Liberia, the capital of the northern province of Moravia, today Guanacaste. By the 13th, Walker's forces were already at San Juan del Sur. On March 16th, Schlessinger and his men crossed the border. At this point, in a place called Salinas de Bolaños, the filibusters attacked and massacred eight Costa Ricans working at the border control office, including a young woman who cooked for them. On the 18th, the Costa Rican troops stationed in Liberia received news of Schlessinger's invasion. General Mora left the main body of his troops in Liberia and moved north with a small division. The next day, the filibusters arrived at the Hacienda Santa Rosa.²⁶¹

Santa Rosa was a famous and old hacienda, dating from the colonial period. In the middle of a pasture stood a large complex of buildings called La Casona, which included the main house, a kitchen, and storage rooms, all built with thick adobe walls over a cement base several feet high, with a large walled patio in the center. These features made it a fortress especially suitable for its defense. In front of the house, looking to the south and to the main road, a series of small stone walls that served as corrals protected the entrance to the Casona. On March 20th, after by-passing the Hacienda, Costa Rican forces discovered footsteps with boot marks leading to Santa Rosa. Mora realized the marks belonged to the filibusters and retraced his steps for several miles. If not for the

²⁶¹ Meléndez Chaverri, *Santa Rosa*, 10–20.

discovery of the trail left by Schlessinger, the filibusters could have arrived at Liberia without a fight.

Once he entered the Hacienda, Mora ordered 100 men to take a small hill some yards away from the Casona. Once the hill was taken, another column, formed by 250 soldiers, started to move to the open field in front of the complex. At this point, one of Schlessinger's guards saw the Costa Ricans and tried to shoot his rifle, sending the sign of alarm, but his weapon did not work. He ran back to the house shouting "The greasers are coming!"²⁶²

The filibusters organized their defense. A division formed by Frenchmen took the northwest corner of the Casona, the direction from which the Costa Ricans were advancing. Another division led by Captain Creighton took positions in the south and west of the complex, while those under the command of Captain Thorpe defended the back of the house. The Costa Rican attack focused first on the corrals, where a filibuster division under the command of Captain Rudler protected the position. After the first shots, the Costa Ricans stormed the walls with swords and bayonets, pushing Rudler and his soldiers back to the Casona. The Costa Ricans continued to push forward, and the filibusters retreated to the main building where they were already under artillery fire.

Captain Gutiérrez, stationed on the hill next to the hacienda to cover any retreat, could not wait any longer and ordered his troops to assault the Casona, engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the filibusters. After this, the Costa Ricans

²⁶²Meléndez Chaverri, *Santa Rosa*, 25–26.

stormed the Casona from all sides. The first to retreat was Schlessinger himself, who took with him the remnants of the French and German divisions. Gutiérrez's actions were extremely important to end the battle, at the same time it left open the only section of the hacienda through which filibusters could escape. General Mora ordered a light cavalry division formed by lancers to pursue those in retreat. From the first shot to the last, the battle lasted only fifteen minutes.

The result of the battle was of extreme importance. First, the military victory proved to the Costa Ricans that the state could field a military capable of defending them, a basic responsibility of a government. Conversely, on the filibuster side it created a sensation of panic. All manner of excuses were used to explain the defeat. After all, in their racist understanding of the world, it was incomprehensible that a group of "greasers" was able to defeat well-trained Anglo and European forces, especially in such an expedited manner. Some filibusters looked for an expiatory goat, and found it, as Walker did, in their leader, colonel Schlessinger. In his account of the War in Nicaragua, written four years after the events, Walker blamed Schlessinger for almost all the mistakes of the adventure. Before going into detail about the battle, Walker explained that the whole march south was full of irregularities, most notably Schlessinger behaving in arbitrary and strange ways that confused and infuriated his soldiers.²⁶³ Others blamed the

²⁶³ Walker, 183.

defeat on the great ability of well-trained and well-armed French and German soldiers fighting alongside the Costa Rican army, a statement that was not true.²⁶⁴

The battle of Santa Rosa anticipated the outcome of the Filibuster War. The defeat destroyed the morale of the filibusters, who could not stop talking about “the disciplined air, fine military conduct, and excellent arms and equipment” of the Costa Ricans.²⁶⁵ In fact, after the defeat “a general depression seemed to pervade officers as well as men. Applications were constantly made for furloughs to return to the United States.”²⁶⁶ The battle proved to the filibusters that the ideology behind Manifest Destiny was wrong in the sense that infallibility marked by providence was not on the side of the Anglos.

Strategically, its importance was even greater. The fact that filibuster troops were destroyed in Santa Rosa secured the sovereignty of Costa Rica. The armed forces could continue to prepare for the war without having to fight on its own territory. The result of the battle made Walker think twice about a direct attack on other Central American countries, realizing that his forces were not yet strong enough for a total takeover. For that reason, as soon as he was informed of the result of the battle of Santa Rosa, Walker and his mercenaries retreated to Rivas. Walker had to rethink his strategy. First, he moved the capital of Nicaragua from Granada to León in order to prevent a direct Costa Rican attack by water.

²⁶⁴ *Harper's Weekly*, 62.

²⁶⁵ Walker, 185.

²⁶⁶ Walker, 187.

Second, he forced President Rivas to sign a decree that gave him absolute power.²⁶⁷ The defeated filibuster became the Dictator of Nicaragua.

In the memory of the Filibuster War, the battle of Santa Rosa currently only serves as a preamble for the celebrations of April 11th. There are no parades celebrating the battle, and for the most part, newspapers do not show interest in commemorating the event. In a later chapter, an attempt by the Costa Rican government to recover the date in connection to another military confrontation in the same hacienda in 1955 will be analyzed.

Next Station: Rivas

After Santa Rosa, the victorious Costa Rican forces returned to Liberia to wait for the remnant of the army that was still marching north. Led by president Mora in person, the army was composed of about nine thousand men. Due to the lack of a clear supply chain, Mora decided to move to Nicaragua with only two thousand men. After all, outside of the Central Valley there were few inhabitants or urban centers that could provide food or other supplies the army needed.²⁶⁸ In Nicaragua, Walker tried to help his army recover from the psychological effects of Santa Rosa. On March 30th, his army paraded in Rivas, as a show of force, haranguing them in person after the military display.

After sending two proclamations in which President Mora made clear that the war was exclusively against the filibusters, the Costa Rican army started to

²⁶⁷ Walker, 186.

²⁶⁸ Rafael Obregón Loría. *Costa Rica y la guerra contra los filibusteros*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1991), 108.

move north in order to cross the border.²⁶⁹ In the first proclamation, Mora asserted that any filibuster found bearing arms would be considered an enemy and executed on the spot, and those who decided to lay down their arms, presenting themselves to the Costa Rican army, would be pardoned. He directed the second proclamation to the Nicaraguans. Mora exhorted them to rise against the filibusters, and in victory together they would rebuild Nicaragua.

On April 7th, the Costa Rican army crossed the border and headed toward Rivas. Small units separated from the main body of the advancing army to take control of the Transit Route. Some soldiers were sent to La Virgen, others to San Juan del Sur. The Costa Ricans were able to easily take San Juan del Sur, without having to fire a single shot, capturing 7 filibusters. At La Virgen, combat was more difficult, ending with some filibusters dead and the rest escaping. To make sure this port would not be used to bring anymore additional reinforcements to Walker, the Costa Ricans burned the wharf. On April 8th, the larger part of the advancing army entered Rivas. Thinking possibly that Mora was ready to take the Transit Route, Walker moved part of the troops to Castillo Viejo and La Trinidad, taking the main body of his army back to Granada on April 8th. There, he learned of the Costa Rican entrance to Rivas, and knowing that Mora was part of the expeditionary army, Walker planned to take him a prisoner to force a Costa Rican retreat or at least a treaty that could benefit his expansionist goals.

²⁶⁹ Obregón Loría, *Costa Rica...*, 108–109.

Knowing of the filibusters' movements to Castillo Viejo and La Trinidad (Hipp's Point), Costa Rica sent some troops to the San Juan River to prevent an invasion from those points. The strategy also included taking control of the river to avoid the arrival of reinforcements for Walker from New Orleans or New York. On April 10th, a battle in La Trinidad ensued. A column of the militia from Alajuela crossed the dense forests of the region, reaching the intersection between the Sarapiquí and San Juan rivers. The filibusters at La Trinidad were advised of the Costa Rican presence and surprised them at the convergence of the rivers. The filibuster disembarking was unsuccessful, and the Costa Ricans held off the attack. Walker claimed this as a victory, asserting that "the routed Costa Ricans did not stop in their flight until they had fallen back to San José."²⁷⁰ On the Costa Rican side, official communications between the governor of Alajuela and Vice President Oreamuno talked about a total victory for the Costa Ricans.²⁷¹ As Costa Rican historian Rafael Obregón asserts, there is not enough data to understand what really happened during that confrontation.²⁷²

Second Battle of Rivas, April 11th, 1856.

Walker's forces marched to Rivas. On the night of April 10th, they captured a Costa Rican spy, and after interrogating and torturing him, they executed him. The spy revealed Mora's location and headquarters, as well as the size and location of the army in Rivas. Based on this information, Walker planned

²⁷⁰ Walker, 205.

²⁷¹ Obregón Loría, *Costa Rica*, 113.

²⁷² Obregón Loría, *Costa Rica*, 113.

to storm the city from different directions. A company under the command of Colonel Sanders entered the city from the north, marching directly to the house where Mora was staying, close to the main Plaza. Major Brewster was to enter from the south, also heading toward Mora. Two more companies, one lead by Machado, the other one by Natzmer, entered the city threatening the right and left flanks of the Costa Rican army. The goal was to distract them and engage those companies while leaving Mora unprotected.²⁷³

On April 11th, the plan was executed. Walker's forces attacked around 8 a.m., taking the Costa Rican forces by surprise. Their fast movement granted the filibusters the capture of a small cannon that was successfully used by Sanders against the Costa Ricans during the battle. The takeover of the cannon made Sanders' company stop in their race for Mora, which allowed the Costa Ricans to counterattack and move Mora to a safer place. From the north, a division commanded by colonel Machado, a Cuban, found a strong Costa Rican army standing in his way. Machado was, in fact, one of the first to fall, raising confusion among his soldiers. While Machado's men started to lose ground and retreat, the battalion Santa Rosa caught them from behind and dispersed the whole company. This battalion was just returning to Rivas, which they left only a couple hours before to make contact with a small reconoitering group that was thought lost.

²⁷³ Walker, 197.

The Costa Ricans had taken the highest tower of the main Church of Rivas and put their best sharpshooters there. Their accuracy stopped the advance of Brewster and Natzmer. The two filibuster companies had to take cover, before they reached the Plaza. The shooters resisted so strongly that Walker could not believe them to be Central Americans, describing them instead as “French and Germans.”²⁷⁴ The Costa Rican ability to stop the filibuster advance deepened “the depression of the companies, blown by the first onset,” as Walker described.²⁷⁵

A stalemate ensued, both sides constantly advancing and retreating, taking a house after a hard struggle only to lose it again. It was during this stretching and shrinking that the most remembered event of the whole Filibuster War occurred. A tactic that had been successfully used during the first battle of Rivas in June of 1855 was employed again. The idea was originated with General Cañas, brother-in-law of the president, and consisted of the application of fire in the corners of the houses where the filibusters were taking cover. By burning the dry canes that supported the ceiling structure, the roofs would collapse over Walker’s soldiers, forcing them to leave their hiding places and retreat. This was the moment that is remembered in Costa Rican history as the martyrdom of Juan Santamaría.

Walker, along with his best troops, took refuge in a large building called Mesón de Guerra. A mesón (from the French *maison*) was a large building

²⁷⁴ Walker, 199.

²⁷⁵ Walker, 200.

reminiscent of what is now a hotel, a refuge for travelers, and a place to eat out of the home. The name of the business, Guerra, represented the name of its. The mesón was located on one side of the main plaza. A group of Costa Rican soldiers concentrated in the building opposite to the Mesón de Guerra, most of them from the city of Alajuela. Among them was an army drummer by the name of Juan Santamaría.

General Cañas did not see any other option than burning down the buildings where the filibusters were hiding, and he asked for volunteers to cross the street with a torch and start the fire. Santamaría took a step ahead by wrapping up some cloths on a stick and immersing it in kerosene. With this torch, he crossed the street and started a fire while a filibuster bullet hit his right arm. The filibusters were able to put out the fire, but the Alajuelan soldier tried once again, this time finding a corner of the Mesón where a large amount of dry cane lay. The fire caught while under a rain of filibuster bullets and Santamaría exhaled his last breath. The building collapsed and forced Walker to retreat to another area of the city, allowing the Costa Ricans to take a better position.

Although it is the most remembered event of the whole war, this action did not end the battle, which continued for hours. By the night of April 11th, Costa Rican reinforcements arrived from San Juan del Sur and La Virgen, making it impossible for Walker to achieve victory. After several hours, Walker decided to retreat, but first he poisoned the water supply by disposing the dead bodies of some of the filibusters' bodies into wells, and then during the early hours of the

12th, his forces started to retreat in silence. In this way, the Costa Ricans defeated Walker once again and held on to both Rivas and the Transit Route.

The result of the second battle of Rivas was fatal for Walker's ambitions, especially because it cut his source of reinforcements from the United States and pushed him out of the southern part of Nicaragua. However, his decision to discard the bodies of his soldiers into the wells bought him time. The waters in Rivas soon carried the *Cholera Morbus* bacteria, causing the Costa Rican army to retreat days later and leave Nicaragua.

Mora ordered the troops to return to Costa Rica, abandoning Rivas and leaving the Transit Route open again for the filibusters. On the way back to San José, hundreds of soldiers died. The Costa Rican army returned victorious from Nicaragua, but it carried with it an even more dangerous enemy than the filibusters: an epidemic of *Cholera Morbus*. Over the next year, about 10% of the Costa Rican population died of this illness, including Vice President Francisco María Oreamuno, the chief engineer of the army Carl Alexander von Bulow, and the Costa Rican vice Chancellor, Adolphe Marie.²⁷⁶ The Costa Rican retreat allowed Walker to continue his developments in Central America for another year. After the defeat at Rivas, Walker returned with all his forces to Granada.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Luis Felipe González Flores. "La Epidemia del cólera en Costa Rica." *La Nación*, November 25th, 1955, p. 12. In: Elías Zeledón Cartín. *Crónicas de la Guerra Nacional, 1856-1857*. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 2006), 149–151. Also: Raúl Francisco Arias Sánchez. *Los Soldados de la Campaña Nacional, 1856–1857*. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2007), 391. Statistics about the cholera epidemic gathered by Arias Sánchez reduced the total of deaths related to cholera to 8.2% of the total population. See: Arias Sánchez, 106-107.

²⁷⁷ Walker, 204, 213.

Once he learned of the departure of the Costa Rican army, he sent troops to again occupy the Transit Route.

Central America and the allied army

Despite the widespread damage of the cholera outbreak, the Costa Rican victories may have triggered the confidence needed for other Central American governments to amass a joint Central American army against Walker. During the last months of 1855, the Costa Rican and Guatemalan governments exchanged several letters concerning the filibuster advances, and by April of 1856, it seemed like President José Carrera had finally developed a sincere interest in pushing them out of the region. El Salvador, on the other hand, sent a letter to the Nicaraguan government complaining about the size of the filibuster army. In a communication with President Patricio Rivas dated May 7th, the Salvadorian government declared that “the presence of the Americans in Nicaragua threatened the independence of Central America.”²⁷⁸ In June, the government of El Salvador sent another letter, asking for the number of filibusters that formed part of the Nicaraguan armed forces to be reduced to only two hundred soldiers in order for El Salvador to consider that the government in Granada was really Nicaraguan, and therefore, El Salvador could recognize it and establish relations.²⁷⁹ At the

²⁷⁸ Walker, 216.

²⁷⁹ Walker, 218.

same time, rumors of an inevitable Guatemalan attack on the filibusters started to spread.²⁸⁰

Distorting the values of democracy, as is typical in the Manifest Destiny discourse, Walker decided to put president Rivas aside. As Walker stated, “it was necessary for the welfare of the Americans that a new election should be called.”²⁸¹ On June 10th, he signed a decree calling for new elections.²⁸² President Rivas and some Democratic leaders, including Máximo Jeréz and Mariano Salazar, thought the moment had come to get rid of Walker, since the amount of power Walker concentrated on his hands was too dangerous for Nicaragua and for the Democratic Party that embraced him. For that purpose, they decided to contact the Central American governments for help. They sent a commissioner to Guatemala asking President Carrera to send troops.²⁸³ Also, President Rivas sent letters to Costa Rica, asking President Mora to accept a peace treaty.²⁸⁴ On July 12th, Walker became the new president of Nicaragua, in a clearly manipulated electoral fraud. Walker himself stated that the disturbed conditions of the country and the irregularities in the voting made any election at the time invalid.²⁸⁵ Of course, this situation did not affect his designation as

²⁸⁰ Walker, 222.

²⁸¹ Walker, 222.

²⁸² Walker, 223.

²⁸³ Walker, 225–226.

²⁸⁴ Walker, 215.

²⁸⁵ Walker 219.

President of Nicaragua. A week later, U.S. Ambassador John Wheeler established diplomatic relations with the Walker regime in the name of his government, recognizing the filibuster's government as the legal one in Nicaragua.²⁸⁶ At the same time, Patricio Rivas continued to be recognized by Central American countries as Nicaragua's only real and legal president.

On April 4th, while president Mora was still marching toward Rivas, Carrera appointed Colonel Víctor Zavala as a commissioner to San Salvador to convince that government to allow the passage of Guatemalan troops through Salvadorian territory.²⁸⁷ In El Salvador, the government allowed the passage of Guatemalan troops and at the same time it raised its own army to join the struggle. Honduras, in the meantime, did not participate, but allowed troop passage towards Nicaragua.

On May 5th, President Carrera published a proclamation to the Guatemalan people. In it, he explained how foreigners from California had been able to take over the Nicaraguan government since October of 1855, and that their presence threatened the independence and nationality of all Central American states. Carrera accused the filibusters of being “adventurers without motherland that do not recognize any law, either human or divine. Their goal is to take away the lands God gave us, they want to enslave us and destroy our holy religion.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Walker, 232.

²⁸⁷ Marco A. Soto Valenzuela. *Guerra Nacional de Centroamerica*. (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1957), 71.

²⁸⁸ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 72–73.

“Soldiers!” he ended, “You will defend a holy cause: the cause of our religion and of our race... To our Costa Rican brothers went the honor of shedding the first blood on the defense of the fatherland. You will attest that in Guatemala we are ready to sacrifice everything.”²⁸⁹ Carrera’s speech presents an interesting counterpoint to Mora’s approach. While the Costa Rican president focuses on the sovereignty of Costa Rica and Nicaragua as separate states, Carrera continues to see the region as an undivided entity. The Guatemalan President also presents the struggle as one of race and religion, that is, a clash of cultures. In the Costa Rican case, while religion and race were mentioned as important factors to resist Walker, President Mora showed a bigger concern on saving the political structure of the state.

The Guatemalan army sent a vanguard force of 500 men, which crossed the Salvadorian border on May 11th, reaching Nicaragua on June 4th, and finally León, the second most important city of Nicaragua, and the capital of the Liberal Party, on July 18th. El Salvador sent 800 soldiers that left Cojutepeque on June 15th. Following the same route of the Guatemalan army, but at a speedier pace, the Salvadorian army reached León on July 12th.²⁹⁰ Both armies occupied León unopposed, as Walker did not move his troops to stop the invasion. Also, as the stronghold of the Democratic Party, patriotic Nicaraguans had already started to denounce Walker. Honduras finally reacted, and on July 20th, some troops were

²⁸⁹ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 74.

²⁹⁰ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 75.

sent to reinforce the Nicaraguan town of Nacaome, close to the border between Honduras and Nicaragua.²⁹¹

The problems that promoted the dissolution of the Central American Federation almost two decades before, though, still haunted the efforts of the allied army. Rivalry and jealousy between the Guatemalan and Salvadorian armies increased with their inactivity at León, allowing Walker to grow stronger with the arrival of new recruits from the United States. More Guatemalan forces arrived at León in August, only to stay as stagnated as the rest of the Central American armies.²⁹²

One reason given for the inactivity of the allied troops was the division still existent between Democrats and Legitimists.²⁹³ General Paredes, the leader of the Guatemalan expedition, and General Belloso, his equivalent from El Salvador, sent several letters to the Legitimists promoting a meeting with the Democrats for the sake of national unity. After a meeting of Legitimist leaders in Matagalpa, they decided to send General Tomás Martínez to negotiate with the Democrats in León. Once there, Martínez signed an agreement of cooperation with the Democrats on September 12th, 1856. Martínez and Fernando Guzmán signed for the Legitimists, and for the Democrats, Apolonio Orozco and Máximo Jérez. After seeing the results of foreign domination, Jérez swore to atone for his error with his own blood if necessary. The national agreement

²⁹¹ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 76.

²⁹² Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 77.

²⁹³ Pérez, 258.

stipulated that Patricio Rivas would continue to be considered the president of Nicaragua by both parties until the filibusters were expelled. Rivas would call for new elections and Martínez would command the military forces as they pushed the filibusters out of the Matagalpa and Managua regions. The agreement also called for a general amnesty, voiding all responsibilities on both sides during the civil war. Guatemalan and Salvadorian military forces in Nicaragua served as guarantors of the agreement.²⁹⁴

Battle of San Jacinto, September 14th, 1856

Before the signing of the September 12th agreement, the Legitimists exiled at the beginning of the war returned to Nicaragua, forming a parallel government. Nicaragua consequently had three presidents: Walker was dictator in Granada, Patricio Rivas was president in León, and the Legitimists in Matagalpa elected José María Estrada as president, residing in Matagalpa.²⁹⁵

One of the main Legitimist commanders, General Dolores Estrada, had an important tactical mission. His goal was to cut one of Walker's main supply routes. The region between Matagalpa and Managua was extremely important due to its grassy plains, providing cattle to the rest of the country. From the haciendas in the region, Walker was able to gather meat for his troops.²⁹⁶ Therefore, Dolores Estrada's mission was to scan the region in search of filibusters and to block their supply chain.

²⁹⁴ Pérez, 261-262.

²⁹⁵ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 81.

²⁹⁶ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 81.

Knowing of the Legitimist forces in the area, Walker sent forty men to scout the region to find and destroy Dolores Estrada, who had taken control of the San Jacinto Hacienda, some twenty miles to the east of Managua. On September 5th, both forces engaged, and after a skirmish, the filibusters had to retreat. Walker decided to organize a larger attack against Dolores Estrada. On September 12th, 120 filibusters left Granada, arriving at San Jacinto on the early morning of the 14th. Dolores Estrada was not expecting the attack, and the initial surprise allowed the filibusters to take positions around the stone corrals and approach the large house where the Legitimists were holding their positions.²⁹⁷ According to Walker's account, the attack was initially successful; his forces divided into three groups and were able to take the stone corrals without much loss. The charge to the house proved to be more difficult, with the filibusters losing all their leaders and a third of the troops trying to take the house. In a few minutes, the filibusters were in full retreat.²⁹⁸

The battle itself is full of symbolism, with the victory being only one of many reasons it is still remembered. In Nicaragua, the term used to call the Filibuster War is "The National War." The term derives from the patriotic treaty signed on September 12th between Democrats and Legitimists. This agreement ensured the creation of a united national front against Walker and the filibusters. Therefore, although the war started as a confrontation between Democrats and

²⁹⁷ Soto, *Guerra Nacional*, 82.

²⁹⁸ Walker, 285.

Legitimists, with Walker an instrument to assure Democratic Party's victory, the war acquired a new connotation after the agreement, affecting the collective memory of Nicaraguans. The current notion of the war is now presented as a Nicaraguan war against a foreign invader, forgetting the long strife and destructive civil war between the liberal Democrats, and the conservative Legitimists.

The victory at San Jacinto was reason for celebration in Nicaragua, and it may have affected the recruitment of new filibusters for Walker's cause. One of the casualties on the filibuster side was that of Byron Cole, a close friend of Walker, who signed the original contract with Castellón that brought the filibusters to Nicaragua in 1855. As Nicaraguan historian Jerónimo Pérez stated, "the death of Cole resounded beyond our borders, and believing that the defeat (at San Jacinto) was of a greater magnitude, the hooking of (filibuster) adventurers became scarce, while before it was so frequent."²⁹⁹

While Pérez states that the division of Democrats and Legitimists was clearly the reason for the Central American armies to hold their positions instead of advancing against the enemy, Dionisio Chamorro argues that it was the news of the victory on September 5th reaching León that convinced the two parties to sign the agreement.³⁰⁰ The fact is that the Central American allied army left León on September 18th, heading to Managua, where they expected to confront Walker's

²⁹⁹ Pérez, 270.

³⁰⁰ Dionisio Chamorro to Jerónimo Pérez, In: Jerónimo Pérez. *Obras históricas del Licenciado Jerónimo Pérez*. Managua: Banco de América, 1977 (1865), 265.

forces. A small filibuster detachment was defeated on their way, and when they reached Managua, the filibusters had already fled.

On September 24th, the allies occupied Managua, where they received news of the victory at San Jacinto from the 14th. Then, they advanced over Masaya, which was occupied on October 2nd. On October 11th, Walker attacked Masaya. While defending the city, Guatemalan troops under the command of General Zavala decided to attack Granada, the center of Walker's power, which should have been weakly defended, according to Zavala. The Guatemalans entered and occupied Granada, defeating the filibusters there. The lack of discipline of the allied soldiers made them think that victory over the filibusters was secured. Walker retreated from Masaya and attacked Granada, finding most of the enemy drunk and unguarded. This was a hard lesson for the allied armies. Walker was not only able to expel the allies from Granada, but he also dealt them heavy losses.

Discipline was not the only problem Central American forces were plagued with. They also lacked understanding and collaboration between their commanders. After all, the Guatemalan government had clear conservative ideas, while the Salvadorians had been ruled by a liberal party for years. Resentment based on the same struggle that had destroyed the Central American Federation was still alive. There was no clear leadership and decisions were taken separately and not as a real allied army.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Pérez, 275.

Costa Rica returns. The Transit Campaign.

By November of 1856 Costa Rica resumed its participation in the war. Once past the cholera epidemic, Costa Ricans expressed the desire to return to Nicaragua and defeat the filibusters once for all. In August, President Mora convoked Congress and delivered a speech recognizing the importance of continuing the war. This was followed by a dinner in honor of Mora in which congressmen continued to discuss a projected invasion against Walker. On October 5th, a special gathering of the most important members of the political elite of the country, including the president, congressmen, local governors and commanders, members of the Church, and other citizens declared the need for the continuation of the war against Walker and urged the government to take action. In previous months, Mora had approached the governments of Chile and Perú asking for economic help. Perú conceded a loan of 100.000 pesos, with very low interest.³⁰²

On October 16th, a decree approving the continuation of the war was published, including a requisition from all the Costa Ricans owning capital larger than a thousand pesos. On November 1st, Mora published a decree defining his initial strategy. Most of the ideas were a continuation of those designed and followed during the Costa Rican campaign of March and April, directed mostly to the occupation of the Transit Route. The decree ordered the blockade of the port at San Juan del Sur, as well as forbidding the use of the San Juan River for

³⁰² Obregón, 181–184.

navigation as long as the war against Walker continued. The decree included provisions allowing the destruction or takeover of any filibuster vessel.

On November 2nd, a vanguard division formed by 300 men, led by General Cañas, brother-in-law of president Mora, left Liberia and headed toward Nicaragua, reaching and occupying San Juan del Sur on November 7th. Cañas then defeated a filibuster attack in a bridge between San Juan del Sur and La Virgen. On November 11th, Walker sent a large force from Granada, including artillery, to stop the advance of Cañas. After a fierce battle against a larger enemy, Cañas retreated and joined with Nicaraguan forces under the command of Máximo Jeréz. Together, they occupied Rivas. Later, both moved to reinforce the allied forces in Masaya.³⁰³

The strategy of taking the Transit Route continued in the San Juan River. Since the retreat of the Costa Rican forces in April, Walker had occupied some important points along the river to secure the Transit Route and the arrival of reinforcements from New Orleans and New York. On December 22nd, Costa Rican forces, under the command of Major Máximo Blanco, took over the fort at La Trinidad, also known as Hipp's Point, after a short battle. For the strategy of taking the forts in the river, the Costa Ricans counted on the support of Sylvanius Spencer, an agent of Commodore Vanderbilt.³⁰⁴ Spencer used to work for the CAT and knew the river well, which proved helpful for the takeover of the route.

³⁰³ Obregón, 194–196.

³⁰⁴ Obregón, 205–210.

Vanderbilt, on the other hand, was a magnate who was cheated by some of his collaborators, losing his control of the CAT. Vanderbilt hired Spencer to help the Costa Ricans, with the goal of recovering the CAT after the war was over. His desire for revenge was so great that he spent large amounts of money to bribe some of Walker's mercenaries to desert him.

On December 23rd, the Costa Ricans took the wharf at Punta Castilla, capturing four CAT steamers that had been constantly used to transport filibusters.³⁰⁵ On December 27th, the Costa Ricans, on board the steamers, took the fort of El Castillo Viejo. On the 30th, the leaders of the filibuster garrison in fort San Carlos were tricked into boarding one of the steamers, where they were made prisoners, forcing the rest of the filibusters to surrender the position.³⁰⁶ The most important steamer, the *San Carlos*, was still free, and to capture it was extremely important. As a Costa Rican soldier explained, "to capture the *San Carlos* means the end of this war."³⁰⁷ The Costa Ricans on board the *Ogden*, one of the steamers they had taken days before, approached the *San Carlos*, blocking its passage through the river, and intimating immediate surrender. While the Costa Ricans had three cannons on board and were ready to confront hundreds of armed filibusters, the *San Carlos* did in fact only carry regular passengers. The

³⁰⁵ Captain John E. Erskine, British Navy, to B. Squire Cottrel, U. S. Consul in Greytown, December 23rd, 1856. In: Rafael Obregón Loría. *Costa Rica y la guerra contra los Filibusteros*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1991), 211.

³⁰⁶ Montúfar, 543–551.

³⁰⁷ *BO*, January 3rd, 1857. In: Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centro América*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 552–553.

steamer was then escorted up to the port of El Castillo Viejo, where the passengers disembarked. Taking the *San Carlos* did not mean the immediate end of the war, but the Costa Ricans were now owners of the Transit Route. That same day, the general of the Costa Rican forces, and brother of the president, José Joaquín Mora, published a proclamation:

“Central Americans:

The venom that gave life to the always renascent hydra of filibusterism is now cut. All the steamers used by the bandit Walker, and all the military ports on the San Juan River, are under my control, and under the custody of Costa Rican soldiers. From this side, you should not be afraid anymore of new hordes of assassins arriving to disturb your tranquility.”³⁰⁸

Masaya and Granada

While Costa Ricans were taking over the Transit Route, Walker returned to Granada after his battle against General Cañas. There he planned his next move; to attack Masaya, where the allied forces were stationed. On November 15th, a large group of filibusters under the direct command of Walker assaulted Masaya. The allied forces repelled the filibuster attack after many hours of fighting. At night, Walker retreated and the allied forces gathered around the main plaza. On the morning of the 16th, Walker returned to Masaya after receiving some reinforcements, and was able to occupy the Monimbó neighborhood of Masaya before the allies knew of his presence. Using artillery, Walker bombarded the allied fortifications while the filibusters dug trenches and barricaded their positions. The allies tried to hold Walker’s attack while also installing their own artillery and a house-by-house battle ensued. The next day, the battle continued

³⁰⁸ Montúfar, 554.

without any side gaining terrain. Finally, before dawn on November 19th, Walker decided to retreat.³⁰⁹

The battle of Masaya left plenty of casualties on both sides, and, as General Belloso from El Salvador said, there was no lack of heroic acts. In some way, the battle resembled the result of the second battle at Rivas, but no noticeable figure came out of the battle of Masaya as a symbol, much less as a national hero. The allies claimed a victory in the battle due to Walker's retreat, but were not able to make further gains, letting the filibusters rest and prepare for another attack. Guatemalan historian Lorenzo Montúfar chastises the lack of military training and little understanding of modern warfare that the Central American officers showed during the Filibuster War.³¹⁰

During the battle of Masaya, Walker learned that some allied forces, led by Máximo Jeréz were moving toward the city of Rivas. Also, he knew that the Costa Ricans were planning to enter Nicaragua at any moment. So, as his own strange omniscient narrator, he explained: "Walker, anxious about the Transit, resolved to retire to Granada, preparatory to an abandonment of the Oriental Department."³¹¹ Walker retreated from the battle of Masaya and returned to Granada. The Transit Route, the vein through which Walker's filibuster adventure breathed, was threatened. On the morning of November 18th, "Walker again

³⁰⁹ General Ramón Belloso to Salvadorian Minister of War, Masaya, November 19th, 1856. In: Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centro América*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000 (1887), 466-468. Also, in the same publication, see: General Mariano Paredes to Guatemalan Minister of War, 468-469.

³¹⁰ Montúfar, 472.

³¹¹ Walker, 312.

entered Granada; and he soon after announced to Henningsen his determination to abandon the place.”³¹²

In his book, Walker makes very clear his intentions about Granada, when stating that he was “determined to destroy as well as abandon Granada.”³¹³ Plunder of the city soon started, and on November 22nd colonel Henningsen proceeded to burn the first buildings. The allied army attacked Granada on the 24th with three columns entering different points of the city. The most successful attack was delivered by the column directed to take the area close to the lakeshore. Walker’s retreat was thus blocked, leaving some people on the wharf and steamers, and others in the middle of Granada, including Henningsen.

The fire continued to spread, making the battle a difficult place to see, breathe, or walk without falling in danger. Henningsen moved out of the main square toward the wharf, a good decision since by the 26th, the whole area around the square was absolutely destroyed by the fire. The allies were able, in the meantime, to take the filibuster position at the wharf, forcing Henningsen and his men to take cover in the churches and houses between the plaza and the wharf. The battle continued for weeks, the filibusters being well fortified, but completely surrounded by allied forces. Two letters were sent asking for their surrender. Cholera reappeared, affecting both allies and filibusters. One of the victims was General Paredes, who died, leaving the Guatemalan forces under the control of General Zavala.

³¹² Walker, 312.

³¹³ Walker, 313.

On December 12th, and after having received new reinforcements from New Orleans, a relieving filibuster force disembarked at Granada. The troops under Colonel Waters started to move toward the church of Guadalupe, close to the shore, where Henningsen was fortified. By the 14th, they made contact and Henningsen prepared to break the allied lines to escape on the steamer brought by Waters. Few buildings still stood in the city, almost completely destroyed by the fire started by the filibusters. Before finally boarding the steamer and escaping, Henningsen stuck a lance on the shore with a sign that said: *Here was Granada!*³¹⁴

San Jorge and the siege of Rivas

Walker retreated to Rivas, arriving two days after leaving Granada, on December 16th. His strategy was clear: hold on to Rivas, keeping control of both San Juan del Sur and the Transit Route, and wait for reinforcements. Once he accumulated a larger force, he could counterattack either south against Costa Rica, or north against the allied forces. On January 17th, the Costa Rican general José Joaquín Mora arrived to Granada aboard the recently captured *San Carlos*. There he met with generals Zavala from Guatemala, Chamorro and Martínez from Nicaragua, and his brother-in-law, general Cañas, who had joined the allied forces some days before. The decision made to move against the city of Rivas to eliminate the threat of filibusterism. On January 28th, the allies arrived to San Jorge, a little town close to Rivas. There, the joined Central American armies established their camp, being able to be close to Walker to control his movements,

³¹⁴ Walker, 340.

but at a distance safe enough to organize their attack. Also, the position was perfect in case they needed to counter maneuver any attempt to recover the Transit Route.³¹⁵

Walker indeed tried to take back the Transit Route, while at the same time, attempted to push the allied forces away. In the San Juan River, battles ensued in the post of La Trinidad or Hipps' Point on February 6th, 8th, and 13th, when Costa Rican forces had finally to abandon their defensive position taken originally on December 22nd. The Costa Ricans were able, on the other hand, to hold an attack to Castillo Viejo on February 16th. In the meanwhile, the filibusters constantly attacked the allied forces in San Jorge. First on January 29th, under the command of Henningsen and Sanders, the filibusters attacked the allies by surprise. The allies were pushed back into the center of San Jorge, but Costa Rican captain Tomás Guardia was able to execute a movement to one of the flanks of the enemy, forcing them to retreat in disorder, losing many men and weapons.³¹⁶ Years later, Tomás Guardia became president of Costa Rica. His connection to, and use of, the imagery of the Filibuster War will be analyzed in a future chapter.

Walker attacked San Jorge again, this time in person, on February 4th, after receiving some reinforcements from San Francisco. His attack at 4 a.m. took the allies again by surprise, but four hours later, once the allies recovered from the surprise, and after many losses, the filibusters had to retreat again. The defense at

³¹⁵ Euclides Chacón Méndez. *Indice Cronológico de la Campaña Nacional, 1856-1857*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2002), 111.

³¹⁶ Chacón, 97–120. Walker, 376–379.

San Jorge was arranged in such a way that General Chamorro and the Legitimist forces barricaded themselves defending the western entrance to the plaza, Cañas and Jeréz defended the south and east, while Zavala took the northern position. A small mixed Costa Rican-Nicaraguan force under General Hernández decided to stay in a large house outside of the town. The filibusters were unaware of this, and Hernández was able to get them from behind putting the filibusters between two fires.³¹⁷

On February 7th, Walker bombarded San Jorge for several hours, without much result.³¹⁸ March 5th saw a fierce battle between forces commanded by Chamorro against filibusters under Sanders. Chamorro was returning to San Jorge after a recognition mission, when he was ambushed by Sanders in El Coyol. The battle ended with a complete victory for the allies. After this Honduran General Xatruch was able to devise the best location from where to direct a siege against Rivas, the hacienda “Cuatro Esquinas.” On March 16th, a vanguard force under Jeréz was sent to occupy the hacienda. That same day, Walker attacked San Jorge once more, and after a long bombardment that seriously diminished the allied forces, returned to Rivas.³¹⁹

At this point, the command of the allied army was given to General José Joaquín Mora. The appointment responded to many factors. First, it was able to end the friction between Guatemalan and Salvadorian officers that had so far,

³¹⁷ Walker, 381. Chacón, 111. Pérez, 318–319.

³¹⁸ Pérez, 319.

³¹⁹ Pérez, 327.

impeded the creation of a unified command. Second, it served as recognition to Costa Rican efforts and success, as well as way to promote a larger commitment of the Costa Rican government in a common effort. After an initial unsuccessful attack to Rivas on March 23rd, J. J. Mora was able to direct his forces to take control of a quarter of Rivas, called La Puebla, on March 26th, pushing Walker's forces to the center of the town. The siege of Rivas had started.

Enclosed in the center of Rivas, filibusters started to desert. The lack of large attacks for almost two weeks made Walker infer that Mora was thinking on do so soon. In Walker's own words, Central American inaction "led to the surmise that they might select the anniversary of the action at Rivas, in April, 1856, for another general attack on American lines."³²⁰ Walker was right, the assault started on the morning of April 11th. Reinforcements arrived from Guatemala the day before were immediately sent into the battle, and their lack of experience made them an easy target for the filibuster rifles. The battle was lost, but the siege continued. The filibusters continued to desert, attracted by the promise of the Costa Rican government to send them back to the United States unharmed and at no cost if they surrendered.

On April 15th, Costa Rica took over San Juan del Sur, and the last possibility for the filibusters to receive reinforcements was gone with that. There, the *St. Mary*, a sloop of war from the U. S. navy was stationed and its captain, Charles H. Davis, aware of the situation in Rivas, decided to start negotiations.

³²⁰ Walker, 405.

The Central Americans, eager to end the war, accepted Davis's proposal: to allow Walker to surrender to the government of the United States, with captain Davis as his representative. In this way, Walker himself, and his closer officers could embark towards San Francisco on the *St. Mary*, surrendering all their weapons to the Central American army. The rest of the filibusters were to be considered prisoners of war. Mora decided also to hold his original promise, granting the prisoners protection and arranging for their safe passage back to the United States.³²¹ Walker signed his surrender on May 1st, 1857, putting an end to the Filibuster War, and marking a beginning of its commemoration, memory, and interpretation.

Just one more time...

Accounts of the Filibuster War end, traditionally, with Walker's surrender on May 1st, 1857. But Walker's filibuster adventures and designs to conquer Central America continued. After his return to the United States, popular reception in Washington D.C., New Orleans, and New York elevated him almost to the level of hero, making of him one of the most popular celebrities in the United States at the time. Politicians, including Lewis Cass, a senator from Michigan and later Secretary of State under Buchanan, as well as local majors and representatives congratulated Walker, gave public speeches showing their support for his cause, and rallied to find funding to continue Walker's war in Nicaragua.

On November 14th, 1857, Walker left the port of Mobile with 270 filibusters arriving some days later to the San Juan River. The filibusters were

³²¹ Walker, 421–429. Chacón, 128–131.

took the Castillo Viejo, almost abandoned by the Costa Ricans at that time, and fortified themselves inside waiting for reinforcements that should have arrived with Henningsen some days later. It was Commodore Hiram Paulding from the U. S. Navy who arrived instead with two well-armed war steamers, and after disembarking 350 soldiers, asked for Walker's surrender, to which he agreed. As a reward, the Congress of the United States suspended Paulding from his position.³²²

Back again in New Orleans, Walker received support and funds to try just one more time. In August, 1860, he embarked for Roatán, Honduras, with the intention of taking over the Bay Islands to establish an independent republic. The islands had been under British control and were ready to relinquish their sovereignty to Honduras. A delay on the abandoning of the islands forced Walker to disembark in a beach close to the town of Trujillo, in mainland Honduras. Honduran troops learned of Walker's presence and convinced a British frigate stationed in the islands to help them arrest him. Fearing battle with the Honduran army, Walker and his filibusters surrendered to the British captain Norvell Salmon, who sent the prisoners to Honduran authorities. After a trial that lasted for two weeks, Walker was condemned to the death penalty. On September 12th, 1860, the filibuster was executed on the beach of Trujillo.³²³

³²² Obregón, 273–275.

³²³ Obregón, 101.

Chapter 4

BEFORE APRIL 11TH: RISE, FALL, AND RETURN OF THE MEMORY OF THE FILIBUSTER WAR

In 1895, U.S. Ambassador Lewis Baker was performing one of his cyclical visits to what he thought to be a peaceful and quiet Costa Rica.³²⁴ At dawn on May 1st, he was abruptly awakened by the sound of cannons firing. To his bafflement, this was soon followed by the “noise of a brass band parading the streets.”³²⁵ His disconcert was not alleviated until he put his hands on that morning’s newspapers, which explained that the noisy sunrise was a demonstration of celebration of the 1857 “surrender in Nicaragua of el filibustero Yankee William Walker.”³²⁶ That May 1st marked the thirty-eighth anniversary of Walker’s defeat in Rivas at the hands of a united Central American army.

For twenty-first-century Costa Ricans this may sound surprising, since the national holiday that celebrates the defeat of the filibusters is celebrated every April 11th. On this day, Costa Ricans remember the feat of a young soldier, Juan Santamaría, who gave his life during the battle of Rivas against the filibusters on April 11th, 1856. Most Costa Ricans are unaware that April 11th did not become an official holiday until 1915, and that before 1885, Santamaría was almost an

³²⁴ In 1893, Baker was appointed by President Cleveland as U. S. Ambassador for Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. *New York Times*. Obituaries. May 1st, 1899.

³²⁵ Daniel B. Lucas. *Nicaragua: War of the Filibusters*. (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1896), 3.

³²⁶ Daniel B. Lucas. *Nicaragua: War of the Filibusters*. (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1896), 3.

unknown figure outside of his hometown, Alajuela.³²⁷

The study of the Costa Rican commemorations of the Filibuster War is a non-linear one, due to the multiplicity of holidays connected to them. This chapter analyzes the commemoration of the Filibuster War in Costa Rica during the nineteenth century. During this period, May 1st became the main holiday associated with the commemoration of the Filibuster War. This chapter explains the changes in the political environment of that country, and how they affected the consolidation of an official memory of the Filibuster War. The process of consolidation of the Costa Rican nation-state suffered from issues related to localism, as well as inter-elite strife that promoted a constant shift in the direction of public affairs. This chapter also analyzes the argument presented by some scholars in relation to the creation of national identity based on the figure of Santamaría. The current position among most scholars studying national identity in Costa Rica establishes 1885 as the moment when official nationalism was consolidated. According to Canadian historian Steven Palmer, that year Santamaría became the quintessential symbol of the establishment of the Filibuster War in the official discourse of Costa Rican national identity.³²⁸ This

³²⁷ In his work about the history of April 11th, David Díaz Arias quotes an editorial from 1980 that erroneously assured that the battle of Rivas had been continuously celebrated for 124 years. In: David Díaz Arias. *Historia del 11 de Abril: Juan Santamaría entre el pasado y el presente, (1915–2006)*. (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2006), xv.

³²⁸ Steven Palmer was the first to approach the study of the Filibuster War as catalyst of official nationalism. He was followed in Costa Rica by Patricia Fumero, David Díaz Arias, and Iván Molina. Palmer has been evolving his thought on the subject. His first analysis on the topic can be found in: Steven Paul Palmer. *A Liberal Discipline: Inventing Nations in Guatemala and Costa Rica, 1870–1900*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Columbia University: 1990. He continued with several articles: Steven Palmer. “Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880-1900.” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 25:1 (Feb. 1993), 45–72. Steven

chapter argues that the process of consolidation of Costa Rican national identity based on the Filibuster War is a dynamic process, and contests the inscription of a specific date as the birth of official nationalism. It also argues that a unilateral decision by the government is not enough to create a sense of national identity based on the events of the Filibuster War.³²⁹ In this manner, it contests the modernizing theories of nationalism that establish the state as the creator and enforcer of a national narrative that then evolves into national identity.

The process of national identity creation is a complex one and in the Costa Rican case the Filibuster War had to overcome a series of obstacles at the local, national, and international levels in order to be consolidated as the main Costa Rican symbol of identity. Some scholars argue that during the colonial period, Costa Rica experienced such a degree of isolation that it had developed specific administrative and political features, producing a unique and distinctive

Palmer. "Sociedad Anónima, Cultura Oficial: Inventando la Nación en Costa Rica (1848-1900)." In: Iván Molina and Steven Palmer, eds. *Héroes al gusto y libros de moda: sociedad y cambio cultural en Costa Rica (1750–1900)*. (San José: EUNED, 2004), 257-323., and Steven Palmer. "El Héroe Indicado (o un Estado en Búsqueda de su Nación): Juan Santamaría, la Batalla de Rivas y la Simbología Liberal, 1880-1895." In: Iván Molina Jiménez. *Industriosa y sobria: Costa Rica en los días de la Campaña Nacional (1856-1857)*. (South Woodstock, VE: Plumrock Mesoamerican Studies, 2007), 111–129. Also, see: Patricia Fumero. "La Celebración del Santo de la Patria: La Develización de la Estatua al Héroe Nacional Costarricense, Juan Santamaría, el 15 de Setiembre de 1891." In: Francisco Enríquez Solano, comp. *Fin de Siglo XIX e identidad nacional en México y Centroamérica*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 403–435. David Díaz Arias. *Historia del 11 de Abril: Juan Santamaría entre el pasado y el presente, (1915-2006)*. San Pedro de Montes de Oca: Editorial UCR, 2006.

³²⁹ While Palmer establishes 1885 as the moment in which official nationalism was created in Costa Rica, Patricia Fumero (Patricia Fumero. "La Celebración del santo de la patria: La develización de la estatua al Héroe Nacional Costarricense, Juan Santamaría, el 15 de Setiembre de 1891." In: Francisco Enríquez Solano, comp. *Fin de Siglo XIX e identidad nacional en México y Centroamérica*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 404., argues for a dynamic process of creation of collective memory, establishing a "permanent transformation of the original meaning" for the social imaginary due to social changes, much in the same way proposed by Halbwachs (Maurice Halbwachs. *On Collective Memory*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

worldview. This Costa Rican version of the ethnonationalist argument has been attacked as a late construction intended to connect current national characteristics with an ancient background.³³⁰ Other scholars propose a dynamic approach explaining that Costa Rican national identity developed during the nineteenth century along with the establishment of modern political, economic, and social structures.³³¹ Gil Zuñiga, for example, focuses on the 1820s and the process of independence, establishing that all structural development that allowed for the consolidation of the nation-state was put in place during that decade.³³² While it is true that politically Costa Rica created a relatively stable system after the 1823 civil war, the expansion of the institutions of the state and the framework necessary for its consolidation took decades after independence. It wasn't in fact until the 1850s, during President Mora's administration, that certain levels of state institutionalization finally started to take form, including a standing army, an export-driven transportation structure, and the creation of the first National Bank. Finally, as mentioned above, Steven Palmer established the year 1885 as the specific moment in which official nationalism was mature enough to make use of the images of the Filibuster War to promote a specific idea of national identity

³³⁰ José Luis Vega Carballo. *Orden y Progreso: La Formación del Estado Nacional en Costa Rica*. (San José: ICAP, 1961), 192. Juan Rafael Quesada. *Clarín Patriótico: la Guerra contra los filibusteros y la nacionalidad costarricense*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2006), 64.

³³¹ Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega. "La invención de la diferencia costarricense, 1810–1870." *Revista de Historia*, 45 (Jan. –Jun, 2002), 191–228.

³³² José Daniel Gil Zúñiga. "Imágenes de la nada. Entre la duda y la ignorancia. Los primeros pasos en la construcción del país." *Revista de Historia*. Heredia-San José: EUNA-EUCR, numbers 53–54 (2006), 233–242.

among Costa Ricans.³³³ This argument presents the construction of official nationalism as well as the memory of the Filibuster War as a monolithic event. Its focus on the figure of Santamaría and April 11th is an anachronism responding to a search in the past from the viewpoint of the present. Palmer's assertion of 1885 as the year in which Santamaría became the Costa Rican national hero reflects the importance Santamaría has in the twentieth century, disregarding the reality of the nineteenth century, clearly illustrated by Ambassador Baker's experience during that 1895 strident morning. This chapter explores the significance of the Filibuster War in the creation of Costa Rican national identity, proposing a dynamic and progressive study of its development.

Initial commemorations of the Filibuster War

The reason the Filibuster War became the cornerstone of Costa Rican national identity is that the victories over the invading filibusters demonstrated the viability of the nation as a long standing project. The process of nation-state building received strong support during the administration of Juan Rafael Mora, the second president of Costa Rica, elected in 1849. Costa Rica had become officially an independent republic just a year before, after being part of the Central American Federation for several years between 1823 and 1838. Mora's administration relied on the moderate liberal ideas typical of Costa Rican politics since 1823, when conservatives were defeated during a civil war. During his

³³³ Palmer has revised his original version of 1993, but in 2007 he insisted that "1885 supposed an abrupt and radical change in the national-political discourse." Steven Palmer. "El Héroe Indicado (o un Estado en Búsqueda de su Nación): Juan Santamaría, la Batalla de Rivas y la Simbología Liberal, 1880-1895." In: Iván Molina Jiménez. *Industriosa y Sobria: Costa Rica en los días de la Campaña Nacional (1856-1857)*. (South Woodstock, VE: Plumrock Mesoamerican Studies, 2007), 112.

presidency, Mora promoted the modernization of the country, expanding the infrastructure to support growing international commerce, and creating institutions to expand the influence of the state. The size of the army increased in a scale never seen before or after, and in 1854, thanks to a large weapons purchase from Great Britain, transformed the Costa Rican army into the most modern of the region. In addition, the creation of a national bank was directed to establish a stronger state control of the economy. Finally, the construction of a road to the Pacific supported the expansion of the export economy.

The Filibuster War served to consolidate a growing sense of national unity. To finance the war, Mora decreed a forced loan of 100,000 pesos from the richest members of society, which involved the elite in a national effort. The army, mostly volunteers from the main cities and towns of the Central Valley, had to move through areas where they had never ventured in before. First, they had to leave the westernmost city in the Central Valley, Alajuela, and cross a series of mountains before reaching the Pacific coast. From there, they had to cross the northern province of Moracia (today Guanacaste) to confront the enemy. Another part of the army was sent directly to the San Juan River through dense and barely explored jungles and rivers. The efforts of the Filibuster War forced both the mingling of soldiers from all parts of the Central Valley, and their discovery of parts of Costa Rica unknown for them. It also invested the support of the ruling class in a war and discovery of national territory. William Walker's war had the effect of solidifying an interclass defense of territory and thrusting urban citizens into unexplored corners of the state. Unity came from this. Costa Ricans could

visualize country and kin, resident became loyal citizens with mutual regard for the nation. What had been local or regional became national. From the beginning of the Campaña Nacional, Costa Ricans recognized its defining effect on nationalism.

In time, of course, citizens have found new ways to remember the war and remind themselves of what it means to be Coosta Rican. Celebrations of the war have endured a series of transformations, brought on by expressions of subsequent generations. During the nineteenth century, May 1st was the only officially sanctioned holiday that commemorated the Filibuster War, celebrating the day Walker surrendered to the allied Central American armies during the siege at Rivas.

The study of the commemorations of May 1st presented in this chapter fills a gap researchers have left in their analyses of the memory of the Filibuster War in Costa Rica. The problem may be related to Steven Palmer's groundbreaking work, which on one hand established an interest on national identity consolidation and the study of the Filibuster War in cultural terms. On the other hand, Palmer focuses too much on the figure of Santamaría, disregarding the study of development of national identity during the period before 1885. His approach may be related to a theoretical bias. Modernists have insisted so much on the study of the development of the liberal nation-state in Europe and the Americas that it seems almost unlogical to search on threats of nation building before the 1870s. This chapter studies the use of the memory of the Filibuster War during the nineteenth century, since the end of the war to the late 1890s. During this period,

the Costa Rican state established May 1st as the main holiday to celebrate the Filibuster War. To study the development of this holiday means to study the earliest representations of the war in the Costa Rican imaginary, and with them, the initial ideological framework that tried to explain the events of 1856-1857. These first representations gave shape to the more modern representations, including the recognition of Santamaría and Mora as national hero. The process of nation building of the nineteenth century coincided with the development of a national narrative of the Filibuster War. The image of the war was therefore influenced by the process of consolidation of the nation-state, but also the nation-state was influenced by the uses of the memory of the war.

In Costa Rica, the first commemorations of the *Campaña Nacional* did not have to wait until the 1870s. The government did not waste time when it came to celebrating its war's achievements. The battle of Santa Rosa, for example, produced the first symbol of the war to be commemorated. Costa Rican battalions entered the battlefield divided among four main commanders. The same soldiers left the hacienda as one single group now named battalion *Santa Rosa*.³³⁴

The next battle, at Rivas, on April 11th, 1856, gave the Costa Ricans the first date to be commemorated. The celebration of that victory happened the very next year, on April 11th, 1857, while the war was still raging. During the siege of Rivas, on 1857, General José Joaquín Mora (president Mora's brother) chose

³³⁴ The first official mention of such battalion comes from a report of the battle of April 11th sent by Pedro Barillier to President Mora: "Informe del Teniente Coronel Pedro Barillier", in: Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centro América*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 231.

April 11th to attack the filibusters in a clear attempt to commemorate their 1856 victory. On March 26th, 1857, the Central American allies forced Walker to retreat from Granada to the city of Rivas, starting a siege that lasted almost 5 weeks. According to Lorenzo Montúfar, on April 10th, General Commander of the allied troops, José Joaquín Mora, called the main officers to a meeting to decide the strategy for an assault on the next day, April 11th, expressing that it will be a perfect day “to commemorate the battle of the year before.”³³⁵ In his memoirs, Walker wrote of the unusual movement of Central American forces encircling the city, stating that “the quiet of the enemy on the 10th led to the surmise that they might select the anniversary of the action at Rivas, in April, 1856, for another general attack on the American lines.”³³⁶ April 11th also presented a stage for the creation of symbols. In order to guard the shores and transport troops, the Costa Rican government rented private vessels, furnishing them with cannons necessary for their defense. On October 1856, President Mora decided to buy a schooner, arm it with four cannons, and baptize it *Once de Abril* (April 11th), honoring the battle at Rivas in 1856.³³⁷

The first official post-war commemoration was celebrated on May 7th, 1857, less than a week after Walker’s defeat. That day, president Mora issued a proclamation: “Filibusterism has failed in Central America. The seventh of this

³³⁵ Lorenzo Montúfar, 636. Rafael Obregón Loría, *Costa Rica y la Guerra...*, 253.

³³⁶ Walker. 405.

³³⁷ Rafael Obregón Loría. *Costa Rica y la guerra contra los filibusteros*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1991), 196. Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centroamérica*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 473.

month, at noon, a hundred and one cannon shots announced to the Costa Rican people that their troops had taken pacific possession of the city of Rivas on May 1st. May 1st will be, from today on, the most memorable day for the Patria!”³³⁸ This was followed on October 27th, 1857, by the Costa Rican congress’ official decree making May 1st a national holiday in perpetuity. The decree, in article 8, made clear the minimal requirements for the celebration. As Ambassador Baker witnessed, May 1st was “celebrated in the entire Republic with as much solemnity as possible, saluting the national flag at dawn of said day with twenty-one cannon shots.”³³⁹ The decree of October 27th, 1857, in which May 1st was declared a national holiday, also had dispositions for the creation of a monument. Article 7 decreed that “The supreme government would erect a monument eternalizing Santa Rosa’s, Rivas’, and San Juan’s victories at the center of a public fountain to be located in a central square in the capital, San José.”³⁴⁰

The first official holiday commemorating the Filibuster War was celebrated, therefore, the next year, on May 1st, 1858. The official newspaper, *Crónica de Costa Rica*, greeted the new day with an editorial note. The newspaper dedicated to the first commemoration stated that “today we celebrate the first anniversary of the surrender at Rivas; and the restoration of Central America.”³⁴¹ The *Crónica*, one of the very few newspapers published in the

³³⁸ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: May 2nd, 1878), 2.

³³⁹ *El Comercio*. (San José: May 28th, 1887), 3.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Crónica de Costa Rica*. (San José: May 1st, 1858), 1.

country in 1858, it was considered the voice of the government. At the time, it was one of the few ways by which the state could communicate with the people and transfer values and ideology; thus the importance of its message. The article revealed a strong nationalist sentiment, and, especially, a clear awareness of U.S. expansionist ideas. The idea that victory during the Filibuster War brought the restoration of Central America can only be understood in the context of the strategic global importance of the Central American area. The article expanded the significance of the victory in Central America when it claimed that Costa Rica preserved regional independence, and also the independence of the whole Latin American region. The Filibuster War was the great Costa Rican moment, in which the small republic was able to consolidate the freedom of the rest of Latin America. In this way, the government pronounced the entrance of Costa Rica into world politics, as it was the desire of Costa Rican elites to occupy an important place in the global economy and to be recognized as citizens of the modern world. This discourse of Hispanic-American solidarity restated the Bolivarian idea that the Latin American region was intimately linked and that only through collaboration could it defend its sovereignty.

Because of the amount of blood spilt in defense of freedom and sovereignty, the Filibuster War became a symbol of a successful and modern nation. Costa Rica acquired independence from Spain in 1821, but it came without struggle. In 1823 Costa Ricans fought among themselves to decide whether to join Iturbide's Mexican Empire or to remain an independent state. The strife ended with the defeat for the pro-Monarchy groups, and the decision to join

the Central American Federation a few months later. The declaration of an independent republic in 1848 was a shy attempt to begin the construction of a nation. But the victory over the filibusters symbolized a de facto declaration of independence and the international recognition of Costa Rican sovereignty. While military casualties were not high, the cholera epidemic that the soldiers brought back home with them decimated the Costa Rican population. In a country of 150,000 people, about 15% of the total male population enrolled in the army. Cholera killed about 15,000 Costa Ricans. The economy suffered and even the elites saw their personal finances seriously affected by forced loans. After such sacrifice, Costa Ricans adopted the military campaign of 1856–1857 as a substitute war for independence. The Filibuster War became the symbol of the survival and endurance of the nation.

Under Mora, the Filibuster War became a symbol of nationalism. The initial independence, considered a gift, was defended with blood in 1856. This meant that, starting in 1856 Costa Rica stood as a member of modern nations and claimed its right to freedom and international respect. It is because of this that Mora started a process to transform the Filibuster War into a symbol of Official Costa Rican national identity. With the installation of May 1st as a national holiday, and the establishment of a decree to build a monument to remember the war, Mora was paying homage to Costa Rican resistance against the filibusters and installing a cornerstone of official nationalism. If this process would have continued, the discussion about the moment in which national identity became connected to the Filibuster War would not be needed.

New Era³⁴²

May 1, 1857, came to represent Costa Rica's achievements, but its commemoration lasted for only one more year. In August, 1859, president Mora was overthrown by members of a rival sector of the Costa Rican economic elite. The anti-Mora clique included Vicente Aguilar, Mora's father-in-law and former business partner, as well as José María Montealegre, Mora's brother-in-law. The fact that his political rivals were also his relatives is not a surprise in Costa Rican politics. In such a small country, as Samuel Stone demonstrated in his now classic book about Costa Rican political endogamy, all but two presidents since 1821 were members of the same families and descended from three of the original Spanish conquistadores: Jorge de Alvarado (Pedro de Alvarado's brother), Juan Vázquez de Coronado (nephew of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado), and Cristóbal de Alfaro.³⁴³

The oligarchy that acted against Mora did so for many reasons. First, Mora's forced loans during the Filibuster War were not well received among some members of the elite. Second, during his administration Mora demonstrated a strong personalistic approach to politics perceived as authoritarian. Third, the extreme rise of the president's salary, from 3000 pesos in 1851 to 15,000 pesos in 1859, and the creation of a national bank with strong ties to Mora were considered

³⁴² I use the term New Era to describe the period between 1859 and 1870 when a slightly more conservative oligarchy took control of power in Costa Rica. New Era (*Nueva Era*) was the name of a newspaper closely connected to the regime.

³⁴³ Samuel Z. Stone. *The Heritage of the Conquistadors: Ruling Classes in Central America from the Conquistadors to the Sandinistas*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 6–7.

signs of corruption. Since a national bank also meant that the control of the economy through loans to middle and small farmers went away from the hands of the elite, this also created resentment among the oligarchy. The reelection of Mora in 1859 helped to alienate other members of the elite who feared an indefinite Mora regime. On August 14, 1859, Colonel Salazar and Mayor Blanco, leaders of the army, denounced Mora, arrested him, and sent him into exile.³⁴⁴

Juan Rafael Mora, although a successful leader in a moment of crisis, was not free of enemies. Most historians blame his insistence on staying in power, among other issues, as the factors that promoted an overthrow by an oligarchic faction of the elite. President since 1849, Mora won the 1853 election, and was reelected in 1859. Since his first government, Mora's opposition was formed mostly by members of the coffee elite that profited from the loans they gave to small producers. The creation of a National Bank meant the end of their credit system, and the benefits it brought. The New Era elite also opposed the Central American Federation. One of the reasons was related to the large debt Costa Rica acquired with British banks while a signatory member of the Federation. The loans did not benefit Costa Rica, but years later, as an independent country, it still had to pay its share of it. The oligarchy also opposed the financing of the Filibuster War, since it meant the creation of a larger national debt. Mora's close relationship with the British, and his negotiation for a large loan from that kingdom was anathema to the coffee elite's objectives. Finally, the relationship of

³⁴⁴ Carmen María Fallas Santana. *Elite, negocios y política en Costa Rica, 1849-1859*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2004), 118–119, 165.

Mora with some of his associates, especially Vicente Aguilar, became problematic, and soon Mora found himself without backers.³⁴⁵

On August 14, 1859, Mora woke up at dawn at his personal house with the news that there was a disorder in the Artillery Fort. Once he stepped outside, the same men that knocked on his door arrested him. Colonel Salazar and Mayor Blanco informed President Mora that they denounced him as President of Costa Rica. Both men were heroes of the Filibuster War and Mora had previously deposited on their hands the control of the army. Then, Mora, his brother José Joaquín, his brother-in-law General Cañas, and other members of his government were taken to the port of Puntarenas and sent to exile.³⁴⁶

Mora insisted on returning to power and organized a military invasion of Costa Rica. Mora's replacements claimed that the invasion threatened to produce serious economic, social, and political damages to Costa Rica. In economic terms, it meant the use of resources from the state and private citizens to fight a civil war. Socially it would disrupted the relationship between the different factions of the elite, as well as the patron-client relationship with small coffee producers. Finally, the return of Mora to power could only mean a long dictatorship, and the destruction of the political balance between the factions of the elite, as well as between the four main cities of the country, San José, Alajuela, Cartago, and Heredia, where the elites lived and ruled.

³⁴⁵ Fallas Santana, 99–116.

³⁴⁶ Fallas Santana, 118-119. Also: Carlos Meléndez. *El doctor José María Montealegre*. (San José: 1968), 59–61, 68–69.

The New Era government defeated Mora's invasion, and after the former President surrendered they executed him, an extremely rare event in Costa Rican politics. It is possible that the New Era government considered his death as the only way of dealing with a man too dangerous and difficult to control. Costa Rican historian Carmen Fallas describes the situation as the only solution the elites saw feasible to keep the social balance of the country. According to Fallas, Mora broke one of most important unwritten understandings among the Costa Rican elite. A military invasion was not an acceptable behavior. In the mentality of the Costa Rican elites, being overthrown was a punishment for big mistakes. As payback Mora should have accepted an honorable exile. Later, depending on the circumstances, he could have returned, become an officer in a new government, and even, as José María Castro Madriz did, become president again after a long hiatus.³⁴⁷

In 1859, the elite elected José María Montealegre as their new president. The New Era lasted ten years and represented a government centered on an elite based in the city of Cartago. This political faction was the enemy of a Central American Federation, and it was opposed to the creation of a National Bank. While the capital remained in San José, the old colonial elites of Cartago assumed a dominant role in defining the role of government, fitting it into a more conservative style, representative of the values of the old city. The new regime took a strong anti-Mora stance and tried to erase the memory of the former President. As soon as Montealegre came to power, systematic repression against

³⁴⁷ Fallas Santana, 143. Also: Stone, 112–113.

ex-moristas began. Between 1860 and 1870, they cancelled all reference to Mora's military victories, disconnecting May 1st from the Filibuster War in all official affairs. May 1st became only congressional inauguration day, a functional activity that celebrated the annual resuming of regular Congress activities.³⁴⁸ During the administrations of José María Montealegre (1859–1863), Jesus Jiménez (1863–1866 and 1868–1870), and José María Castro Madriz (1866–1868), a purposeful silence about the Filibuster War prevailed.³⁴⁹ This is palpable in the official newspaper, which during that decade constantly mentioned May 1st in relation to the Congress returning to its activities, but never to the defeat of William Walker. The New Era governments buried the official memory of Mora and the Filibuster War for more than ten years. As a holiday that commemorated the Filibuster War, May 1st was not properly celebrated again until 1883.³⁵⁰

Still, the memory of the Filibuster War was not totally silenced. On September 15th, 1864, the New Era government issued a relevant and controversial document. President Jesús Jiménez invited José de Obaldía, ex-president of the Republic of New Granada (today, Colombia), to deliver a speech as part of the commemorations of Independence Day. Obaldía had been recently expelled from New Granada due to his support for the creation of an independent

³⁴⁸ Ironically, a tradition also started by Mora. During most of the nineteenth century, Congress met only for a short season. The rest of the year the Congress only met when to vote to solve constitutional issues.

³⁴⁹ With some clear exceptions, of course, as in the case of José de Obaldía's speech of 1864, in which he mentions the name of Santamaría and other heroes of the Filibuster War. Mora's name, though, was not.

³⁵⁰ *El Comercio*. (San José: May 28th, 1887), 3. As a holiday, May 1st never was abolished, but it was not until 1883 that Costa Ricans heard again the 21 blank shots.

Panama. He had wanted to ingratiate himself with the government that gave him asylum. In a speech delivered in the Costa Rican presidential palace, Obaldía presented a summary of his political ideas, arguing against the federal system of government in Latin America.³⁵¹ In his opinion, Federalism was an erroneous and unnatural system for most Latin American countries, something that could be surely appreciated by the authorities of the New Era regime, which already rejected the idea of a possible re-union with Central America.³⁵² Later, Obaldía explored the most important leaders and events of Costa Rican history since independence. The speaker was careful enough to skip the administration of Juan Rafael Mora, but the Filibuster War was an unavoidable topic. In his speech, the author praised the memory of the battles of Santa Rosa, Rivas, and San Juan, announcing that the victory over Walker was mainly a Costa Rican feat. “There is an event,” said Obaldía, “that should not stay in oblivion.”³⁵³ Referring to the battle of Rivas, Obaldía described how Walker and his filibusters had concentrated their forces in a building called the Mesón de Guerra, and that the Costa Rican lack of prevision for heavy artillery or any kind of incendiary rockets made it impossible to charge the building. In this account, a soldier voluntarily undertook the mission to start a fire in the building to force the filibusters’ retreat:

An anonymous soldier enters that citadel, certain of finding death
in its interior. The fire starts, but the light reveals the incendiary.

³⁵¹ José de Obaldía. *Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Don José de Obaldía, en el salón del Palacio de Gobierno, el día 15 de Setiembre de 1864, cuadrajésimo-tercer aniversario de la Independencia de Centroamérica*. (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1864), 1–6.

³⁵² *Gaceta Oficial*. (San José: September 15th, 1866), 1–2.

³⁵³ José de Obaldía, 24.

An enemy bullet destroys the arm in which his torch gleams. His courage does not fail, and the other arm does the work. The ammunitions explode; the building burns and consumes everything. The filibusters run, frightened, and victory over them is pronounced... Sirs, the humble hero, imitator of Ricaurte in San Mateo, is named Juan Santamaría, Gallego as a nickname. Honor to his memory!³⁵⁴

This speech marked the first time the feat of Juan Santamaría was ever described. In fact, before Obaldía's speech there is almost no official mention of Santamaría. The only document existing before 1864 was Santamaría's baptism record and his mother's request for a pension. The surviving battle reports described the burning of buildings during the battle of Rivas, and specifically of the Mesón de Guerra, but none mentioned Santamaría by name.³⁵⁵ Obaldía had no problem eliminating Mora from his speech, but the Filibuster War must have had a special meaning for the Colombian politician to risk a confrontation with the New Era elite. The answer may be that Obaldía's speech reflected the importance the Filibuster War had for Latin America. In 1864, Latin Americans perceived the defeat of Walker as the arrest of U.S. expansionism.

This speech is still a matter of controversy among scholars. Historian Lorenzo Montúfar argued in his 1887 study of the Filibuster War that the speech had a clear anti-Mora bias. According to Montúfar, the purpose of the author was to support the New Era's position. By stressing Santamaría's feat, Obaldía

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 23–24.

³⁵⁵ Walker, 201; Jerónimo Pérez in Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centroamérica*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), 230; Barillier, in Montúfar, 231; Mora, in Montúfar, 233.

diminished the importance of Mora as leader of the Filibuster War. According to Montúfar, rescuing the name of the humble soldier was aimed at obscuring Mora.³⁵⁶ The problem with this theory is that during the New era period there was not any single mention of the Filibuster War, Mora, or Santamaría other than Obaldía's speech. If the New Era group wanted to eliminate the memory of Mora, they would have worked a little bit harder to create heroes and images to substitute for the President. This shows that the speech was not devised by the Costa Rican oligarchy as a way to replace the memory of Mora with that of Santamaría's, but an idea developed exclusively by Obaldía. It is possible that Obaldía remembered the Filibuster War as a moment of pride for Latin America. After all, in 1856, New Granada, along with Chile and Perú, supported the Costa Rican cause against the filibusters, and politicians of these countries, like Obaldía, were aware of the importance of the war against Walker. The Clayton-Bulwer treaty between the United States and the United Kingdom already mentioned the possibility of taking over the Colombian province of Panama. On the other hand, the image of Mora was too closely associated with the Filibuster War. The simple mention of the war risked the revival of the memory of the President's name, and the anti-Mora elite would have definitely tried to avoid this. While creating a substitute hero of the war sounds clever, it was extremely unlikely to happen under the 1864 circumstances. In any case, the days of the anti-Mora elite were soon to be over.

³⁵⁶ Montúfar, 243.

On April 27, 1870, a group of military men took over the main barracks and forts of the country, forcing President Jiménez's resignation. While Jiménez and Montealegre abandoned the country, the leader of the revolt, General Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez, was elected as the new president of Costa Rica. Although liberals had held power in Costa Rica almost without interruption since independence, Guardia established a new liberal regime that enforced the most positivistic policies related to concepts of modernity and progress. Guardia became the Costa Rican strongman and dictator until his death in 1882. The few days he was not president, Guardia was still the real power behind the throne.³⁵⁷ During his administration, Guardia promoted a revival of the memory of the Filibuster War.

The end of the New Era also saw a shift of power from Cartago to Alajuela. The Jiménez and Montealegre families, as representatives of the traditional elite from Cartago, were now in exile. On the other hand, Guardia, although born in Guanacaste, married a woman from Alajuela and moved to the city long before becoming president. His love for the city became obvious during his regime. He governed mostly from Alajuela instead of San José, although the one was the capital of the country and the official seat of the government. This Alajuela versus Cartago dichotomy had defined nineteenth-century Costa Rican politics since independence and continued for decades.

³⁵⁷ Jorge Francisco Sáenz Carbonell. *Los meses de don Aniceto: Ascenso y caída de don Aniceto Esquivel Sáenz*. (San José: EUNED, 2002), 113.

Localism

To understand Costa Rican politics during the nineteenth century, it is necessary to analyze the importance of localism. Independence in Costa Rica was not achieved by fighting against colonial powers, but by a decision by the Kingdom of Guatemala (of which Costa Rica formed part) to separate from Spain on September 15, 1821. Following the Spanish tradition of township, Guatemala sent a note to all Central American towns calling them for a general assembly to decide the future of the region. Towns, in Spanish tradition, were autonomous entities that owed their allegiance to the crown, specifically to its head, either a king or a queen.³⁵⁸ Therefore, once its allegiance to the king was severed by a declaration of independence, the Province of Costa Rica received its sovereignty back. Furthermore, as was clarified by the municipality of San José, in 1821 it was not the Province of Costa Rica that received its sovereignty back; instead, each town in the Province was now independent.³⁵⁹

In 1821, there were four major towns in Costa Rica: Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, and San José. While there were plenty of villages, some of them older than most towns, they did not have administrative power to be sovereign entities according to Spanish tradition. Cartago was the capital of the Province and the

³⁵⁸ See: Helen Nader. *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Habsburg Sale of Towns, 1516–1700*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. For the specific case of Central America, Jordana Dym has published the best work so far about the development and importance of localism and towns in Latin American nation-formation: Jordana Dym. *From Sovereign Villages to National States: City, State, and Federation in Central America, 1759–1839*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.

³⁵⁹ Rafael Obregón Loría. *De Nuestra Historia Patria: Los primeros días de independencia*. (San José: Universidad de Costa Rica, 1971), 127.

oldest town in Costa Rica. Its elite was formed mostly by an oligarchy that based its economic activities of a hacienda, which consisted owning large plots of land, production being reduced to supply local consumption. Heredia had a similar structure, although in a much smaller scale. San José and Alajuela emerged as commercial centers connected to the booming coffee export-driven production. By 1821, San José was a much larger and prosperous town than Cartago. Coffee, the most important export product, had to pass through Alajuela city, on the western side of the Central Valley, to be sold at the port of Puntarenas on the Pacific coast. Alajuela was a transportation hub for the coffee industry.³⁶⁰

The decision to separate from Spain became a serious problem for the consolidation of a new independent Costa Rican state. First, Cartago tried to impose its views over the rest of the towns due to its position as capital of the province. While Cartago declared the annexation of the province of Costa Rica to the Mexican Empire of Agustín de Iturbide, this was immediately rejected by Alajuela and San José.³⁶¹ Heredia, on the other hand, joined the declaration of León which technically meant they joined the former province of Nicaragua in the north. Cartago decided to follow Heredia's example.³⁶²

Tensions over city allegiances grew. In March, 1823, the Cartago elite, supported by the Church and other conservative elements took over the military fort of Cartago and declared, again, the annexation of Costa Rica to Iturbide's

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 91–92.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 127–132.

³⁶² Ibid., 110, 131.

Mexican Empire.³⁶³ San José and Alajuela, traditionally more liberal and holding sympathy for republican ideals, resisted. On April 5th, Imperialists and Republicans confronted each other at Ochomogo, on the outskirts of Cartago. The Republicans, led by Alajuelan commander Gregorio José Ramírez, defeated the Imperialists and marched on Cartago. As a result, the capital and seat of government was moved to San José, a fact that would not be easily forgotten by the Cartago elites.³⁶⁴

In 1823, Costa Rica joined the Central American Federation as a newly created state. In 1834, in order to appease Cartago's insistence that the city had the right to hold the capital, the Costa Rican government decreed a law creating an ambulatory capital. That meant that the government would change its seat every four years. San José assigned Alajuela, its natural ally, to be the first capital of the *Ley de la Ambulancia* period.³⁶⁵ Soon, Congress realized that instead of appeasing the feelings of localism, this law promoted them, and in 1835 the *Ley de la Ambulancia* was abolished. According to historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia, this promoted Cartago's reaction. The colonial capital had hoped that once it became the seat of government again through the ambulance law, it would recover and retain the position of capital of Costa Rica forever. Relying on localist sentiments in Alajuela and Heredia, Cartago organized an insurrection

³⁶³ Rafael Obregón Loría. *Conflictos Militares y Políticos de Costa Rica*. (San José: Imprenta La Nación, 1951), 4.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4–6.

³⁶⁵ Ricardo Fernández Guardia. *La Guerra de la Liga y la invasión de Quijano*. (San José: EUNED, 2007), 3.

against San José. When the allied forces surrounded San José, Chief of State Braulio Carrillo tried to negotiate with the besiegers.³⁶⁶ Carrillo and representatives from Alajuela met and were getting close to an agreement when unexpectedly the forces of Cartago attacked San José. According to Fernández Guardia, Cartago was not happy with reaching any kind of agreement, wanting San José's total defeat to reclaim the capital.³⁶⁷ Finally, San José won the war and kept its position as capital.

Even so, localism continued to be a central issue in Costa Rican politics, marked by an Alajuela/San José vs. Cartago/Heredia rivalry. The fall of President Mora in 1859 was also promoted in part by this conflict. His overthrow was organized mainly by the Cartago elite, while Mora counted on strong support in Guanacaste and Alajuela.³⁶⁸ Between 1859 and 1870, an authoritarian coffee growing oligarchy with strong ties to Cartago ruled Costa Rica.³⁶⁹ The New Era ended on April 27, 1870 when Tomás Guardia overthrew President Jiménez. Guardia symbolized a shift of power from Cartago to Alajuela. Guardia, a native of Guanacaste, lived in Alajuela, was married to a woman from that city, and was its governor. This, plus the fact that he was a Morista, helps to explain his disdain

³⁶⁶ The position of president did not exist until 1848, when the Republic was created. Before that, Costa Rica formed part of the Central American Federation, and the person in charge of the executive power was called Jefe de Estado (Chief of State).

³⁶⁷ Ricardo Fernández Guardia. *La Guerra de la Liga y la invasión de Quijano*. (San José: EUNED, 2007), 31–36.

³⁶⁸ For a detailed study on the fall of Mora, see: Carmen María Fallas Santana. *Elite, Negocios y Política en Costa Rica, 1849–1859*. Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2004.

³⁶⁹ Héctor Pérez Brignoli. *Historia Contemporánea de Costa Rica*. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997), 79.

for the Cartago elite. Guardia's policies redefined the state under a new liberal structure. During his regime, Guardia created one of the most important series of reforms in Costa Rica, all of them directed at the consolidation of a modern nation-state. Reforms included a new constitution (1871), a military code, a civil code, the expansion of state bureaucracy, and the construction of a railroad. These reforms represented an expansion of the presence of the state in political, economic, and social relations. Also, he gave continuity to Mora's initial project; a state that appealed to the popular classes for the consolidation of official nationalism, rebuilding the position of the Filibuster War on official memory.

Guardia and the Filibuster War

Guardia's regime established a cult of personality, prompting some changes to the interpretation of the Filibuster War. May 1st was not celebrated as it had been during Mora's time. During Guardia's regime, references to May 1st or to the Filibuster War in general, always counted on invocations to his own past as a Lieutenant Colonel of the Costa Rican army. Also, along with May 1st, Guardia created another holiday celebrating the coup d'état that brought him to power on April 27th. Guardia's goal was to connect the glories of the Filibuster War with his personal glories to claim his legitimacy to power. Guardia was not a member of the economic elites, and his real claim to power and legitimacy was his position in the military, especially as an officer and veteran of the Filibuster War. Therefore, he created an image of the war that established himself as a central figure. The connection between April 27th and May 1st was also important. It became a week of civic celebrations connecting the glorious past of May 1st with the symbolic

revindication of the Morista liberal state on April 27, 1870.

According to Costa Rican diplomat Jorge Francisco Sáenz Carbonell, Guardia's cult of personality was enforced by members of his government, the Costa Rican society, and even by his enemies.³⁷⁰ The constant congratulations received by the General President on almost every act he performed enforced his sense of infallibility. Although some importance was given to the celebrations of Independence Day on September 15th, Guardia's government focused more on the commemoration of Walker's defeat on May 1, 1857. Along those holidays, his regime developed a new one to complement them. The anniversary of the coup d'état, on April 27th, became the symbol of his administration, enforcing a strong connection between Independence, the Filibuster War, Mora, and the figure of Guardia.

Newspapers of the period report, for example, that on the evening of April 26, 1873, the Minister of Foreign Relations, Lorenzo Montúfar, organized a banquet to congratulate Guardia along with the rest of the military chiefs that participated in the April 27, 1870 revolution.³⁷¹ This was followed by another banquet scheduled for the 27th. Montúfar, again, dedicated a toast to the president. Rafael Ramírez, one of the guests to the party, interrupted the speech by adding a toast to the heroes of Central American independence and to the memory of president Carrillo, considered the organizer of the Costa Rican state during the

³⁷⁰ Sáenz Carbonell. *Los meses...* Also: Jorge Francisco Sáenz Carbonell. *Los días del presidente Lizano: La muerte de don Tomás Guardia y la administración de don Saturnino Lizano Gutiérrez*. San José: EUNED, 1997.

³⁷¹ *El Costarricense*. (San José: May 8th, 1873) 1–2.

first years after independence. Montúfar replied immediately, stating that “Independence, acquired on September 15th, 1821, would have perished by another kind of domination, had Costa Ricans not secured their heroic victories in the fields of Nicaragua against the filibusters.”³⁷² The toast ended with Montúfar’s affirmation of the heroes of the Filibuster War, and especially of Juan Rafael Mora and General Cañas. The officials asked Guardia for an honorific burial of their remains, an idea the president seemed to approve.³⁷³ This speech may be the earliest official mention of the Filibuster War after the New Era period. It is important to note Montúfar’s strong reaction to the mention of Independence Day by superposing the Filibuster War, representing one of the earliest attempts to promote the Filibuster War as the real fight for independence. Without doubt, Guardia recognized the symbolic importance of the Filibuster War, especially when it was if connected to April 27th and his own heroic participation in that war. That same year, Guardia had a unique opportunity to reestablish his connection with the Filibuster War.

In August, 1873, the political situation in Central America was fragile. The personal relations between Costa Rica’s and Guatemala’s presidents raised the prospect of war. While both presidents were liberals, Barrios considered himself to be the natural leader of that movement in Central America, resenting Guardia’s lack of recognition in this respect. Allied with El Salvador, Guatemala

³⁷² Ibid., 2.

³⁷³ Ibid., 2. Sixteen years later, Montúfar was commissioned to write one of the most important works on the Filibuster War.

promised to form a dangerous coalition against Guardia. Buenaventura Carazo, an enemy of Guardia, was appointed by Guatemala and El Salvador as Plenipotentiary Minister in a mission to Nicaragua, with the specific goal of convincing that government to join the alliance against Guardia.³⁷⁴ As a response, a leaflet published in Alajuela announced the need to prepare for a possible attack from the north reminding the bravery of Costa Rican soldiers: “Our flag is holy... – said the leaflet – Let them come! Nothing we fear. We still remember the *Guerra Nacional*..., when we defended nothing less than Central American independence... then, we all fought in that same Nicaragua against filibusterism...”³⁷⁵ The leaflet conjured up the memory of the Filibuster War, for the first time since Mora’s fall and Obaldía’s speech. More than that, it established the meaning of the possible war against a Central American army in terms related to the Filibuster War: the defense of sovereignty. The use of the term *Guerra Nacional* acquired here a new and different meaning. Before, this term had been connected to the Filibuster War implying that Central America fought as one nation to save its sovereignty, while the 1873 leaflet shows a Costa Rican revision of the term putting it in a local context. In this new interpretation, Costa Rica existed as an entity separate from the rest of Central America, describing the Filibuster War as the demonstration of Costa Rica’s ability to fight for its own survival. This leaflet demonstrates the growing understanding of Costa

³⁷⁴ Rafael Obregón Loría. *Conflictos Militares y Políticos de Costa Rica*. (San José: Imprenta La Nación, 1951), 58.

³⁷⁵ *El Costarricense*. (San José: September 2nd, 1873), 2. *Guerra Nacional* (National War) was the term used at the time for the Filibuster War.

Rica as a separate nation, establishing the Filibuster War as the moment in which its sovereignty was successfully consolidated. Indeed and in the public's imagination, Costa Rica had become a nation.

The peril of an attack grew, and on September 7th, the Costa Rican president prepared his army to protect the northern border. In the large expansive park of La Sabana, in western San José, Guardia harangued 3,000 members of the army. Responding to critics that believed that the army was too small to defeat both Guatemalan and Salvadorian combined forces, Guardia remarked: “they forget that you are the sons of the defenders of national independence, back in 1856.”³⁷⁶ With this speech, Guardia made clear that the Filibuster War was now considered exclusively a Costa Rican affair, and that its symbolism resided with the defense of Costa Rican sovereignty. In the same phrase, Guardia restated the importance of the Filibuster War as the real war of Costa Rican independence.

The idea of the Filibuster War as a symbol of Costa Rican resistance, sacrifice, and victory was constantly revisited by newspapers during this period of tension. *El Costarricense* wrote that Nicaragua would not support the pretensions of Guatemala and El Salvador, since it was confronting plenty of internal issues, the worst “since the times the filibusters invaded that Republic.”³⁷⁷ The image of Guardia as leader of the nation was conjured in terms of military heroism, reminding the people of the president's participation in the Filibuster War.

³⁷⁶ *Alcance a la Gaceta, número 42*. (San José: September 7th, 1873), 1. Imprenta Nacional. Reprinted in: *El Costarricense*. (San José: September 12th, 1873), 1.

³⁷⁷ *El Costarricense*. (San José: September 12th, 1873), 1.

Anthemns were written as elegies for Guardia, one of them stating:

Let us raise a glorious anthem
to the caudillo, the courageous warrior,
that the light of his resplendent steel,
in the most holy war spread.³⁷⁸

The threat of war from Guatemala and El Salvador served as catalyst of Costa Rican nationalism based on the defense of sovereignty. To recover the Filibuster War was a natural step, since most Costa Ricans were aware of the events that happened just seventeen years before, in which sovereignty was successfully defended. Furthermore, the president of the nation happened to be a veteran of that war. There was no need to create the figure of a national hero, since there was already a hero holding the position of leader of the nation. The connection did not pass unperceived by Guardia and his followers, and the commemoration of the defeat of Walker, abandoned after the fall of Mora in 1859, soon resumed.

On May 1, 1877, the government ordered all public buildings to raise the national flag in commemoration of Walker's defeat.³⁷⁹ In 1878, an official newspaper's editorial commemorated May 1st by reminding Costa Ricans of the importance of this day: "Today we celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of the glorious battle of Rivas."³⁸⁰ The article focused on the value the holiday represented: "Without diminishing the merits of the efforts of Nicaragua,

³⁷⁸ *El Costarricense*. (San José: September 19th, 1873), 4.

³⁷⁹ *El Costarricense*. (San José: May 3rd, 1877), 2.

³⁸⁰ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: May 1st, 1878), 2.

Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala... we can state that the army of Costa Rica decided the victory in favor of the holy cause of the allies.”³⁸¹ The fact that Costa Ricans were the deciding force in the war, according to the article, is connected to the idea of Costa Rica’s invincibility, which helped then to state that “Costa Ricans fought with bravery and success during those memorable times, and sealed with blood the borders of the Patria to secure its inviolability and to punish the invaders of those and all times.”³⁸² This phrase encompasses a recurring myth of the Costa Rican national narrative, that the Filibuster War provided the nation with an aura of impregnability against all kinds of foreign threats.

The 1878 editorials and efforts to resurrect the official memory of the Filibuster War responded to another crisis. Just a few months before, in January 1878, Costa Rica suffered an invasion from Nicaragua with the intention of overthrowing Guardia’s government. Federico Mora, a nephew of the former president Juan Rafael Mora, was the leader of an armed group of exiles that found an ally in a high officer of the Nicaraguan army. The goals of the armed invasion were to overthrow Guardia and declare Federico Mora president of Costa Rica.³⁸³ The recovery of the memory of the Filibuster War served then as a way to encourage loyalty among Costa Ricans. The invaders awakened some ghosts in the Costa Rican population. First, the initial concern that Alajuela and Guanacaste would support Federico Mora revealed a consciousness about localist politics in

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Rafael Obregon Loría. *Conflictos Militares y Políticos de Costa Rica*. (San José: Imprenta La Nación, 1951), 65–68.

Costa Rica. The cloud was dispelled when authorities of the two provinces expressed their support for Guardia.³⁸⁴ Second, the memory of the Filibuster War continued to be present, transforming any threat to national sovereignty into a connection with the past, and resembling any invader to a filibuster, as the announcement of an Alajuelan newspaper revealed when stating that “Don Federico Mora has invaded the territory of his own Patria followed by his filibusters.”³⁸⁵

The image of the Filibuster War was also exploited by Guardia in a proclamation against Federico Mora. In 1856, President Mora issued a decree that condemned to death any filibuster carrying weapons.³⁸⁶ By 1878, although President Guardia had already decreed the abolition of the death penalty, he considered invasion an act of high treason and proclaimed that the invaders “do not deserve forgiveness...instead, they should suffer the same luck as the filibusters...”³⁸⁷ The concept was shared by Congress, which on January 24th decreed that “the invaders of the Republic, in the current case, are to be considered as outlaws and filibusters by International Law.”³⁸⁸ The whole country backed the decision of the government. The municipality of Puntarenas gathered and issued a decree asserting the need to organize the population against the

³⁸⁴ *El Pueblo*. (Alajuela, January 25th, 1878), 1.

³⁸⁵ *El Pueblo*. (Alajuela, January 25th, 1878), 1.

³⁸⁶ Montufar, 211.

³⁸⁷ *Gaceta Oficial*. (San José: January 25th, 1878), 1.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

“filibuster expedition,” which was complying with the desires of the Guatemalan dictator, Justo Rufino Barrios to overthrow Guardia.³⁸⁹ “The patriotism of its sons – said the municipal corporation – would not allow the feet of the filibusters to stain the heroism of the invincible flag” of Costa Rica.³⁹⁰ The municipality of Escazú acknowledged the threat that a “phalanx of adventurers” represented to national sovereignty and offered all resources to fight the “filibuster horde.”³⁹¹ Similar terms were used by the representatives of Alajuela, San José, Desamparados, San Ramón, Grecia, Puriscal, Atenas, Heredia, Cartago, La Unión, and Liberia, demonstrating the unity of the country against the invader, using imagery based on the memory of the Filibuster War.³⁹² It is clear that by January, 1878, Costa Ricans had developed a clear connection between national sovereignty and the memory of the Filibuster War, establishing a strong imprint into Costa Rican national identity.

After Federico Mora’s defeat, the government continued to promote the connection between the Filibuster War and President Guardia. On May 1, 1878, the official newspaper celebrated the Filibuster War not because it represented the defeat of Walker and his men, but because it could be used as an example of how Costa Rica was able to defeat anyone who tried to invade the country. Costa Rica defeated Walker because it had great military leaders, said the newspaper, and

³⁸⁹ *La Gaceta. Diario Oficial.* (San José: January 30th, 1878), 1.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 1–4. Also: *La Gaceta. Diario Oficial.* (San José: February 2nd, 1878), 1–4.

some of them were still around at the time. The editorial is explicit about one of the main actors of the Costa Rican success against Walker when it states that “General Tomás Guardia was one of the noble Costa Ricans that complied with his duties, to his own pride, and for the glory of Central America.”³⁹³ It is clear in the article that Costa Rica should remember the Filibuster War as proof of the invincibility of its troops. But more than that, it declared that while Tomás Guardia was in charge of the country, Costa Rica could sleep well at night. The celebration of the Filibuster War now had a new hero, he was alive, he was the protector of Costa Rica, a paternal figure; and he also was the president of Costa Rica.

To emphasize this concept, the next day, May 2, 1878, another editorial was dedicated to Walker’s surrender. The article established a clear connection between Guardia’s government and the government of president Mora. The article portrays the Filibuster War as a plague that stormed Nicaragua. May 1, 1857, explains the author, was relevant for all of Central America, but especially for Costa Rica, since it was able to bring triumph against the filibusters once and again, due to the “heroism and courage” of its soldiers.³⁹⁴ The article ended with the inclusion of Juan Rafael Mora’s original proclamation of May 1st as a holiday.³⁹⁵ The editorial served to validate Guardia in two ways. First, it connected the Costa Rican army of 1878 to the memory of an undefeated army in

³⁹³ *La Gaceta. Diario Oficial.* (San José: May 1st, 1878), 2.

³⁹⁴ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial.* (San José: May 2nd, 1878), 2.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Nicaragua during the campaigns of 1856 and 1857. Second, it allowed Guardia to reconnect with his past as a successful military officer during the J. R. Mora administration. By remembering the celebrations of May 1st, condemned to oblivion during the New Era, Guardia reclaimed the glories of the Filibuster War as the natural heir of J. R. Mora, Cañas, and the heroes of 1856–1857. He cleverly robbed Federico Mora of any claim to family heroism and name association with his uncle.

By 1880, mentions of the Filibuster War restated its image as a substitute war for independence. The meanings of the Filibuster War transformed over a decade. First the war represented a fight for Central American unity, then it became a war for Costa Rican sovereignty, and in 1880, an event in which Costa Ricans saved Central America from another the filibuster threat, this one from within Central America. According to the *La Gaceta* article of May 1, 1880, the Filibuster War “signifies the glorious defense of the national independence of the Central American people.”³⁹⁶ Among the bravest of the soldiers were the Costa Ricans, says the article, and, as we have seen before, only Guardia’s name is insinuated among the thousands of possible heroes of the Filibuster War: “Costa Ricans...contributed a great part...among which one of the most distinguished in the battlefield was the current Chief of the Nation.”³⁹⁷ On the same page this article was published, there are two other articles commemorating April 27th, serving to reinforce the connection between Guardia and the Filibuster War.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

In 1882, Guardia was extremely ill, asking his First Designate to take control of the Executive. At the time, there was no office of Vice President. In the case of the President's absence, a list of designates was established in order to fill his position. On a decree signed on June 17th, Saturnino Lizano, a son-in-law of Guardia, became the interim president. In the meantime, Guardia's brother-in-law, Próspero Fernández, became the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, thus they split the civic and military positions normally held by the president.³⁹⁸ This moment served to recognize the connection Guardia established with the Filibuster War. On May 5, 1882, a newspaper reminded the population that Guardia was a courageous officer during the battles of San Jorge and Rivas.³⁹⁹ President Guardia died in Alajuela during the night of July 6th. Cannon shots and bells waking up the country announced his departure.⁴⁰⁰ His body was buried in the Cathedral of San José, but his heart, always close to the city of Alajuela, was given to the municipality of that city in an official ceremony, along with all his decorations.⁴⁰¹ The obituaries in the newspapers were reminders of his twelve years as president, as well as the changes his regime brought to Costa Rica. But he was also remembered because of his connection to the Filibuster War. A

³⁹⁸ Jorge Sáenz Carbonell. *Los días del Presidente Lizano*. (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal A Distancia, 1997), 83. The figure of Vice-President did not exist at that time. Instead, the President established a list of three Designates, which he (or the Congress in his absence), called in order to occupy the position when traveling, illness, or other reasons made it impossible for the president to attend to his functions.

³⁹⁹ *El Ferrocarril*. (San José: May 5th, 1882), 2.

⁴⁰⁰ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: July 9th, 1882), 1.

⁴⁰¹ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: July 13th, 1882), 2.

municipality expressed the sadness it felt for the “irreparable loss of such an illustrious Chief, who courageously sustained a fight against the filibusters, enemies of our independence and our nationality.”⁴⁰²

The connection Tomás Guardia worked so hard to establish between his persona and the Filibuster War was soon under attack. In 1883, Cartago’s newspaper, *La Palanca*, published a short column dedicated to the celebrations of April 27th, not even a year after Guardia died. The newspaper protested against the commemoration: “What can be said about its celebration?” asked the note. “Nothing that would not be vulgar...”⁴⁰³ The purpose of the note was to begin to destroy the image of the Alajuelan leader, much in the same way the Cartago elite did with J. R. Mora during the New Era period. This is palpable when observing that in the same column, the newspaper published another note celebrating the festivities of May 1st in terms that connected its commemoration to the city of Cartago.

This dichotomy shows the malleability of commemorations and the political burden they carry. May 1st was originally conceived by President Mora as a commemoration that glorified the Costa Rican efforts during the Filibuster War. Because of its connection with the Mora regime, the New Era group ostracized the holiday, transforming May 1st into a mere administrative day in which Congress was inaugurated. The New Era regime was careful enough to not officially abolish the holiday, which certainly would have infuriated many

⁴⁰² *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: July 16th, 1882), 1.

⁴⁰³ *La Palanca*. (Cartago, May 3rd, 1883), 2.

veterans, including New Era sympathizers, but it did not promote its celebration. During Guardia's regime, April 27th gained strength because of its association with May 1st, showing the President's use of his glories during the Filibuster War in order to justify his military action of 1870. Official and private newspapers used their May 1st edition to commemorate the Filibuster War as well as to comment on the celebrations of April 27th. The fact that Guardia was the first veteran to be in power, and the fact that he was a military man, made it impossible to not accept the president as a site of memory for the Filibuster War. Therefore, when the Cartago elite felt liberated from Guardia, they directed their energies to abolish April 27th as a civic holiday. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs suggests that resistance to a consolidated social system can only be performed inside the accepted social framework.⁴⁰⁴ The Cartago elite, who were accustomed to denigrating May 1st because of its connection to President Mora, now used the holiday to despise Guardia and the Alajuelan political elite. The article of *La Palanca* described Cartago as "the ancient cradle of the Costa Ricans that contributed with their precious flow of blood to save the Central American rights from the filibuster clutches in 1856 and 1857."⁴⁰⁵ Indeed, the forces of Cartago made up the majority of soldiers during the war, so their claims of multiple sacrifices for the Patria and the final victory was a source for their claims to the

⁴⁰⁴ Halbwachs. *On Collective Memory*, 85.

⁴⁰⁵ *La Palanca*. (Cartago, May 3rd, 1883), 2.

center of the government.⁴⁰⁶ The fact that there was no comment at all in *La Palanca* about May 1st in 1884, when April 27th was not commemorated anymore, demonstrates the importance of the symbolism behind the date. The use of May 1st in the 1883 article was not a revindication of that holiday, but a tool to discredit the value of April 27th.

Guardia's legacy continued after his death in 1882. The president was the founder of a new dynasty that lasted for another seven years. In 1882, his brother-in-law, Próspero Fernández, was elected as president. As Guardia, Fernández was a veteran of the Filibuster War, and also a member of the group that assaulted the Artillery Barracks on April 27th, 1870, helping Guardia to come to power. Guardia, enamored with Alajuela, had prompted the city to a new place in Costa Rican politics. While the Presidential Palace was located in the capital of San José, he lived and ruled mostly from Alajuela. Guardia's own house location lied across the main Fort and Barracks of Alajuela, making clear his connection to and supervision of the military forces.⁴⁰⁷

Próspero Fernández had closely followed Guardia's career and learned from it. As Guardia before him, Fernández held the position of Commander of the Alajuelan Barracks, and later he became Governor of Alajuela. Also, as Guardia, Fernández was a member of the Costa Rican military. Finally, to clearly establish the close connections between both men, Próspero Fernández was married to

⁴⁰⁶ Raúl Arias Sánchez. *Los soldados de la Campaña Nacional, (1856–1857)*. (San José: EUNED, 2007), 106.

⁴⁰⁷ Jorge Sáenz Carbonell. *Los meses de don Aniceto: Ascenso y caída de don Aniceto Esquivel Sáenz*. (San José: EUNED, 2002), 9-10.

Cristina Guardia Gutiérrez, sister of don Tomás.⁴⁰⁸ Power continued to be held by the group that established Alajuela as their personal fiefdom.

The government of Próspero Fernández, however, was short lived. The new president died after only three years in power. Another member of the liberal elite centered in Alajuela city succeeded him. Bernardo Soto Alfaro, as Guardia and Fernández, was also a member of the Costa Rican military, although too young to have participated in the Filibuster War. Before becoming president, Soto Alfaro was a congressman for Alajuela, and then, like Guardia and Fernández before him, became Governor of Alajuela during his predecessor's administration. Before being elected president in 1886, Bernardo Soto became the interim President in order to finish Fernández's term.

These three figures, Guardia, Fernández, and Soto, established a new period in Costa Rican politics that served as a counterbalance to the New Era. The arrival of Guardia to the presidency shifted the center of power from Cartago to Alajuela. During the ruling of the Alajuela dynasty or *Alajuelato*, members of the New Era elite were relegated and persecuted, especially during Guardia's regime.⁴⁰⁹ The *Alajuelato* rejected most of the policies of the New Era period and ruled the country under a new positivistic understanding of liberalism. Between 1870 and 1890, Costa Rica saw a process of consolidation of the nation-state, adorned with rhetoric full of ideas of modernization, progress, and order. The

⁴⁰⁸ Sáenz Carbonell, *Lizano...*, 22.

⁴⁰⁹ José María Montealegre was exiled. He and his immediate family moved afterward to San José, California, from where he never returned.

Alajuela dynasty created the railroad system, abolished the death penalty, introduced electricity to Costa Rica, and established a strong series of anti-Church laws. They also created a series of education reforms, including the founding of several public elementary and secondary schools, the National Library, and the National Archives.⁴¹⁰ The railroad system was such an expensive endeavor that it almost bankrupted the state. To finance the project, Guardia asked for a large loan from British companies, an idea that contradicted all efforts of the New Era period to stay away from foreign debt.

As part of the consolidation of the nation-state, a recreation of a national narrative became necessary. British historian Eric Hobsbawm explains that drastic social change creates levels of instability that can be balanced with the creation of traditions that establish a connection with a suitable past.⁴¹¹ As it is shown above, Guardia was able to revive the memory of the Filibuster War during moments of crisis, especially related to threats against his power. Use of the Filibuster War during the Alajuelato, following Halbwachs' theory of Collective Memory, helped to counter the instability that the liberal reforms could have produced for the mostly rural population of Costa Rica. The resurgence of the Filibuster War started by Guardia did continue after his death. In fact, with his passing the celebrations of April 27th waned, and May 1st recovered its place in the Costa Rican imaginary. Guardia resurrected Mora and the Filibuster War to legitimize his presidency, to wrest regional authority from Cartago, and to provide a vision

⁴¹⁰ Sáenz Carbonell. *Lizano...*, 90.

⁴¹¹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*, 1–2.

of a modern nation to mitigate the public's unease during a period of rapid change. In this new casting of Costa Rican national identity, May 1st (the date of Walker's surrender) replaced April 27th (the date of Guardia's coup d'état) as the most celebrated national holiday.

Once Próspero Fernández came to power, the Alajuela elite focused exclusively on the consolidation of the memory of the Filibuster War without Guardia. After twenty-five years of being underrated or simply forgotten, May 1, 1883 saw the resurrection of the old Mora tradition of using twenty-one blank artillery shots to celebrate the dawn of the holiday.⁴¹² During the Fernández administration an article published in a local Alajuelan newspaper mentioned the name of Juan Santamaría for the second time. This article continues to be a fundamental document in the study of the consolidation of Juan Santamaría as the Costa Rican national hero. In September, 1883, *El Tambor* published an article that followed in the footsteps of Obaldía, whose 1864 speech was the first one to mention Juan Santamaría's feat. Honduran author Alvaro Contreras, a liberal exiled from his native country, titled his article "An Anonymous Hero."⁴¹³ In it, Contreras analyzed the image of what he described as a forgotten object, obscured by the lack of interest in Central American history. This object is in reality a Costa Rican soldier named Juan Santamaría, who by giving his life saved his comrades during the battle of Rivas, on April 11, 1856. He was an anonymous

⁴¹² José María Bonilla. "Memorias." *El Comercio*. (San José: May 28th, 1887), 3.

⁴¹³ Alvaro Contreras. "Un Héroe Anónimo." *El Tambor*. Alajuela: September 9th, 1883.

hero because, says Contreras, “he is barely known even in his own country.”⁴¹⁴

His anonymity is also related to his upbringing, humble and poor, without formal education, or any attachments to a known family or institution. In his article, Contreras presented a narrative of Santamaría’s feat, with some differences from Obaldía’s account:

On the unforgettable April 11th, the Costa Rican army, valiant and jealous defender of Central America, was being decimated in Rivas by the filibusters that occupied a stronghold. This could not be demolished because the lack of adequate tools. How could we triumph in such a fearful conflict? How to defeat our tenacious enemy, located in such an advantageous place?

Only by the impulse of a great heart, only with the will of a soldier! In the middle of despair and death, a voice rose among our troops asking: “Who wants to make the ultimate sacrifice by burning the Mesón?”

“I”, responded Santamaría, swiftly and with resolve, as if the mission was just a simple matter of discipline... With serenity, he took the torch and went to comply with his duty under a rain of bullets. One of them incapacitated his arm, but then the other one served to crown his great attempt. Our comrades saw, under the reflex of the flames, a powerful transfiguration and a triumph as splendid as it was unexpected.

Contreras ended his article by announcing that by the end of the current generation, Costa Rica would see the rise of the study of Santamaría and the Filibuster War. His article ended with a paragraph that can be interpreted as a call for the building of a monument to the memory of Santamaría: “Since we cannot tell people from other climates: Strangers! Look there, the tomb that contains the ashes of a martyr, bow in front of its statue!, we should state to all Central Americans: Compatriots! Keep in your memory, with respect, the venerable name

⁴¹⁴ Contreras, “Un Héroe Anónimo”, reproduced in: Luis Dobles Segreda. *El Libro del Héroe*. (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2006), 271–277.

of Juan Santamaría.”⁴¹⁵

Contreras’s article followed the narrative of José de Obaldía, the first one to mention the name of Santamaría, in 1864. His approach was not new, but it needs some analysis in order to understand its importance. If we look on Contreras’s past, we find a Honduran journalist that was exiled from his country by a conservative government. When the author arrived in Costa Rica, he started to work in Guardia’s administration. Soon, though, he became involved in conspiracies against the General.⁴¹⁶ In 1871, he was expelled from Costa Rica for this reason. Contreras participated in two more attempts to overthrow Guardia, including the failed invasion of Federico Mora in 1878.⁴¹⁷

The date of the publication of Contreras’s article, during the administration of President Fernández is not casual. Contreras died in 1882, and *El Tambor* published *Un Héroe anónimo* the year after. Therefore, although it is hard to define the date he wrote the article, it is possible to assume that he did so during the period Guardia was president. The newspaper in which the article was published was named *El Tambor* (the drummer), which references the position Santamaría occupied in the army. The fact that *El Tambor* was a local Alajuelan newspaper supports the idea that the Alajuelan elite was trying to develop the image of Santamaría as the hero of the Filibuster War, and therefore, as a symbol of Alajuelan predominance in Costa Rican politics.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Rafael Obregón Loría. *Conflictos Militares*, 56, 65.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

Obaldía's article of 1864 has been accused by some scholars of being an instrument to curry the favor of the New Era regime.⁴¹⁸ By mentioning the Filibuster War without mentioning the figure of Mora, Obaldía denied the president's relevance as leader of the nation. But more important is that Obaldía's establishment of Santamaría as a national hero instead of Mora was directed at destroying Mora's image in the collective memory of the nation. Following Montúfar's claims, the narrative of Santamaría's feat replaced Mora's achievements and gave birth to a rivalry between the two figures. Although a conspiracy behind Obaldía's speech is not clear, it is possible to affirm instead that Contreras used the same literary trick to suppress the connection Guardia established between himself and the Filibuster War. When invoking Santamaría, Contreras reminded the reader of Obaldía's speech, not as an act of modesty, but as an attempt to establish a fictitious connection with the past. By repeating the narrative, as Hobsbawm asserts, Contreras sanctioned a precedent and created continuity, the basic requirements of an invented tradition.⁴¹⁹ In this way, by solidifying the figure of Santamaría, Contreras was able to achieve his real goal: to neutralize any claims Guardia could have made about the past and his connection to the Filibuster War.

Contreras's article served the liberals of Alajuela well and demonstrated the exceptionality of Santamaría as national hero. While Contreras wanted to

⁴¹⁸ Montúfar, 243. Díaz Arias, *11 de abril...*, 1.

⁴¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

destroy the claims of Guardia to national hero, the Alajuelan elites had to think how to keep their claim on political power and continue their project of creating a unified nation and consolidate the nation-state without antagonizing the opposition. The continuous use of the Filibuster War was useful to establish a national narrative to promote the defense of Costa Rican sovereignty, and with it, a sense of nationalism. But, to continue using Guardia as the national hero representing the Filibuster War was an affront to anti-Guardia groups. A solution was to rescue the memory of the original president of the Filibuster War, Juan Rafael Mora. The reason *Un Héroe Anónimo* was published after the death of both Contreras and Guardia was because Alajuela wanted to promote a slightly less threatening Alajuelan hero. Santamaría, known in local popular circles, had already been mentioned during the New Era period, and now by Contreras. To allow for the publication of Contreras's article along with the restoration of May 1st with full regalia was just a logical move. In this way, the Filibuster War had a relevant and officially sanctioned holiday, and it also produced a national hero: Juan Santamaría. It was just a matter of waiting for the right moment to promote Santamaría from the ranks of Alajuelan hero to national hero, and this happened just two years later, in 1885, when another war threatened Costa Rican sovereignty, in much the same way as it did in 1873, and in 1878.

The fact that the two original elegists of Santamaría were foreigners cannot be overlooked. Obaldía was Colombian and lived in Costa Rica as an exile. Contreras was Honduran, and also moved to Costa Rica as a political exile. Obaldía lived some time in Alajuela, from where he could have learned the legend

about the *Erizo* (the hedgehog), Santamaría's nickname. It is not clear if Contreras ever lived in Alajuela, but he could have just developed his article based on Obaldía's speech. The fact that both of them were foreigners and that there was no Costa Rican writer interested in developing the image of Santamaría can be explained by the existence of Santamaría's story as commonplace in Alajuela. If that is true, there was no need in Alajuela, or Costa Rica, to elevate a very familiar story to the level of legend.

In 1856, the real Juan Santamaría must have been a familiar face in the streets of Alajuela, the third city in size in Costa Rica at the time, but still with a very strong village feeling. After the war, Santamaría's story must have been considered as just one more among the many circulating in Alajuela at a communal level. In Pierre Nora's terms, up to the 1880s, Santamaría was still part of a live collective memory.⁴²⁰ According to the French historian, the process of modernization was responsible for the forgetting of traditional local stories that gave a sense of communal identity. The only way to keep a remnant of identity was to create sites of memory, mnemonic objects or places that through symbology could encompass values and promote remembrance. Following this argument, only after the generations that fought during the Filibuster War started to pass away, or when new generations started to occupy their positions in society, could the Filibuster War become a *lieu de mémoire*, a symbolic vessel or site of memory. Therefore, before the Filibuster War events stopped to be a

⁴²⁰ Pierre Nora. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7–25.

commonplace in Costa Rican culture, only a foreigner could recognize the power behind Santamaría's story as equivalent of the most extraordinary stories of heroism. Only for a foreigner could Santamaría become a site of memory, since the image of the Alajuelan soldier was never part of his collective memory. That is why Obaldía, a Colombian citizen, can compare Santamaría only with Ricaurte, a well-known Colombian hero of Independence.⁴²¹ It is precisely the lack of familiarity with the story that allows Obaldía and Contreras to understand its importance.

1885, a second phase of official nationalism.

During Guardia's presidency, the memory of the Filibuster War was recovered at the official level. Along with May 1st Guardia developed April 27th as national holidays, associating his personal image to the Filibuster War. Through these holidays, and the remembrance of the Filibuster War, Guardia was able to raise sentiments of patriotism among Costa Ricans. That included the 1873 crisis with Guatemala, but also the invasion of Federico Mora in 1878, both already mentioned above. By 1885, a new threat resulted in another step for the final consolidation of the official narrative of the Filibuster War in connection to Costa Rican national identity.

On March 5, 1885, the Guatemalan Congress, in accord with President Justo Rufino Barrios, decreed the forced union of Central America. Honduras agreed with the idea, but El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica declared war on Guatemala to defend their sovereignty. Costa Rican volunteers enlisted in the

⁴²¹ Obaldía, 24.

army and moved to Nicaragua, where they were expected to join the Nicaraguan forces in order to fight Barrios, who had already invaded El Salvador. There, close to the town of Chalchuapa, in the battle of April 2nd, Barrios, who was President of Guatemala and the head of his army, received a mortal wound. His death marked the end of his bid for Central American union.

The Costa Rican government used this event to connect the images of the Filibuster War with the new military crisis, as Guardia did in 1873 and 1878. While President Próspero Fernández was busy organizing the army that confronted Barrios, an article published in the private newspaper *El Diario de Costa Rica*, talked about an unknown hero, a figure that defined the typical Costa Rican soldier during the Filibuster War. The article was none other than Contreras's ode to Santamaría, published already in 1883. According to Canadian historian Steven Palmer, this article represents more than the already traditional use of the memory of the Filibuster War to raise patriotism in times of crisis. Palmer argues that this article symbolizes the moment in which Juan Santamaría was created as a national hero, and the Filibuster War installed as a national symbol. This dissertation instead argues that the recognition of Juan Santamaría's feat was only part of the process of consolidation of the Filibuster War as a national symbol of Costa Rican unity and strength.

Steven Palmer and Official Nationalism

The figure of Juan Santamaría, as well as the Filibuster War, had been topics of intermittent study in Costa Rican historiography. In 1993, Steven Palmer's publication on Costa Rican official history became the first one to

analyze the rise of the national hero and the Filibuster War into the Costa Rican imaginary.⁴²² Before him, most works had focused on specific events of the war, or on building *historia patria*.⁴²³ Palmer's work is currently a cornerstone in the study of the Filibuster War's memory, and his publication is basic for the work of many historians including David Díaz-Arias, Iván Molina, and Patricia Fumero.

With his article, Palmer was the first one to use the theoretical tools developed by Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm's related to imagined communities and the invention of traditions.⁴²⁴ In his influential work, Palmer assures that 1885 signals the moment in which Santamaría became the Costa Rican hero par excellence, marking the triumph of official nationalism in the construction of Costa Rican national identity. Palmer argues that the decree of Central American unification proclaimed by Justo Rufino Barrios created an immediate reaction on the Costa Rican liberal elite, promoting the invention of an official narrative that installed the Filibuster War as the main symbol of Costa Rican nationalism. According to Palmer, the publication of Alvaro Contreras'

⁴²² Steven Palmer. "Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880–1900." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 25:1, (Feb., 1993), 45–72.

⁴²³ The term *historia patria* is used in Latin America to refer to the kind of history directed to aggrandize figures and events for the sake of patriotism. This kind of history has a narrow interpretation of the events, tries to be effectivist, and tends to omit certain information for the benefit of a specific narrative. Although used mostly by history aficionados, the style of some professional historians also falls into this category. There is only one work that predates Palmer's article. That is Annie Lemistre Pujol's *Dos Bronces Conmemorativos y una Gesta Heroica*, published in 1988. In it, Lemistre Pujol analyzes the development of the major monuments to the Filibuster War: the statue of Juan Santamaría, unveiled in 1891, and the Monumento Nacional, unveiled in 1895. Her work analyzes the construction of the statues, as well as the celebrations surrounding their unveiling, but do not analyze the context of official nationalism.

⁴²⁴ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*.

article *Un Héroe Anónimo* on the *Diario de Costa Rica* on March 5th and 6th, and then on the official newspaper *La Gaceta* on March 6th, responded directly to Barrios' threat on Costa Rican sovereignty. Also, Palmer asserts that this was the specific moment in which the Filibuster War became recognized as a staple for national identity, with Juan Santamaría as the most prominent figure. Contreras's article was therefore responsible for an immediate Santamaríamania.

While it is true that the figure of Santamaría gained broader recognition in 1885, in reality the *Erizo* had to wait another thirty years for the declaration of April 11th as a national holiday. Contrary to what Palmer assures, Juan Santamaría was only one of many heroes of the Filibuster War mentioned by the newspapers as examples to follow. Other names constantly mentioned during the last quarter of the nineteenth century included Juan Alfaro Ruiz, Mercedes Guillén, both officers of the Costa Rican army during the (second) battle of Rivas, and of course, President J. R. Mora. Also, the use of images and references to the Filibuster War during the 1885 crisis was not unique. As shown before, the Filibuster War was already used as a nationalist symbol in 1873 and in 1878. Several years before 1885, Guardia reinstated May 1st as a national holiday commemorating the Filibuster War. Just by 1883 May 1st celebrations included military parades, a twenty-one gun salute, and the ornamentation of public buildings with the national flag.

To be fair, there were some other references to the Filibuster War during the war with Guatemala. But the newspaper notes of 1885 clearly resemble the ones published during the crises of 1873 and 1878, demonstrating that the

nationalist image of the Filibuster War was already part of the Costa Rican collective memory, and not just a fad recently constructed by the government based on a single article about Santamaría. On March 10th, the official newspaper *La Gaceta* published the answer of several institutions to Soto's exposition published the day before. The Municipality of Alajuela made a slight, almost veiled mention to the Filibuster War. That institution said that "the pretended union is an act that threatens the national sovereignty, and that if it is needed, as it happened not long ago, the Republic of Costa Rica would show to the world that it knows how, and it will, defend its rights."⁴²⁵ That day's editorial article also makes a vague mention to a former "unfortunate day" in which the elders had to confront a similar situation.⁴²⁶ The municipality of Cartago was the only one that was a little more emphatic, asserting that "Costa Rican forces in the years 1856 and 1857 scattered their blood on the fields of Santa Rosa, Rivas and other places in defense of the sovereignty of their own rights and the patria..., (and) will know this time how to repel the invader..."⁴²⁷

In sum, Palmer's articles produced an extraordinary interest in the history of the commemorations of the Filibuster War. The analysis above revises some of his most important concepts, establishing the dynamic continuity of the memory of the Filibuster War, and rejecting the idea that 1885 was the moment in which the Filibuster War became the center of Costa Rican national identity. It also

⁴²⁵ *La Gaceta - Diario Oficial*. (San José: March 10th, 1885), 1.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ *La Gaceta - Diario Oficial*. (San José: March 11th, 1885), 1.

rejects Palmer's idea of Santamaría's invention and its sudden transformation into the Costa Rican national hero. In any case, the crisis of 1885 forms part of the puzzle of a growing Costa Rican official narrative based on the Filibuster War.

May 1st after Guardia

As mentioned above, the death of President Guardia signaled a new period of resurgence of the commemorations of May 1st. In 1883, the old tradition inaugurated by President J. R. Mora of celebrating the dawn of the national holiday with twenty-one blank artillery shots was resurrected. The tradition continued in 1885, as the official newspaper *La Gaceta* described: "Today the artillery shots, the sounds of martial music, and especially, the zealous feelings of patriotism hailed the memorable day in which the unjust aggressor, seen his forts destroyed and his vanquished hordes, shamelessly surrendered in the city of Rivas; happy event for the people that struggled for its political freedom, a moment that in front of the world could not do less than appear as a motif for singular glory for the small but strong Costa Rican nation."⁴²⁸ The narrative in this article follows the already traditional idea of Costa Rica as a nation able to take a place in the history of the world. Although the material progress of the country was not mentioned, it is obvious that the social and technological advances produced during the last decades of the nineteenth century (railroads, telegraph, street lights, national archives, national museum, etc.) were material tokens Costa Ricans perceived as symbols of development and modernization. In

⁴²⁸ *La Gaceta - Diario Oficial*. (San José: May 1st, 1885), 1.

some way the article considers the battle of Rivas of 1857 as the birth of the modern nation, the moment in which Costa Rica started to consider itself a member of the orchestra of civilized and prosperous nations.

After 1885, the celebrations of May 1st did not change much, although newspapers showed a greater interest on the commemorations than they did before Guardia's passing. This may be related to the explosion of new newspapers in Costa Rica, starting in 1885. The index of the Costa Rican national library clearly shows that independent newspapers were a rarity during most of the nineteenth century.⁴²⁹ Other than the official *La Gaceta*, the national library shows few independent newspapers existing between 1859 and 1885. During this period, independent newspapers tended to be close to the official position, and usually printed in the same press as the official newspaper. This is the case of *Nueva Era*, the Cartago newspaper printed during the *New Era* decade.⁴³⁰ From the years between 1862 and 1869, the national library does not hold any other newspaper than the official one.⁴³¹ Between 1870 and 1880, only *El Costarricense* and *El Ferrocarril* competed with *La Gaceta*, both newspapers

⁴²⁹ Biblioteca Nacional de Costa Rica. *Indice cronológico de los periódicos de Costa Rica publicados entre 1833-2006 existentes en las colecciones de la biblioteca nacional*. Retrieved on 11/7/2011:
<http://www.sinabi.go.cr/Biblioteca%20Digital/Indice%20cronologico%20de%20periodicos.pdf>

⁴³⁰ The use of *New Era* to define the governments between 1859 and 1870 is based precisely on the name of this newspaper.

⁴³¹ This is based on the editions available at the national library. This does not discount at all the existence of other newspapers during these times. The lack of volumes at the national library, though, tells us that the newspapers were published only in small quantities and in a local context. An example is *El Tambor*, published in Alajuela during the 1880s. The national library does not hold any copy, and we know of its existence only due to the citation of the original publication of Contreras's article.

having close connection to Guardia's administration. By 1887, the catalog shows for the first time more than four newspapers listed on the catalog of the national library.⁴³² After that year, newspaper printing increased. Education reform and expansion of the press surely helped to promote the consolidation of the nation-state, especially when promoting the symbols that would help to shape Costa Rican national identity.

The celebration of May 1st gathered a renewed strength after 1883, but its importance was contested. Since May 1st was also the day in which Congress was inaugurated every year, the government made sure this fact did not pass unnoticed. Also, other dates were considered to be relevant as symbols of the Filibuster War. In 1886, the private newspaper *La Chirimía* continued the process of glorification of the Filibuster War. For the anniversary of the Battle of Santa Rosa, an article described March 20, 1856, as the beginning of the "epopee of Costa Rican history."⁴³³ Interestingly enough, although the article tried to recover the memory of the Battle of Santa Rosa, it also asked for an "intelligent patriot" to write its history, since the editor did not consider himself competent for such endeavor, claiming a broad ignorance about an event his newspaper was promoting. On April 11th, the anniversary of the battle of Rivas, another article was published referring to the Filibuster War. The name of Juan Santamaría was attached to this date, but so were the names of Juan Rafael Mora, Juan Alfaro

⁴³² One reason could be that the national archive was inaugurated in 1881, and the national library in 1888, incentivizing the reading and collection of news and documents.

⁴³³ *La Chirimía*. (San José: March 20th, 1886), 1.

Ruiz, and José María Cañas.⁴³⁴ Finally, on May 1st, another article closed the trilogy. In it, the editors mentioned the names of four other heroes of the war, “Coronel Cauty, Sargento Mayor Máximo Blanco, Capitán Jesús Alvarado y soldado Nicolás Aguilar.” The *Chirimía* confirmed that in later editions it would publish articles on these heroes, since they “should be considered as the saviors of Central America.”⁴³⁵ The article ended by stating that May 1st represented a “synthesis of all heroisms.”⁴³⁶ Opposed to what Plamer implies, Santamaría was not alone in his race to hero-hood.

In 1886 and 1887, the use of artillery to celebrate the holiday was still in use.⁴³⁷ The official newspaper informed that military bands paraded throughout San José playing music according to the sentiments of May 1st. At the same time, at the main railroad station cannon shots were fired.⁴³⁸ In 1889, a newspaper used the celebration to refresh the commitment of the Costa Rican soldiers to the fatherland, hoping that the memory of the heroes of 1856 and 1857 served as an example for them if defense of the national territory was necessary.⁴³⁹ As seen before, the use of the Filibuster War during this period was connected always to the defense of national sovereignty.

⁴³⁴ *La Chirimía*. (San José: April 10th, 1886), 1.

⁴³⁵ *La Chirimía*. (San José: May 1st, 1886), 1.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: May 2nd, 1886), 5. *El Comercio*. (San José: May 3rd, 1887), 3.

⁴³⁸ *La Gaceta: Diario Oficial*. (San José: May 2nd, 1886), 5.

⁴³⁹ *La República*. (San José: May 1st, 1889), 2.

The importance of May 1st overwhelmed that of Independence Day, celebrated on September 15th. Although there were some attempts to establish a connection between the two holidays, it was obvious that for Costa Ricans it was easier to relate to the Filibuster War than to Independence Day. After all, independence came almost by default, and it did not represent necessarily a special effort by Costa Ricans. May 1st, instead, was the moment in which Costa Rica had to stand by itself in order to defend its freedom and its right to exist. Moreover, the participation of Costa Rica was crucial for Walker's defeat. It was easy, therefore, to relate to the Filibuster War as the real war of independence, one in which Costa Rica stood for Central America, and not vice versa. *La Prensa Libre* was able to encapsulate that sentiment. In an article titled *September 15th* and dedicated to Independence Day, this newspaper expressed the importance that date had for Central America. Even so, the article claimed that "a day would come when its true anniversary will be May 1st, a day in which the region accomplished its second and definitive autonomy."⁴⁴⁰ The following year, *La Prensa Libre* stated on its May 1st edition that "the surrendering of Walker is the real seal of independence."⁴⁴¹ In 1895, the year of the unveiling of the National Monument, the same newspaper insisted that "for Costa Ricans it is possibly more valuable May 1st, 1857, than September 15th, 1821."⁴⁴² *La Prensa Libre* was not alone in

⁴⁴⁰ *La Prensa Libre*. (San José: September 15th, 1889), 2.

⁴⁴¹ *La Prensa Libre*. (San José, May 1st, 1890), 2.

⁴⁴² *La Prensa Libre*. (San José, May 1st, 1895), 2.

this sentiment.⁴⁴³ During the end of the nineteenth century, May 1st saw its climax as a Costa Rican national holiday, coming to represent the Filibuster War, and therefore, the most important date of Costa Rican history, the day in which the nation became one, recognizing its individual nationality, and taking a proud place among modern nations.

In 1887, President Bernardo Soto, the last of the Alajuelan liberals to hold power, initiated the process for the building of a statue to Juan Santamaría.⁴⁴⁴ On June 8th of that year, he decreed a subscription to collect funds to pay for the costs of raising the statue.⁴⁴⁵ The death of Guardia in 1882, and then of Fernández in 1885, made Soto responsible for initiating a campaign to solidify the Filibuster War in the collective memory of Costa Ricans. In 1885, he decreed that two new steamers would bear the names, respectively, of Mora and Santamaría.⁴⁴⁶ In 1886, he assigned Lorenzo Montúfar to write the first Costa Rican history of the Filibuster War.⁴⁴⁷ In 1887 he assigned the sum of 5000 pesos destined to the building of Juan Santamaría's statue.⁴⁴⁸ That same year, he decreed the creation of

⁴⁴³ *El Independiente Demócrata*. (Heredia: May 2nd, 1897), 2.

⁴⁴⁴ Neither Guardia, nor Fernández were born in Alajuela, but are considered to form a liberal clan centered in Alajuela. Fernández was the brother-in-law of Guardia, while Bernardo Soto was the son-in-law of Fernández.

⁴⁴⁵ Quoted in: Lemistre Pujol, 88.

⁴⁴⁶ Quoted in: Lemistre Pujol, 87.

⁴⁴⁷ Montúfar, cover.

⁴⁴⁸ Quoted in: Lemistre Pujol, 91.

a new park in downtown Alajuela as the location of the statue.⁴⁴⁹ In 1888, he also decreed the building of the National Monument in San José.⁴⁵⁰ His campaign focused on resolving two issues related to official nationalism. First, the death of Guardia and Fernández represented the passing of the veteran generation. Their physical absence left a vacuum that needed a symbolic filling, which prompted Soto to promote, as never before, the creation of an official discourse in relation to the war. Second, the publication of Carnevalini's translation to Spanish of Walker's book created the need for a response from the Costa Rican perspective, and with it, the creation of a narrative that could counter the dissemination of the filibuster version.

Between 1891 and 1895, the celebrations of May 1st were continuously celebrated with a hail to the national flag and twenty-one cannon shots.⁴⁵¹ The commemorations included the praising of several heroes of the Filibuster War, since May 1st began to represent the war itself, without a specific hero or individual image. The names of Mora, Cañas, Guardia, and Santamaría resounded constantly, but also those of some heroes not currently well known or studied by most Costa Ricans, including Quirós, Escalante, Giralt, Alfaro Ruiz, Blanco, Fernández, and Gutiérrez.⁴⁵²

The end of the nineteenth century confirmed the importance of the

⁴⁴⁹ Quoted in: Lemistre Pujol, 92.

⁴⁵⁰ Quoted in: Lemistre Pujol, 93.

⁴⁵¹ *La Unión Católica*. April 30th, 1891. *La República*. May 1st, 1891. *La Hoja del Pueblo*. May 2nd, 1893. *El Diarito*. May 3rd, 1895.

⁴⁵² *La Prensa Libre*. May 1st, 1894. *La Unión Católica*. "11 de abril de 1856 en Rivas." Published in three parts: April 12th, 1893; April 19th, 1893; May 3rd, 1893.

Filibuster War in the discourse of official nationalism. May 1st became the most important day in the civic calendar. As a consequence of the majestic celebrations of 1891 and 1895, the euphoria about the Filibuster War spread for years. On May 1, 1896, newspapers celebrated with strong articles the “surrender of Walker.”⁴⁵³ For the first time, private businesses took the day off in order to commemorate the holiday.⁴⁵⁴ The view of Costa Rica as the main actor during the Filibuster War continued to be propagated, reinforcing the idea that the war was an international affair, and a reason for Costa Ricans to be proud when “the look of European powers fixated in Costa Rica admiring its virility.”⁴⁵⁵ A strong sense of patriotism was imbued on each yearly commemoration, reaching all corners of Costa Rican society. In 1897, artillery shots awakened San José, *dianas* run throughout the city while the Costa Rican flag was raised on all public buildings, even on foreign embassies.⁴⁵⁶

The consolidation of the Filibuster War in the Costa Rican collective memory was confronted with change and adaptation, showing a dynamic process that transformed the commemorations according to local, national, and international events. Juan Rafael Mora started a process of commemoration of the war, instituting a holiday on May 1st to celebrate Walker’s surrender to the allied Central American army. He also decreed the building of a statue to commemorate

⁴⁵³ *La Prensa Libre*. (San José: May 1st, 1896), 2.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ *El Heraldo de Costa Rica*. (San José: May 1st, 1896), 2.

⁴⁵⁶ *El Heraldo de Costa Rica*. (San José: May 1st, 1897), 2. *El Pabellón Liberal*. (San José: May 1st, 1897), 2.

the war. After his fall in 1859, the governments of the New Era period silenced any celebration of the war, due to its connection to president Mora. A strong localism centered in a more conservative Cartago dominated for a decade until a veteran of the war, Tomás Guardia, overthrew the clan and imposed his own faction. Starting in 1870, a liberal clique centered in Alajuela dominated the government, starting a process of reforms that expanded and consolidated the state. During Mora's government, part of the structure of the nation-state was already devised, allowing for Guardia's reforms to be easier to enact. During Guardia's twelve years in power, May 1st was reestablished as a national holiday, and references to the Filibuster War were used to promote patriotic sentiments, especially during the crises of 1873, 1878, and 1885 when Costa Rica's sovereignty was threatened.

Official nationalism in relation to the Filibuster War was established during Guardia's regime. His tendency to associate himself with the Filibuster War, as a hero in the battle of San Jorge, enforced the association between the state and May 1st, and also provided a figurehead that represented the victory against Walker and the defense of the nation: Guardia himself. After Guardia's death, his successor, Próspero Fernández, renewed the tradition of celebrating May 1st with twenty-one cannon shots, as urged by Mora's decree of 1857. It was the third president of the Alajuelan clan, Bernardo Soto, the one that promoted a new phase in the celebrations of the Filibuster War. The passing away of Guardia and Fernández signaled the transferring of power from the Filibuster War generation to a new one. A new image that represented the war was necessary.

The phenomenon of the memory of Juan Santamaría follows Pierre Nora's understanding of the creation of a *lieux de mémoire*, where collective memory is replaced by a symbol that distances itself from the real event to give it a new signification. Santamaría is an Alajuelan hero, showing the dominance of that city in Costa Rican politics, but he was not a member or partisan of any of the political clans, making him easy to digest as a symbol of national consolidation over local politics. The rise of Santamaría as national hero was a slow process that had several competitors, and not an automatic frenzy as Palmer believes.

Soto's successor, José Rodríguez Zeledón, elected in 1890, represented a turnaround from the Alajuela dominance. He was a member of the opposition and of the Cartago elite. Moreover, he participated in a revolt against Guardia in 1876.⁴⁵⁷ It seemed that the rivalry Cartago-Alajuela was to continue, but the process of maturation of the nation-state over localism had reached in 1889 a point in which the liberal project was able to form a consensus. This explains the continuation of the commemorations of May 1st, and of Soto's projects by Rodríguez Zeledón, allowing for the construction of Santamaría's statue in 1891. This also counts for the unveiling of the National Monument in 1895, this one under the presidency of Rafael Yglesias, also a member of the Cartago elite, and son-in-law of Rodríguez Zeledón. At the end of the nineteenth century the Filibuster War was a cornerstone of Costa Rican national identity and official nationalism. The next chapter will take us to the twentieth century, when May 1st found a rival holiday in the celebrations of April 11th, which became an official

⁴⁵⁷ Sáenz Carbonell, *Aniceto...*, 143.

commemoration in 1915. National and international affairs continued to affect the evolution of each holiday, including the crisis of liberalism, the entrance of the working classes into politics, and the rise of anti-imperialism in Costa Rica.

Chapter 5

THE RETURN OF THE FILIBUSTER MYTH AND CULTURAL ANTI-IMPERIALISM: CONSOLIDATION OF THE MEMORY OF THE FILIBUSTER WAR IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY COSTA RICA

While President Guardia (1870-1882) initiated the efforts to restore the memory of the Filibuster War, he did so in part to glorify his personal image. It was the last member of the *Alajuelato*, President Bernardo Soto (1885-1889), who consolidated the process of creation of a Costa Rican national narrative. In 1886, he decreed the writing of a history of the Filibuster War from the Costa Rican viewpoint.⁴⁵⁸ The result was Lorenzo Montúfar's *Walker en Centroamérica*, a large volume that included the history of the war from the clash between Conservatives and Liberals in Nicaragua to Walker's execution five years later on an abandoned Honduran beach. Soto's involvement in the development of a Costa Rican national identity based on the Filibuster War produced, along with Montúfar's book, the naming of two new ships as *Juan Santamaría* and *Mora*. In addition, he declared the erection of two statues, one for Juan Santamaría in Alajuela, and the National Monument in San José.

Soto's strong interest on the consecration of the Filibuster War in Costa Rican collective memory is connected to the publication in 1883 of Fabio Carnevalini's translation of William Walker's book, *The War in Nicaragua*. According to Soto, this book presented a biased version of the events that

⁴⁵⁸ Lorenzo Montúfar. *Walker en Centro América*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000), front matter. Acuerdo XLI, April 9th, 1886.

completely ignored Central American resilience.⁴⁵⁹ Soto's decision to support the publication of a Costa Rican version of the Filibuster War was an attempt to confront two issues that had haunted Costa Rican politics since 1860: the myth of the Return of the Filibuster, and the Costa Rican stand on cultural anti-imperialism. These concepts have never been explored before, and I would like to draw attention to them in this chapter.

The myth of the Return of the Filibuster

The myth of the Return of the Filibuster refers to the power-seeking nature of Walker's invasion and its connection to U.S. expansionism during the nineteenth century. The several attempts by Walker to take over Central America between 1855 and 1860 created the perceived need for constant vigilance against further invasions. Costa Ricans became very sensitive to any possibility of external incursions. This myth has proven to be of great importance in the Costa Rican national discourse since at least 1873. That year, the possibility of a Guatemalan invasion became almost a certainty. Since the times of president Guardia, references to the Filibuster War coincided with a heightening of threats to national sovereignty. The sense that filibuster-like foreign forces would continue returning until they finally achieved their goal became a staple of the national myth related to the Filibuster War. The fear of a Return of the Filibuster is ingrained in Costa Rican consciousness, and it defines its national identity.

During his administration President Soto established a strong concern with cultural anti-imperialism based on the memory of the Filibuster War. Scholars

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

define Cultural Imperialism as the threat that U.S. expansionism represents to Latin American cultural sovereignty by means of economic interactions that created and reinforced Latin American dependency on the United States.⁴⁶⁰ The concept of Cultural anti-imperialism used here opposes cultural imperialism by focusing on the perception of the receiver of an imperialist action, and not on the goal of the imperial actor. In the case of the Filibuster War, the translation of Walker's book was not part of any hegemonic agenda on the side of U.S. individuals or government. For the Costa Rican president Bernardo Soto, however, the translation to Spanish of *La Guerra en Nicaragua* represented a threat to Costa Rican cultural sovereignty. In some ways it was as if the war was repeating itself; this time using words as the weapon of preference. Since there was no published Costa Rican version of the events, the book threatened to cement the memory of the war from the exclusive point of view and interpretation of William Walker. To avoid this external influence on Costa Rican collective memory, Soto treated Carnevalini's translation in the same way Guardia treated military threats to sovereignty. The book represented a return of the filibuster, and Soto decided to confront it with the same weapon: another book. In this way, Soto initiated a tactic to combat external ideas about the Filibuster War by devising a weapon of cultural anti-imperialism, actively imposing a nationalist view of the events to answer against an external threat to Costa Rican national identity.

⁴⁶⁰ Catherine C. LeGrand. "Living in Macondo: Economy and Culture in a United Fruit Company Banana Enclave in Colombia." In: Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 352.

Throughout the twentieth century, Costa Rica found itself confronted with several waves of U.S. expansionism, and a battle largely fought in cultural terms awakened an anti-imperialist reaction. Soto's clarion call for cultural resistance to assaults on national identity served Costa Ricans well during the twentieth century when confronted with Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. acquisition of the Panama Canal, numerous interventions in Central American domestic affairs, and Cold War proxy wars. Costa Rica successfully drove U.S. military plans from its shores without lifting a gun. Indeed, I argue that especially after 1948 cultural anti-imperialism helped raise the nation above military conflict, since Costa Ricans had prided themselves in abolishing the army and using peaceful methods of sorting out political differences among citizens and between nations. Cultural cohesion met imperialist threats by substituting fear and anger with collective confidence and solidarity. Often forgotten in assessments of national defense, I argue that cultural anti-imperialism is a fundamental element in drawing and defending national boundaries. The original defeat of Walker has created a sense of collective confidence among Costa Ricans, allowing them to stand their ground against threats to national sovereignty and U.S. imperialist manipulation and influence.

To understand the importance of the myth of the Return of the Filibuster and its influence on cultural anti-imperialism reaction in Costa Rica, this chapter will analyze commemorations of the Filibuster War during the first half of the twentieth century. During this period, May 1st, the holiday that traditionally celebrated the Filibuster War, suffered several attacks. The rise of the

international labor movement promoted by anarchists and socialist groups represented a threat to the governing liberal elites. The declaration of May 1st as International Labor Day created a fixed date in which labor organizations demonstrated their force while demanding social reform. In Costa Rica, the confluence of May 1st as both the day of Walker's surrender and Labor Day promoted the substitution of May 1st by April 11th as the national holiday commemorating the Filibuster War. In terms of cultural anti-imperialism, calls to defend national sovereignty continued to use images related to the memory of the Filibuster War. This is present in the reaction to U.S. expansionism during the twentieth century, the war against Panamá in 1921, and the opening of the Cold War.

May 1st, the Filibuster War, Labor Day, and Arbor Day

During the twentieth century, May 1st suffered a different fate than it had during the nineteenth century. While Santamaría's image and the celebrations of April 11th were on the rise, May 1st started to decline. The fall of May 1st as the day commemorating the Filibuster War did respond to ideological reasons, both at the national and at the international level. The rise of May 1st as International Labor Day around the world made the celebration of the Costa Rican May 1st problematic. The commemoration of the Filibuster War had clear anti-imperialist and nationalistic meanings, and Labor Day, as a socialist celebration, promoted an anti-capitalist, anti-oligarchic, and anti-imperialist message. While both celebrations agreed on their anti-imperialist characteristics, the liberal oligarchies that controlled power thought it necessary to separate the meaning of Labor Day

and the Filibuster War to protect the nationalistic meanings of the second and separate from them the anti-status quo rhetoric.

The ascendance of U.S. imperialism and intervention in Latin America reminded Costa Ricans of the dangers they suffered from the same source in 1856 and 1857. The slicing of Panama from Colombia (1903), and the invasions of Cuba (1898, 1906–1909, 1912, 1917-1921, and 1934), Nicaragua (1898, 1899, 1907, 1912–1933) and Honduras (1903, 1907) made Roosevelt’s *Big Stick* a common referent of U.S. intentions for the region. The usual expressions of joy for the commemoration of May 1st became gloomier with the news of renewed U.S. expansionism. On May 1st, 1907, an editorial titled *I de Mayo* (May 1st), the newspaper *La Prensa Libre*, a traditional liberal newspaper, expressed its concern about U.S. expansionism.⁴⁶¹ In it, the war of 1856 and 1857 was defined as a struggle to keep the country independent from foreign powers, “because it is well known that Walker, a Yankee by nationality and temperament, with North American help... pretended to dominate this small isthmus and reinforce with it the Yankee Slavist Party.”⁴⁶² Showing concern for the return of a new kind of filibuster threat to Costa Rica, the writer warned: “being Yankee filibusterism defeated fifty years ago, it still has not abandoned the main idea that guided it from the beginning. Now it takes the name of expansionism and it works, works without truce to reach the goal of its purposes. The danger grows larger against

⁴⁶¹ *La Prensa Libre*. San José, May 2nd, 1907.

⁴⁶² In Latin America, Yankee has become synonymous with the United States.

these five little pieces of a nation...⁴⁶³ Coming from a pro-liberal newspaper, the message contained a strong nationalistic sentiment, typical of any reference to the Filibuster War. At the same time, it served as an example of how U.S. expansionism was perceived in Costa Rica during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The rise of International Labor Day, and its influence on Costa Rican politics, was responsible for a growing disconnection between May 1st and the Filibuster War. In Chicago, on May 1st of 1886, a movement supporting the establishment of an eight-hour work day ended with a confrontation between workers and the police. Some of the protest leaders were accused of throwing a bomb and were subsequently tried and executed. The event, known as the Haymarket Affair, inspired the commemoration of this day as International Workers' Day by the International Working Congress in Paris, in 1889.⁴⁶⁴ This influenced the nascent Costa Rican workers' movement, which by the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century was also on the rise. By 1905 the first Workers' Federation was created, followed by the founding of the Workers' National Confederation in 1913.⁴⁶⁵

Workers' demands for social justice and social reform included an internationalist approach to condemn imperialism. Socialists believed that imperialism was responsible for war. The argument was that war affected

⁴⁶³ *La Prensa Libre*. San José, May 2nd, 1907.

⁴⁶⁴ Vladimir de la Cruz. *Los mártires de Chicago y el 1 de mayo de 1913*. (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1985), 78.

⁴⁶⁵ De la Cruz, 49–50.

primarily the working classes while supporting the oligarchy's goals. Therefore, socialists considered anti-imperialism as a natural goal for workers' organizations. As an example, in 1910, several protests in Costa Rica asking for higher salaries and the establishment of an eight-hour work day also included demonstrations against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.⁴⁶⁶ In 1912, one of the protests against U.S. military invasion and occupation of Nicaragua was repressed by the government.⁴⁶⁷ As a result, the next year the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores established May 1st as a day when workers would unite in an annual parade to ask for their rights, protest against the oligarchy, and demand the end of imperial advances in the region.⁴⁶⁸

Starting in 1913, May 1st became a dual-purpose holiday, celebrating on one hand the past glories of the Filibuster War, and on the other hand, serving as a date to remember the issues confronted by the working class. Both commemorations shared in condemning U.S. imperialism and expansionism. The problem was that the original meaning behind the commemoration of May 1st was attached to national sovereignty, while Labor Day celebrations were imbued by an internationalist cause for social justice. This created a problem for the traditional liberal Costa Rican state, which had been legitimized by using nationalistic and patriotic symbols derived from the memory of the Filibuster War. Now it was confronted by the contradiction of repressing Costa Rican workers protesting

⁴⁶⁶ De la Cruz, 67.

⁴⁶⁷ De la Cruz, 73.

⁴⁶⁸ De la Cruz, 74.

against abusive labor conditions, mostly by foreign corporations such as the United Fruit Company, while the same day celebrating the defense of national sovereignty.

That year, 1913, newspapers acknowledged the coexistence of both holidays.⁴⁶⁹ *La Información*, for example, published an editorial note titled *¡Gloria a los héroes! ¡Salud al Trabajo!...* (Glory to the heroes! Hail Work!...), in which it stated that May 1, 1913, would be recorded in history because it was a day to remember “the glory of the heroes that defeated the buccaneer Walker,” while celebrating for the first time the union of workers against traditional politics.⁴⁷⁰ This connection between labor and the Filibuster War was also used by organized workers. In 1913, *Hoja Obrera*, a labor unions’ newspaper, published a poem written by one of its readers, a worker named Eugenio Peralta. One of its verses read:

It is just and fair to send our protest
against the northern vulture, black plague of the world...
William Walker is returning to the world with his stench
of vandals and brutes that yesterday...
just yesterday, we defeated!⁴⁷¹

The anarchist discourse of Labor Day, and the appropriation of May 1st by labor organizations, represented a threat to the traditional message commemorating the Filibuster War alone. As a result, the connection between

⁴⁶⁹ *La Aurora Social*. May 8th, 1913, p. 2. *La Información*. May 1st, 1913, p.2.

⁴⁷⁰ *La Información*. May 1st, 1913, p. 2.

⁴⁷¹ *Hoja Obrera*. August 14th, 1913, p. 3. Quoted in Mario Oliva Medina. *Artesanos y Obreros Costarricenses, 1880–1914*. San José: EUNED, 2006.

Labor Day and the Filibuster War started to decline almost immediately, and the state withdrew its support for the celebration of May 1st. In 1917, *La Información* commented on the connection between both holidays without appealing to the traditional defense-of-sovereignty approach, focusing instead on a message that embraced the nation in a positivistic context of progress and order without class struggle. In its editorial article, titled “For the Nation and the Workers,” the newspaper described May 1st as “the day when we feel the joy of freedom, bravely conquered by our grandparents; it is the day when all workers meet, rest, and contemplate the future, forgetting for a moment the pains of the past, feeling hope rising in their hearts.”⁴⁷²

A strategy was devised by the liberal oligarchy to reestablish a holiday that protected the values of defending the national boundaries and sovereignty without threatening the liberal government’s status quo. First, there was an effort to dilute the importance Labor Day had been gaining. Second, the state developed a new, separate holiday dedicated exclusively to the Filibuster War. In this way, the nationalistic meanings of the war that consolidated Costa Rican and Central American sovereignty could be separated from any other commemoration, avoiding the appropriation of its patriotic message and neutralizing its use against the state or against international corporations allied with the oligarchy. The result was the state support for an innocuous Arbor Day on May 1st, and the establishment in 1915 of April 11th as the new official holiday to commemorate the Filibuster War.

⁴⁷² *La Información*. May 1st, 1917.

Arbor Day was a short-lived, invented tradition to be celebrated on May 1st and directed to divert the socialist message of Labor Day. During the first years of the workers' movement, the unions existed under the strong influence of the dominant classes, which favored a reformist and reconciliatory attitude.⁴⁷³ One of the most important unions, the Sociedad Federal de Trabajadores de Costa Rica (Costa Rican Workers' Federal Society) or SFTCR, was successfully infiltrated by the government, demonstrating a close connection to it. In 1920, for example, the main speaker for the SFTCR celebrations of Labor Day was none other than the Costa Rican President, Julio Acosta.⁴⁷⁴

It was precisely the SFTCR that showed the strongest support for the celebration of Arbor Day. Due to its proximity to the beginning of the rainy season, unions celebrated Arbor Day with a spring-like ceremony of the planting of trees. To explain the connection between Labor Day and Arbor Day, the president of the SFTCR expressed in his 1913 speech: "we decided to break with the old myths and not celebrate Labor Day with the usual meetings, but instead, to have a festivity useful for everybody. That is how the idea of Arbor Day was born."⁴⁷⁵

For the celebrations of May 1, 1915, the SFTCR established a clear message to support their joined Fiesta del Trabajo and Fiesta del Arbol celebrations. In a speech delivered by Luis Cruz Meza, May 1st became a

⁴⁷³ Mario Oliva. *I de Mayo en C. R., 1913–1986*. (San José: COMARFIL, S. A., 1987), 10.

⁴⁷⁴ *La Tribuna*. San José, May 4th, 1920.

⁴⁷⁵ Oliva, 9.

reincarnation of the values of Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture.⁴⁷⁶ For the STFCR, May 1st was not an invocation of anti-imperialism, or a day to remember the Filibuster War. Instead, it was a moment of “confraternity and love...a festivity for those that sweat...that produce...not for parasites, a festivity for those that live for the Patria, not of those that live off the Patria.”⁴⁷⁷ Labor and nature condensed the values expressed in this speech. Referencing ancient Greece, the speaker was able to recall times when labor and nature had an intrinsic connection. He argued that the Costa Rican state should do well in imitating ancient Greece, promoting the love for land and work, “because love for nature translates into crops.”⁴⁷⁸ The speaker continued with this romantic view of an agricultural society by explaining that when men are taught to love the land they would be able to “live in a firm, growing community.”⁴⁷⁹ The support of the state for this diluted version of Labor Day was affirmed by Congressman Leonidas Briceño, who answered Cruz Meza’s speech by arguing that “this festivity the STFCR has created is the festivity of the future for our soil,” “Blessed be God for so much prodigy he has created!”⁴⁸⁰

The partial success of Arbor Day is explained by the fact that in Costa Rica, workers’ unions and Labor Day were created under the shadow of declining

⁴⁷⁶ *La Información*. May 5th, 1915, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

agricultural life. Since the 1870s, Costa Rica suffered drastic changes in its economy and demographics, which soon affected the traditional social connections with agriculture and small land-holding. That decade saw the inauguration of the railroad, and with it, large Italian, Spanish, West Indian, and Chinese immigration. The railroad was also responsible for the creation of banana enclaves and the funding of the United Fruit Company. The concentration of land by large coffee growers and the fall of coffee prices in international markets promoted internal immigration from rural areas to the cities, with the obvious threat to traditional culture and the psychological disconnection of the new urban inhabitants.⁴⁸¹ The new immigrants, national and international, found that worker's unions served as a cohesive community in which all members could participate. Establishing Arbor Day along with the celebrations of Labor Day can only be understood as a nostalgic call for past times in which labor had a strong connection with community and, especially, nature.⁴⁸²

Another factor that helped to divest May 1st of its symbology in relation to the Filibuster War was the promotion of a new holiday to commemorate it. In 1915, the government finally established April 11th as a new official holiday to celebrate the battle of Rivas and the figure of Juan Santamaría. At the same time, the government stopped celebrating May 1st. As a consequence, 1916 was the last year that May 1st was commemorated with the traditional 21 gun salute in honor

⁴⁸¹ De la Cruz, 48.

⁴⁸² An example of social transformation between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century is analyzed in: Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

of the victory over the filibusters.⁴⁸³ The confusing messages surrounding May 1st, and the establishment of April 11th as a new holiday commemorating the Filibuster War produced a disengagement with the original holiday created by President Mora in 1857. The move was so successful that in 1921, a newspaper commented that some people thought about “reviving the ancient custom of celebrating the civic festivities in the month of May, but the idea has not found enough resonance.”⁴⁸⁴

The government’s abandonment of May 1st as the holiday that celebrated the Filibuster War promoted a drastic disinterest in the commemoration. On May 1st, 1924, there was still a mention of Walker’s defeat on the main page of the *Diario de Costa Rica*.⁴⁸⁵ The following year, only a very brief note was published.⁴⁸⁶ In 1925, only one school visited the National Monument. The government, instead, focused on the inauguration of Congress with the presence of military bands and the shooting of 21 gun salutes to celebrate the political event, but not the memory of the Filibuster War.⁴⁸⁷ The state had withdrawn all support for May 1st as a celebration of the Filibuster War, and therefore eliminated it from the public sphere. Now, instead, May 1st was used to celebrate the state itself in the figure of Congress. May 1st, as the epicenter of the memory

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ *Diario de Costa Rica*. May 3rd, 1921, 7.

⁴⁸⁵ *Diario de Costa Rica*. May 1st, 1924.

⁴⁸⁶ *Diario de Costa Rica*. San José, May 1st, 1925.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 4.

of the Filibuster War was celebrated only one more time, in 1929. The reason was the inauguration of a monument to president Mora in San José, corroborating once again the importance of official influence on the celebration of this date.⁴⁸⁸

The tactic of diluting May 1st worked very well. By 1921, the traditional *dianas* and 21 gun salutes were no longer in use in San José. Arbor Day also fell into decay; being unnecessary after it accomplished its goal of distracting the unions. Newly established labor organizations eliminated all references to nature, including the SFTCR. Instead, most unions started to focus on political issues and demands of social reform, and they ceased recognizing May 1st as Arbor Day. There were no Labor Day celebrations in 1918, 1919, 1921, 1924, 1929, 1930, or 1931.⁴⁸⁹ The strength Labor Day had acquired during the second decade of the century was soon lost and not even the newspapers were interested in mentioning it.

The potential threat that May 1st and remembrance of the Filibuster War represented for the oligarchy was dismantled by the state in a multidirectional way. According to modernizing theories, nationalism is useful for the state to create cohesion around the goals of the dominant elites. When nationalism becomes a tool used by the popular classes, instead, it can threaten the relations the state has with either international corporations or its patron-client associations with other states. The coincidence of the celebrations of Labor Day and Walker's surrender on May 1st produced a conflict over the meaning of nationalism,

⁴⁸⁸ *Diario de Costa Rica*. May 1st, 1929. May 2nd, 1929.

⁴⁸⁹ Oliva. *1 de Mayo*, 7.

promoting popular requests for a nationalist support for social justice while pushing aside the traditional loyalty for the governing elites. To counter the growing importance of Labor Day, the state's first answer was to co-opt the labor movement through the support of the Arbor Day celebration, with relative success on diffusing the class struggle message of May Day. Finally, the government decided to stop the support to the celebrations of the Filibuster War on May 1st, eliminating the traditional *dianas*, blank shots, and *Te Deums*.

The value of the Filibuster War memory could not be lost, and the state recognized the usefulness of its nationalistic message. Luckily for the state, since the death of Guardia in 1882 and Fernández in 1885, a renewed interest in the memory of the Filibuster War brought plenty of heroes to celebrate, but, especially, it gave the option of a recognizable date that could substitute May 1st. It happened that April 11th and the figure of Juan Santamaría were already celebrated on a local level in Alajuela. In 1915, the declaration of April 11th as the new national holiday celebrating the Filibuster War responded to the need to disconnect the meanings of Labor Day from those related to the Filibuster War. Once April 11th gained enough celebrity, it was not necessary to revive May 1st. Starting in 1916, April 11th was officially celebrated at the national level, which was also the last year the government showed interest in celebrating May 1st. Requiem May 1st!

The Filibuster War During the Twentieth Century: April 11th and Cultural Anti-Imperialism.

The war between the United States and Spain in 1898, and Washington's subsequent takeover of Cuba and Puerto Rico, awakened an anti-imperialist and anti-expansionist reaction in Latin America. In Costa Rica, anti-imperialism, and especially anti-U.S. imperialism could only be translated into a resurrection of the memory of the Filibuster War. One aspect of this anti-imperialist reaction can be seen in the literature of this time. In 1901, the first Costa Rican short story focusing exclusively on the Filibuster War was published. Its author was Ricardo Fernández Guardia, a known intellectual, whose family already had left their imprint on Costa Rican nationalism. Fernández Guardia was the son of León Fernández, a historian, and a close friend of President Tomás Guardia. León Fernández collected documents in Spain, Mexico, and Guatemala that related to Costa Rican colonial history, and he donated them to the emergent National Archives. This alone was an important step for the spread of official nationalism.

Fernández Guardia, who also became a prominent historian, was a member of an intellectual elite group known as *El Olimpo* (Olympus, due to their high status and inaccessibility). The group, although mostly without formal ties, worked to forge a sense of national identity through literature, journalism, and history. Some members of *El Olimpo* were also members of the political elite, and Cleto González Víquez (1906-1910, 1928-1932) and Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1910-1914, 1924-1928, 1932-1936), became presidents of Costa Rica years later.

Fernández Guardia's short story, published in the book *Cuentos Ticos*, was titled *Un Héroe* (A hero), and focused on an obscure character that served in all the main battles of the Filibuster War, including Santa Rosa, Rivas, and the naval battle where the schooner *11 de Abril* was lost.⁴⁹⁰ The story includes the first description of Santamaría's feat in a work of fiction, based on traditional accounts, and possibly also on the witness accounts collected by the Municipality of Alajuela in 1891.⁴⁹¹

Other members of the *Olimpo*, writers and historians as Carlos Gagini Cleto González, and Ricardo Fernández, also took interest on the topic of the Filibuster War. In 1918, Carlos Gagini published *El árbol enfermo* (The sick tree), a novel in which a young woman, symbolizing the nation, was caught in an internal struggle to either stay loyal to the traditional local elite by marrying a Costa Rican young man or to fall into the arms of a foreign businessman.⁴⁹² The novel appeals to fears of cultural imperialism, a surrender to the vibrant novelty and success of the U.S. economy. The conflict represented a raising doubt among the elites related to the remaining loyal to traditions or opening themselves to foreign influence to assure the benefits of an economic alliance with the United States.

⁴⁹⁰ Ricardo Fernández Guardia. *Cuentos Ticos*. San José: Imprenta y Librería Española, 1901.

⁴⁹¹ Municipalidad de Alajuela. *Información ad perpetuam: Heroísmo de Juan Santamaría*, 1891. The lack of official reports that included an account of Santamaría's actions during the battle of Rivas promoted the creation of a file in which voluntary witnesses could declare what they saw during the battle of April 11th, 1856. Accuracy of the accounts is contested due to the directive nature of the questions.

⁴⁹² Carlos Gagini. *El árbol enfermo*. 1918.

Definitely influenced by the events of World War I, Gagini answered the question originally raised in *El Arbol Enfermo* with a Vernesque science-fiction novel in which, in an alternative reality, an anti-imperialist alliance was about to change the face of the world. *La Caída del Aguila* (The Eagle's Fall), published in 1920, was set in a U.S. dominated Central America, where Theodore Roosevelt's *Big Stick* policies transformed each country into a colony.⁴⁹³ In Costa Rica, the statue to Juan Santamaría was substituted with a statue to William Walker and the National Monument was replaced by another one dedicated to Woodrow Wilson. The main character of the novel was Roberto Mora, a descendant of President Mora, who, as his sucesor, was due to become the leader of a war against the invaders from the north. The attack that signaled the defeat and immediate surrender of the United States happened, not coincidentally, on May 1st. The message of the novel was directed against all types of imperialist aspirations, since in it, after the United States surrendered and liberated all its colonies, France and England were forced to do the same.

The last part of Gagini's anti-imperialist trilogy was a short novel published in 1922, named *El Erizo*.⁴⁹⁴ The title refers to the nickname of Juan Santamaría, and it is a romantic approach to the life of the Costa Rican hero. In the novel, Santamaría sacrificed himself in a show of love for the woman he cares for. To clarify the meaning behind the story, it is important to note that in these three novels, women represent more than just a female character. They embody

⁴⁹³ Carlos Gagini. *La caída del águila*. 1920.

⁴⁹⁴ Carlos Gagini. *El Erizo*. 1922.

the nation, or, as in *La Caída del Aguila*, humanity. In *El Erizo*, Santamaría dies to gain the favor of the woman he loves. The image Gagini wanted to portray was that of Santamaría gaining a special place in the memory of the nation (the woman he loves) with his sacrifice.

April 11th, along with the figure of Santamaría, rose as the new symbols of the Filibuster War at the same time the importance of May 1st decayed. There is clear evidence of a celebration of April 11th during the early twentieth century in Santamaría's native city, Alajuela, and there is a possibility that this was promoted by the unveiling of Santamaría's statue in 1891. It is possible that his feat was also taught in local schools, since only a recognizable figure could have had such an easy acceptance once April 11th became a national holiday. The survival of Santamaría's story as part of the Alajuelan local collective memory definitely established him as a popular figure, making him a good choice for a symbol of the Costa Rican nation-state. The popularity of the young drummer made his image malleable and easy to embed with nationalistic and patriotic meanings.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the place of Santamaría in collective imaginary resided outside of the official discourse, which was still focused on celebrating May 1st. In the city of Alajuela, Santamaría started to gain a strong position in local mythology. There is clear evidence that local authorities in Alajuela supported the celebration of April 11th in 1901, 1904, 1907, 1908, and

1912.⁴⁹⁵ Also, in 1908, they changed the Alajuelan coat of arms, establishing a direct connection with Santamaría and the Filibuster War. Under a Costa Rican flag, the coat or arms showed a Phrygian cap that symbolized republicanism, representing the liberal ideas espoused by Alajuela during the nineteenth century. Next to the cap, the coat of arms showed Santamaría's torch, a symbol of freedom and sacrifice. The motto states: *Pro Patria Nostra Sanguis Noster* (For our country, our blood), establishing Alajuela's pride and identity based on Santamaría's feat.



Figure 2 Coat of Arms of the Municipality of Alajuela. Modern version. The Phrygian cap is now located at the head, Santamaría's torch still takes half of the coat of arms. (Photo Xela Cabrera Geserick, 2011).

⁴⁹⁵ *La República*. (September 20th, 1900), 2-3. *La República*. (September 20th, 1900), 3. Méndez, 110-111; *La República*, April 12th, 1901, p.2. Méndez, 111; *La República*, April 12th, 1904, p.3. Méndez, 109; *El Noticiero*, April 12th, 1907, p2. *La Información*. (April 12th, 1908). *La Prensa Libre*. (April 14th, 1908). *La Información*. (April 12th, 1912). It is possible the celebration included other years, but no newspaper registers the event.

By 1913, the Alajuelan celebration of April 11th developed further. That year, ceremonial speeches indicated a vigorous interest in defining a specific meaning of the commemorations. By 1915, April 11th was finally elevated to the rank of national holiday. On June 18th of that year, President Alfredo González Flores signed the decree that established April 11th as a national holiday for perpetuity.⁴⁹⁶ On April 11th, 1916, the first official holiday dedicated to Santamaría signaled the transformation of April 11th into the main holiday celebrating the Filibuster War, in detriment of May 1st. During the commemorations of April 11th, 1916, Costa Rican Secretary of State Claudio González Rucavado asserted that Juan Santamaría's feat, and therefore its celebration, should not have any kind of competition. "It seems as though our national imaginary" – said González – "could not admit any other eagle besides its courageous flight."⁴⁹⁷ For León Cortés, congressman for Alajuela and future President of Costa Rica (1936-1940), the Filibuster War established the right of Costa Rica to be recognized by the world as an independent nation. According to Cortés, in 1856 "Costa Rica acquired the right, established by the blood shed by its sons, to the respect of powerful foreigners to...the integrity of its territory and the efficiency of its freedoms."⁴⁹⁸ Newspapers compared the battle of Rivas to Thermopylae, and authors chided the fear of a new kind of filibusterism with their anti-imperialistic rhetoric, specifically in the figure anyone who would "kneel in

⁴⁹⁶ Dobles Segreda, 75.

⁴⁹⁷ Municipalidad de Alajuela. *Memoria de las Fiestas Cívicas celebradas en Alajuela el 11 de abril de 1916*. (San José: Imprenta y Litografía del Comercio, 1916), 52.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

front of the dollar.”⁴⁹⁹ Following this concept was the anti-imperialist diatribe by the young leader of the “Juan Rafael Mora” boy-scout company, Ricardo Gólcher, who described the filibusters as “tyrants swollen by greed that wanted to force us to join to their customs... Let’s love our land, do not let anybody insult its sovereignty. Better to die before allowing that to happen!”⁵⁰⁰

It may sound ironic to think of a Costa Rican child dressed as a boy-scout talking about sovereignty. This apparent contradiction is explained by understanding the concept of cultural anti-imperialism. Cultural anti-imperialism is an analysis of the position and value of cultural expressions that opposes cultural imperialism, focusing not on the goals of the empire, but on how the periphery defines imperial expansion. The concept of cultural imperialism assumes that when one country (i.e., the empire) exerts economic or political control over another one, it forces its values and habits onto a dependent society through media and consumption.⁵⁰¹ Following our example, cultural imperialism would propose that the boy-scouts, a typical U.S. cultural product, are part of an imperialist agenda directed to spread U.S. values throughout Latin America to conquer the minds of the inhabitants of that region. This, of course, is very unlikely. The boy-scouts were neither the first nor the last idea Costa Ricans introduced into their society that were initially developed in the United States or Europe. After all, Latin America, as part of the West, has always considered

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁰¹ John Tomlison. *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Printer Publishers, 1991.

developments in the other parts of the Americas as well as in Europe as part of its own heritage. The concept of cultural anti-imperialism, applied here, does not see adaptation of cultural expressions on the possible intentions of the empire, but instead, it focuses on the eye of the beholder. Using cultural anti-imperialism, we can understand how certain actions that can be perceived as threatening for Costa Rican sovereignty will be naturally confronted with resistance and rejection. Foreign influence that does not represent an act of intervention, instead, will be perfectly acceptable. Since only Costa Ricans can decide what they as a society consider threatening, they carry the weight of interpretation. Under cultural anti-imperialism, it is not relevant if the United States, or any other power for that matter, is actively trying to intervene in Costa Rican affairs, but how much Costa Ricans consider imperialist motives and behaviors of the hegemon a threat. In the case of the boy-scouts, Costa Rica adopted the organization and it reannointed it a Costa Rican nationalist activity.

An example of how cultural anti-imperialism works is the development of the myth of the Return of the Filibuster in Costa Rica. Since the times of President Tomás Guardia, references to the filibusters have always showcased the defeat of the threat to sovereignty. This reflects the fact that Walker himself was able to return again and again to continue his plans to conquer Costa Rica and Central America. For five years (1855-1860), the name of Walker represented a looming menace. Every time he was defeated, he returned. President Mora knew about Walker's intentions in 1855. In November of that year, he issued a proclamation warning Costa Ricans of the threat. In February, 1856, Costa Rica was at war, and

in March Costa Rica was invaded. By April, it seemed that Costa Rican forces were able to stop Walker, but then the cholera epidemic forced Costa Ricans to abandon Nicaragua. Six months later, the threat continued to grow and Costa Rica had to renew the war. Finally, on May 1, 1857, Walker surrendered. The filibuster left the region and returned to the United States. A few months later, news of a possible attack by Walker reached President Mora, who issued a decree informing the public that any person who formed part of any filibuster contingent, in the past, present, or future would be executed.⁵⁰² Indeed, rumors were correct, and on November, 1857, Walker attacked Costa Rican positions in the San Juan River.⁵⁰³ A month later, Walker returned to the United States after being arrested by Captain Paulding of the U.S. Navy. In June, 1860, Walker returned once more to Central America, attacking the town of Trujillo, Honduras. Finally, in September, 1860, William Walker was captured, and after a trial, executed. The constant threat of Walker created the sense that the filibusters would continue to return until achieving their goal.

This traumatic recurrence became a staple of the Costa Rican national myth related to the Filibuster War. As a Sword of Damocles, the filibuster was a figure that represented, and continues to represent, any kind of threat to national security, especially to national identity and national sovereignty. This explains the constant returning to the image of the filibusters every time sovereignty is threatened. As we saw in the last chapter, the invasions of Federico Mora, and the

⁵⁰² Montúfar, 687.

⁵⁰³ Montúfar, 701.

threats of Guatemalan President Justo Rufino Barrios, were perceived as a renewal of filibustering adventures, defined as such on newspapers and official speeches.

During the twentieth century, a facet of the return of the filibuster myth was present during the border conflict that in 1921 brought Costa Rica and Panamá to a military confrontation. As Venita Datta mentions in the case of fin-de-siècle France, imminent external threat is a powerful tool for nationalist revivals.⁵⁰⁴ Both countries disputed the exact position of the border, tensions arising since the creation of Panamá in 1903. Both countries agreed to turn the case over to an international commission that would help to settle the issue. In 1921, and following the resolutions of French President Emile Loubet, and the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Edward White, Costa Rica decided to take possession of the town of Coto, close to the border with Panama. Panamanians considered this an invasion of their territory and took the town back. The problem escalated and soon both countries rallied to build their armies.

Costa Rica lacked a large standing army needed to fight the war. To fill the gap and to promote enrollment, newspapers became the main tool to create popular enthusiasm and support for the war. Following Benedict Anderson's premise of the importance of media for the development of nationalism, it does not come as a surprise that newspapers invoked patriotism by recalling a Costa

⁵⁰⁴ Venita Datta. *Heroes and Legends of fin-de-siècle France. Gender, Politics, and National Identity*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

Rican victory with militias.⁵⁰⁵ Datta points out that there must be an appeal to a glorious past that can be used as an example for new generations.⁵⁰⁶ The myth of the Return of the Filibuster was, of course, the main and possibly the only theme available to inspire Costa Ricans to go to war. Local newspapers made sure to use it in their patriotic calls.

An article reporting the initial manifestations of support for the government already showed strong calls for patriotism. On March 1st, while the army was sent to reinforce the position at Coto, the main cities held patriotic demonstrations in favor of the Costa Rican militias. In Heredia, “no less than three hundred men walked through the streets hailing the Patria and offering their blood to bathe the national flag with honor.”⁵⁰⁷ In Alajuela, references to the Filibuster War were the main argument for patriotism. A newspaper reported that a crowd gathered “at the foot of the statue of the humble drummer Juan Santamaría, where the Alajuelans swore to offer, once again, their blood for the integrity of the Republic, and to repeat the feat of Rivas if it becomes necessary to burn another Mesón in order to expell the invader.”⁵⁰⁸

The official rhetoric served also as an example of the use of the memory of the Filibuster War. In a speech given on February 28th, 1921, at the main station of the train to the Pacific, President Julio Acosta greeted the troops headed

⁵⁰⁵ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.

⁵⁰⁶ Datta, 6.

⁵⁰⁷ *Diario de Costa Rica*, March 1st, 1921.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

to Coto, declaring: “lucky you that will exchange your miserable flesh for the bronze that lives (forever). This is a solemn moment. We now have the privilege of following in the steps of our grandparents in their heroic feats of 1856 and 1857.”⁵⁰⁹

Victories at the front were celebrated with more references to the Filibuster War. “Our young soldiers comply as their grandparents did in 1856,” said a newspaper, adding that: “you would see a virile and valiant people exchange their rough tools for weapons.”⁵¹⁰ This is a clear reference to the national anthem, which, as María Amoretti has demonstrated, is based on President Mora’s speeches during the Filibuster War.⁵¹¹ The invasion of Panamanian forces to Costa Rican territory was in this manner easily connected to the filibuster invasion of 1856, reinforcing the myth of the return of the filibuster.

President Mora’s words served as one of the main symbols used during the war against Panama. Another article published during the war used one of President Mora’s original speeches as incentive for patriotism. The speech was mixed with comments to redirect its meaning to the Panamanian War:

Costa Ricans (in that manner started the vibrant proclamation by Mora when in 1856 the filibusters wanted to transform our Patria in a

⁵⁰⁹ *La Tribuna*, March 1st, 1921.

⁵¹⁰ *La Tribuna*. March 3rd, 1921. The newspaper refers to the lyrics of the national anthem: “If someone pretends to stain your glory, you will see your people, valiant and virile, the rough tool exchanged for arms.” The lyrics of the Costa Rican national anthem are inspired by the Filibuster War, especially by two famous speeches President Mora gave at the beginning of that war. For an analysis of the Costa Rican national anthem and its connection to the Filibuster War, see: María Amoretti. *Debajo del canto: un análisis del himno nacional de Costa Rica*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1987.

⁵¹¹ Amoretti, María. *Debajo del canto: un análisis del himno nacional de Costa Rica*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1987.

*dependency. Those words of the old and valiant leader acquire further value each time they are mentioned, and so, we hear him yell): Costa Ricans: peace, that virtuous peace that joined to your laborious perseverance has augmented our credit, our richness, and our happiness, is now perfidiously threatened (it seems to us that his gallant figure stands now with words of fire: Before from the north, today from the South... The words of Mora are still resonating... listen to the voice of Mora!)*⁵¹²

The image of Santamaría and Mora were constantly used during the short war. In Alajuela, voluntary forces took up arms, forming the battalion “Santamaría,” and the battalion “11 de Abril”, a fact so symbolic that it was mentioned decades later in one of the most important novels in Costa Rican literature.⁵¹³ On the other hand, invocations to Mora pertain to the need of a mythic triumphant commander. While Santamaría serves as a figure to promote courageous actions, the emergence of the image of Mora provides confidence on the figure of the leaders of the nation.

The leader of the battalion sent to reinforce Coto, Colonel Miguel Obregón, also a writer, was wrongly reported to have fallen in battle while being transported in a boat to the battlefield. Believing him dead, Omar Dengo, a fellow writer, described him in the terms in vogue at the time: “Brother: Juan Santamaría’s symbol is the torch, yours is the prow of a boat... There where you fell with your legion, the sea – as a voice of the fate of the Patria – responds the scream for freedom of Juan the soldier...”⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² *La Tribuna*, March 6th, 1921. In parenthesis the notes added to the original speech by the editors.

⁵¹³ *La Tribuna*, March 6th, 1921. Carlos Luis Fallas. *Marcos Ramírez*. 1952.

⁵¹⁴ *La Tribuna*, March 4th, 1921.

The war with Panama awakened the memory of the Filibuster War, in the same way that any threat to sovereignty or invasion did before 1921 and has done since then. The first decades of the twentieth century were of constant commemoration, especially in connection with the Filibuster War. In 1914, the centenary of the birth of President Mora was celebrated. In 1916, the first official celebration of April 11th became an event of national dimensions. In 1921, the war against Panamá served to renew the commitment to national sovereignty, and to the memory of the Filibuster War. During this period, anti-imperialism was also a developing sentiment.

By the 1920s, the figure of Santamaría had been consolidated, while, as we saw above, May 1st was being relegated and finally abandoned by the state. While the intention of the government was to excise nationalism from anti-imperialism, the 1930s witnessed the ascendance of the figure of Santamaría as an anti-imperialist figure, something also recognized by international figures. In 1930, one of the most important Latin American figures of the moment, Mexican politician and philosopher José Vasconcelos, participated in the celebrations of April 11th in Alajuela. The author of *The Cosmic Race* and former Mexican Minister of Education and presidential candidate, described Santamaría as the Latin American hero par excellence.⁵¹⁵ In a speech given to celebrate the Costa Rican national hero, Vasconcelos acknowledged the importance of the Filibuster War, declaring that April 11th would be “soon celebrated across the whole

⁵¹⁵ One of the most recent translations is: José de Vasconcelos. *The Cosmic Race*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Vasconcelos was Secretary of Education in Mexico during the 1920s, and Mexican presidential candidate in 1929.

continent.”⁵¹⁶ For Vasconcelos, “Santamaría was the true hero of our race: others fought against Spain, mother, after all, of these countries. Juan, instead, fought against the only enemy we have had, the filibusters. That is why *El Erizo* is the continental symbol of our race.”⁵¹⁷

The following year, Costa Rican newspapers mentioned the arrival of a famous visitor from the United States, comedian Will Rogers. While traveling to Panama, he stopped in Costa Rica precisely on April 10th, 1931. In an interview, Rogers commented on his fascination with Costa Rican nature and criticized the economic crisis in the United States as well as the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua. He also acknowledged April 11th, the celebration of the anniversary of the Filibuster War, by sending a telegram to about 400 newspapers in the United States stating: “I am in Costa Rica. Tomorrow this country celebrates the patriotic holiday of April 11th, anniversary of the definitive defeat of the filibusters. Think I will feel here as an Englishman could feel in the United States on July 4th.”⁵¹⁸

In 1931, the city of Alajuela celebrated the centenary of Juan Santamaría’s birth. While April 11th continued to be remembered in relation to Santamaría’s martyrdom in Rivas, the main celebrations focused on August 29th, the birthday of the hero. This event served to define the meaning of the figure of Santamaría. The celebrations of August 29th also illuminate that the creation of collective memory is a dynamic process, in which there are several levels of meaning. Some of these

⁵¹⁶ *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 12th, 1930.

⁵¹⁷ Quoted in: Enrique Obregón Valverde. “Un Soldado Bañado de Luz.” *La Nación*. San José, April 11th, 2003.

⁵¹⁸ *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 11th, 1931.

lines repeat well established narratives; others attempt to recover old, lost messages; while at the same time applying new meanings to the original concepts. During Santamaría's centenary, the myth of the Return of the Filibuster continued to be present, while a new description of Santamaría was being developed, portraying him as a humble countryside teenager. This image served both to emphasize his connection with the national values of a rural democracy, while at the same time representing an attempt by the state to control the anti-imperialist tones associated with the hero. This reveals the growing threat that popular and workers' organizations represented to the liberal political and economic elites, which were possibly sensing their own political crisis. The 1931 commemoration also helped to consolidate the sacredness of Santamaría's image in opposition to mundane affairs.

The celebrations of the centenary of Santamaría enjoyed all pomp and circumstance, lasting for several days. The main theme developed during the commemorations was the image of Santamaría as the symbol of the common Costa Rican citizen, wrapped in the shape of a humble countryside teenager. The image delivered through speeches and articles emphasized either the democratic nature of Costa Rican institutions, or the subordinate position of the popular classes. This image had a strong connection with the national anthem, which, as María Amoretti has analyzed, presented the typical Costa Rican as a small humble farmer, a prototype of a rural democracy who reacted with a sense of communal

defense when his land is threatened.⁵¹⁹ On August 2nd, the editorial of the *Diario de Costa Rica* celebrated Santamaría as a people's hero, and as a "real representative of the Costa Rican people, of that laborious, uncomplaining, quiet, humble people."⁵²⁰ As representative of the popular classes, Santamaría was described here almost in religious terms, as a devoted son ready to sacrifice for the Patria and the state, never questioning it. A week later, precisely on the day of Santamaría's birthday, the message was confirmed. Santamaría, said the *Diario de Costa Rica* in its editorial, was the epitome of Costaricaness, since he was part of a "simple, humble people like ours, without aristocracy..." a representative of "those humble Costa Ricans that do not talk, do not dissent, do not intervene in political activities."⁵²¹ This extreme approach was directed to weaken and delegitimize labor organizations as unpatriotic and un-Costa Rican. To understand the context of this description, it is important to note that 1930 saw the largest and best organized strike against the United Fruit Company, the largest U.S.-owned banana corporation in the world. Also, 1931 was the year in which the Costa Rican Communist Party was founded. This was a time in which, increasingly, unions used symbols of the Filibuster War during their manifestations. Therefore, April 11th and the image of Santamaría became a contested space in which the official discourse tried to separate anti-imperialism from nationalism.

⁵¹⁹ María Amoretti. *Debajo del Canto: Un Análisis del Himno Nacional de Costa Rica*. San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1987.

⁵²⁰ *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 22nd, 1931.

⁵²¹ *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 29th, 1931.

The idea of the humble, uncomplaining Santamaría was reinforced during speeches given on August 29th for the inauguration of the Fuente de Libertad (Fountain of Freedom), a small monument raised in the place where Juan Santamaría's house used to stand. The Director of the San Luis Gonzaga high school described the battle of Rivas as a moment in which a humble soldier, not a great general, defeated the enemy.⁵²² Congressman Otilio Ulate, later president of Costa Rica, described Santamaría as a “son of the earth...a country boy, seminude and agile...a son of the fresh wind of the mountains...”⁵²³ A journalist of the *Diario de Costa Rica* described him as a “humble peasant” in whom Costa Rica could see reflected its democratic essence.⁵²⁴ But Santamaría was not a peasant. In fact, he was born and raised in Alajuela, now the second most populated city of Costa Rica. While the city was not more than a small town in the 1850s, it had already served as capital of the country, and had a very important place in all Costa Rican political and economic activities. Santamaría's life did not involve farm work, but instead painting walls and running errands for local stores and soldiers in the barracks. The transformation of Santamaría into a farm boy was an attempt to connect his image to one the liberal elite of *El Olimpo* had been

⁵²² Instituto de Alajuela. *Libro del centenario de Juan Santamaría*. (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1934), 28-29.

⁵²³ *Libro del centenario*, 32-33.

⁵²⁴ *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 28th, 1931.

creating for decades: that of Costa Rica as a rural democracy, without class distinctions, and a strong paternalistic approach to social relations.⁵²⁵

At the same time, another discourse running during the celebrations was the myth of the Return of the Filibuster. The myth was used this time as an omnipresent peril that gives life to Santamaría's image, making him a silent guardian illuminating with his torch the omniscient darkness of filibusterism. The Sociedad Bolivariana de Costa Rica, immersed in the panamericanist ideal of the Libertador, celebrated the centenary of Santamaría in the context of his service to the survival of the Latin American nations, raising hope for a future union.⁵²⁶

Manuel Castro Quesada, presidential candidate for the Republican Union Party, took advantage of the historical moment to tie himself to Santamaría's anti-imperialist image. According to the politician, if the hero was still alive, he would be a member of his party, since both cared for the defense of Costa Rican independence. "We use different methods, – said Castro Quesada - we are also confronting the invasion of foreign gold, and we see how it tries to hold its grip of power among us through docile governments that serve it. We follow the luminous path marked by Santamaría, against...the new filibusters of the Bond and Share (a U.S.-owned electric company)."⁵²⁷

By 1931, Santamaría had earned the necessary respect to become the central figure that defined Costa Rican national identity. The matter discussed

⁵²⁵ Alvaro Quesada Rojas. *Breve Historia de la Literatura Costarricense*. (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2010), 15–31.

⁵²⁶ *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 30th, 1931.

⁵²⁷ *Diario de Cosa Rica*. August 28th, 1931.

from this point on was the meaning behind Santamaría, and what kind of symbolism he represented. By August of 1931, the electoral campaign that ended with the election of a new president on February, 1932, was at its peak. The heated contest pitted Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno, a member of *El Olimpo*, against ex-president Alfredo González Flores, and Manuel Castro Quesada, mentioned above, in a series of insulting and furious articles published several times during the days preceding the celebration of Santamaría's centenary. The dispute continued into the week before the celebrations, when public opinion strode to defend the sanctity of the national hero, asking for a political silence during the commemorations. Official representatives imposed a prohibition of any political activity in the province of Alajuela for August 29th, and newspapers published cartoons condemning the attitude of the politicians. Figure 4 is a cartoon published on the newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica* on August 30th, 1931. It shows Jiménez Oreamuno, Castro Quesada, and González Flores gagged by a humble Costa Rican. The title of the cartoon is "Heroic Silence," The gags say "Centenary - Juan - Santamaría." The celebrations of 1931 show that by then Santamaría had earned a sacred place in the altar of Costa Rican heroes. While the state tried to transform his image into a humble and quiet peasant, the public hailed him as a man willing to give his life in battle. Also, the place that Santamaría started to occupy in the Costa Rican imaginary represented the common citizen, and his distrust of traditional politicians.



Figure 3 *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 30th, 1931.

While Santamaría's image and April 11th commemorations were consolidated, May 1st survived only in connection to Labor Day.⁵²⁸ By 1931, the Communist Party was founded and Labor Day became more organized. During the 1940s, the Communist Party formed an alliance with the governing National Republican Party, and most celebrations of May 1st became parades showing support for the social reforms applied in the areas of Social Security, Universal Health Care, the creation of a Labor Code, and the legalization of a minimum wage. April 11th, on the other hand, became an arena where the meaning of

⁵²⁸ *Diario de Costa Rica*. May 1st, 1932; May 3rd, 1932; May 3rd, 1938; May 1st, 1940; May 3rd, 1941; May 1st, 1943; May 3rd, 1945.

Santamaría and the Filibuster War was contested every year. The state stripped May 1st of its connection to Walker's surrender to separate labor and leftist organizations from the celebration and avoid the use of the holiday for anti-imperialist expressions.

The Communist Party, for example, used the image of Santamaría to advance anti-imperialism among its followers through its own newspaper, *El Trabajo*. The Communist Party constantly pointed to U.S. corporations like the United Fruit Company as a new kind of filibusterism, extending its critique to the liberal elites for selling out the country while hypocritically continuing to use the image of the national hero to disguise this fact.⁵²⁹ Indeed, the anti-imperialist attitude of the workers' organizations became obvious at the national level in 1947, when two parades organized by the Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica, one on April 11th and the second on May 1st, directed their critique to Truman's foreign policy.⁵³⁰ In 1947, U.S. Sub-Secretary of State William Clay proposed the consolidation of the British and U.S. military zones in Germany, which was interpreted as a symbol of U.S. imperialism.⁵³¹ The CTCR also protested against U.S. intervention in Greece.⁵³² According to the banners used by the communists, Clayton's plan promoted a special economic zone that affected Costa Rican commercial interests. Also, Truman's policy of containment

⁵²⁹ Díaz Arias, *11 de abril*, 17–18.

⁵³⁰ *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 11th, 1947. *La Nación*, April 10th, 1947.

⁵³¹ *Diario de Costa Rica*, May 2nd, 1947.

⁵³² *La Nación*, April 10th, 1947.

threatened the sovereignty of Latin American countries, destroying the trust built by Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy.⁵³³

On the other hand, those opposing the communists and their ally, the National Republican Party, considered that while the communists wanted to stop U.S. expansionism, they were more than willing to sell out the country to the Soviet Union. The parades of April 11th and May 1st, 1947, were therefore not a commemoration of Costa Rican patriotism, but an affront to the United States disguised under a nationalist discourse. The parades of April 11th and May 1st, 1947, mark the recognition in Costa Rica of the beginning of a new global conflict, the Cold War. Interestingly enough, it also signaled the political radicalization in Costa Rica that promoted the civil war of 1948, defining a new era in the interpretation of the Filibuster War.

⁵³³ *La Nación*, April 10th, 1947.

Chapter 6

CELEBRATING THE AVENGING TORCH. PERCEPTIONS OF A MILITARY HERO IN A COUNTRY WITHOUT AN ARMY.

Under the sunny sky of an April morning in Alajuela, Costa Rican presidents and governmental representatives deliver a yearly speech in commemoration of Juan Santamaría, the national hero who, according to official history, gave his life in battle, consolidating the victory of the Costa Rican forces over an invading army of U.S. filibusters in 1856.⁵³⁴ On April 11, 2007, standing at the center of the square where a statue of the hero holds the avenging torch that illuminates the faces of thousands of students eager to start the annual parade, the Costa Rican president, Oscar Arias, waxed enthusiastic: “The image of the soldier that holds the torch under a rain of bullets fills our breast with pride.”⁵³⁵ The idea of the military hero resonated in these words. The president continued his speech by using more military images, warning the students against adversity: “there are so many strongholds that shower the shrapnel of hate over us.”⁵³⁶ This kind of official rhetoric in relation to Santamaría’s commemoration has been common.

⁵³⁴ During the battle of Rivas, on April 11th, 1856, William Walker and other filibusters were hiding in a large building. In order to expel them from the *Mesón de Guerra*, as the building was called, the only option was to burn it down. Juan Santamaría offered to deliver the mission, took a torch and crossed the street that separated the Costa Ricans from the filibusters. While applying the fire to a corner of the building, Santamaría was shot to death. His effort paid off. The fire spread and the filibusters had to escape, leaving their position. Several versions of the event can be found at: Luis Dobles Segreda. *El Libro del Héroe*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2006.

⁵³⁵ Arias Sánchez, Oscar. Speech delivered on Juan Santamaría’s Square, Alajuela, on April 11th, 2007. Retrieved on April 15th, 2008: <http://www.casapres.go.cr/real/11%20de%20abril%20%20FINAL.doc-114200714269/11%20de%20abril%20%20FINAL.doc>. “La imagen del soldado que sostiene la tea debajo de una lluvia de balas nos llena el pecho de orgullo.”

⁵³⁶ Ibid. “Son tantos los bastiones desde los cuales nos llueve la metralla del odio.”

On April 11, 2003, for example, Vice-president Linneth Saborío used the military imagery related to Santamaría to refer to social issues. Speaking from the main stand at the Juan Santamaría Square she harangued: “The struggle has to start in the heart of each family, and we, men and women that love this land, should seize the weapons of education . . . for our country.”⁵³⁷ Years before, in 1997, Education Minister Eduardo Doryan told the students that in order to succeed they “have to win the battle against pessimism.”⁵³⁸ The constant use of military rhetoric in the official discourses on each April 11th raises a question: to whom were these politicians speaking? After all, Costa Rica abolished its army in 1948 and most if not all those present at the Juan Santamaría Square had never experienced a war, nor seen an army. Therefore, these military metaphors should not have made any sense to the average Costa Rican present in the square. At the same time, April 11th is a day that celebrates the feat of Juan Santamaría, a soldier and military hero. This chapter analyzes the contradiction between these two circumstances: an official military discourse in the presence of a national hero of military background in a country without an army. Its importance relies on the study of contesting cultural values and how societies cope with these inconsistencies, especially since, in the specific case of Juan Santamaría, his image defines Costa Rican national identity.

⁵³⁷ *La Nación*, April 12th, 2003. “Celebración salpicada con protestas.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2003/abril/12/pais2.html. “La lucha debe comenzar en el seno de cada familia, donde los hombres y mujeres que amamos esta tierra debemos empuñar las armas de la educación . . . por nuestro país.”

⁵³⁸ *La Nación*, April 12th, 1997. “Sol y orden recordaron al héroe.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/1997/abril/12/sol.html. “Tenemos que ganar la batalla contra el pesimismo.”



Figure 4 Statue of Juan Santamaría. Juan Santamaría Plaza, Alajuela. (Photo Xela Cabrera Geserick, 2011).

In Costa Rica, the celebrations of April 11th are as important, if not more, than Independence Day. There is no national narrative of independence, and instead, the heroes of the Filibuster War define the values of nationality. This establishes an important exception in the Americas, where independence commemorations traditionally represent the day the nation is celebrated. This phenomenon was first studied by Steven Palmer, a History Professor at the University of Windsor, who in 1993 published an article that shook the intellectual foundations of the scholarly community in Costa Rica.⁵³⁹ In it, Palmer asserts that the image of Juan Santamaría as the quintessential hero of the

⁵³⁹ Steven Palmer. "Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880–1900," in: *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 25:1 (Feb. 1993), 45–72. Also published in an abbreviated version in Spanish, in: Molina Jiménez, Iván and Steven Palmer. *Héroes al gusto y libros de moda: Sociedad y cambio cultural en Costa Rica (1750-1900)*. (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2004), 283–288.

Filibuster War was part of the liberal project of nation formation during the late nineteenth century. The purpose behind the invention of a national hero was to create a sense of nationalism among Costa Rican citizens so they would support the consolidation of the nation-state in the terms defined by the liberal elites. Above I discussed how this interpretation is inaccurate, and how the importance of the Filibuster War and Santamaría were neither inventions, nor established as national symbols in 1885.

Still, Palmer's article promoted a very important reevaluation of the period by Costa Rican historians, forming the basis of the works of Iván Molina Jiménez, David Díaz Arias, and Patricia Fumero, among others.⁵⁴⁰ In 2007, Costa Rican historian Rafael Méndez published a new study about Juan Santamaría that, among other contributions, contested Palmer's assertion about Santamaría as an invented tradition. In his book, Méndez argues that the image of Juan Santamaría existed in the memory of common citizens before 1885, especially in Alajuela, Santamaría's native city.⁵⁴¹ According to Méndez, local memory kept the story of Santamaría's feat alive. This allowed for Santamaría's image to survive long

⁵⁴⁰ Patricia Fumero. "La celebración del santo de la patria: la develización de la estatua al héroe nacional costarricense, Juan Santamaría, el 15 de setiembre de 1891." In: Iván Molina Jiménez and Francisco Enríquez Solano. *Fin de Siglo XIX e Identidad Nacional en México y Centroamérica*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2000). Works by David Díaz Arias include: David Díaz Arias. *Historia del 11 de Abril: Juan Santamaría entre el pasado y el presente*. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2006). David Díaz Arias. *Construcción de un Estado Moderno: Política, Estado e Identidad Nacional en Costa Rica, 1821-1914*. (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2005). From Iván Molina: Iván Molina. *Industriosa y Sobria: Costa Rica en los días de la campaña nacional (1856-1857)*. (South Woodstock, VT: Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 2007).

⁵⁴¹ First a thesis defended successfully in 1993, Méndez's work was later published as: Méndez, Rafael Angel. *Imágenes del poder: Juan Santamaría y el ascenso de la Nación en Costa Rica (1860-1915)*. (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2007).

enough in a local stage until, says Méndez, the Liberal State was able to recognize his value as a national figure, using him to form a national identity.⁵⁴²

Building on this work, my analysis proposes the study of the army and military institutions in Costa Rica and their relation to the development of a military culture present in symbols, discourses, speeches, and popular celebrations. The goal is to establish the creation of Santamaría's image in a militaristic context, and to understand how the perception of the national hero has changed since the abolition of the army, more than sixty years ago. Since studying the army in Costa Rica is to study what no longer exists, scholarly work in this area is limited. Most of the publications focus on events related to the abolition of the army in December of 1948. Even so, because of the importance the army had during the period of consolidation of the liberal nation-state, studies of the period between 1849 and 1948 give a valuable insight into the army and the culture that developed from it.⁵⁴³

As seen above, militaristic culture is still present in the official discourse, and therefore, it makes the study of cultural change and the transformation of the

⁵⁴² Rafael Angel Méndez. *Imágenes del Poder. Juan Santamaría y el Ascenso de la nación en Costa Rica*. (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2007), 48–50.

⁵⁴³ Concerning the abolition of the army, see: Cerdas Albertazzi, Ana Luisa and Gerardo Vargas Cambroner. *Abolición del Ejército en Costa Rica: hito de un camino de democracia y paz*. San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1988. For the development of the army in Costa Rica during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, see: González Murillo, Olger. *Los Militares en Costa Rica: génesis, apogeo y caída del ejército en Costa Rica, 1821–1919*. (San José, Costa Rica: Librería Alma Mater, 2005). Also see: Solís, Edwin and Carlos González. *El ejército en Costa Rica: poder político, poder militar*. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Alma Mater, 1991). About the relation between militarism and constitutionalism, see: Zamora Castellanos, Fernando. *Militarismo y Estado Constitucional en Costa Rica*. (San José, Costa Rica: IJSA, 1997).

image of Juan Santamaría extremely difficult. The celebrations of April 11th follow the now classic style of commemorations in which the official discourse establishes a framework of values in which the participation of common citizens is necessary. With this in mind, and to find an answer to the question of the transformation of Juan Santamaría's image, the work of Antonio Gramsci and Carlo Ginzburg on dominant and subordinate culture may prove helpful. In *Prisoner Notebooks*, Italian linguist Antonio Gramsci divides societies in two, an elite group and the popular classes.⁵⁴⁴ According to Gramsci, culture is also divided along the same lines, a dominant culture and a subordinate culture. Since the elite group controls the media, archives, recording, and official documents, it becomes the dominant culture of a society. The dominant culture transmits its ideology and perceptions to the popular classes through the control and interpretation of information. In this structure, the transmission of culture is unidirectional, from the top down, where the dominant culture defines the subordinate culture. Obviously, in this system the only possibility for the subordinate culture to control the dominant discourse is to take over society and establish the popular classes as the dominant culture.⁵⁴⁵

In *The Cheese and the Worms*, Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg contests Gramsci's ideas, and discovers a way to hear the voice of the popular classes by

⁵⁴⁴ Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

scrutinizing the official discourse.⁵⁴⁶ In his now emblematic book on microhistory, Ginzburg presents the story of Menocchio, an Italian peasant of the sixteenth century with a peculiar view of the world, different from the dominant ideology. Having a particular view of the world and the universe, Menocchio is called in by the Inquisition for interrogation. It is precisely in this encounter between the Inquisition, an institution part of the dominant culture, and a peasant, a member of the subordinate culture, that popular culture is shown. Menocchio's answers to the Inquisitors were recorded, leaving a tangible source of a view of reality different from the dominant culture. With this methodology, Ginzburg gives voice to popular culture, arguing that popular classes can have an independent perception of reality, different from the dominant elite and the official culture.⁵⁴⁷ Following Ginzburg's ideas, we can infer that popular culture can also influence the dominant culture, establishing a bidirectional transmission of values. Based on this concept, this chapter explores the development of the image of Santamaría in the place where official and popular culture encounter each other, that is, the annual celebrations of April 11th.

The idea of militarism in Costa Rican culture, especially in relation to the celebration of Juan Santamaría, will be analyzed, focusing on both the discourse of official culture as well as the expressions of popular culture. In order to do so, this study will follow the analysis of militarism developed by Tord Høivik and

⁵⁴⁶ Carlo Ginzburg. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xiii–xxvi.

Solveig Aas. These Norwegian members of the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo identify the levels of militarization of a society by analyzing three indicators: size of the military, militarized behavior, and penetration of non-military institutions by military culture.⁵⁴⁸ Using these parameters, it is possible to discern the moments in which militarization is enforced or subdued, both in Costa Rican society as well as in the celebrations of Juan Santamaría. The importance of the military in Costa Rica's life can be traced observing the three aspects mentioned by Høivik and Aas as far back as 1948, but after that year, since the army was abolished, the analysis will focus mainly on the third area, by studying the penetration of military aspects into civilian activities. By analyzing military symbolism used during Santamaría's celebrations after 1948, it is possible to understand the contradiction produced in Costa Rican society by celebrating a military hero in a country where the army had already disappeared.

Militarism in Costa Rica

Initially, the history of military forces in Costa Rica had been no different than in most of Latin America. Even so, it is necessary to clarify that military involvement in politics was short lived and more sporadic than in the rest of the region. The Costa Rican army reached its peak during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which coincides with the period of consolidation of the nation-state.

⁵⁴⁸ Høivik, Tord and Solveig Aas. "Demilitarization in Costa Rica: A Farewell to Arms?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 18:4 (1981), 333–351.

In general, Central America did not suffer the immediate spread of militarism after independence that most of the continent had to endure. This is due to the fact that Central American independence from Spain was granted without the need of a military confrontation of high magnitude.⁵⁴⁹ This does not mean that the region was free of militarism. During the colonial period, the Bourbonic reform of the militias that modernized the military forces in Spanish America, after the fall of Havana during the Seven Years' War, created a new system that promoted social mobilization.⁵⁵⁰ This gave members of lower and middle classes the opportunity to elevate their status through a military career. As Timothy Hawkins demonstrates, the last ten years before independence defined a new militaristic attitude of Central American elites. The news of armed insurrection across Spanish America, the closeness of New Spain to Central America, and the constant threat of local rebellions resulted in an increase in military spending, including the size and professionalization of militias. The situation made the elites that would soon govern the new Central American nations focus on the achievement of internal control and legitimacy, substituting civil authority with military force.⁵⁵¹

The conflict between Liberal and Conservative elites for the control and direction of the government meant that the first years of independent life were characterized by military struggles. In the specific case of Costa Rica, this ended

⁵⁴⁹ Timothy Hawkins, "La Corona, El Ejército y La Sociedad Colonial Centroamericana," *AFEHC Asociación para el Fomento de los Estudios Históricos en Centroamérica*, no. 34 (2008), 1.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

in 1823, when Imperialists and Republicans confronted each other to decide on either incorporating the country to the Mexican Empire, or remaining an independent nation. The incorporation of Costa Rica in the Federal Republic of Central America between 1823 and 1838 decreased the need for Costa Rican military investment. Once the Federation broke up in 1838, Costa Rica renewed its military development. By 1849, a new interest on the expansion of executive power and an early push for the consolidation of the nation-state promoted the modernization of the army.⁵⁵² By 1853, the national army was already composed of 5,000 soldiers, divided into two main forts located in San José.⁵⁵³

With the arrival of Juan Rafael Mora to the presidency (1849–1859), the army experienced a process of modernization, including the hiring of Polish colonel Von Salisch and French colonel Pierre Barillier as military instructors, as well as the purchase of new weapons from Great Britain in 1854.⁵⁵⁴ As part of this transaction, Costa Rica acquired at least 500 *Minié* rifles, considered the most advanced of their type at that time.⁵⁵⁵ The importance Mora gave to the army is noticeable, since this purchase represented 25% of the annual national budget. By 1856, Costa Rica had an army composed of 7,000 men. In February of that year,

⁵⁵² David Díaz Arias. *Construcción de un Estado Moderno...*, 36.

⁵⁵³ Olger González Murillo, *Los Militares En Costa Rica: Génesis, Apogeo y Caída Del Ejército En Costa Rica, 1821-1919*. (San José, Costa Rica: Librería Alma Mater, 2005), 25–26. Arias Sánchez, Raúl Francisco, *Los Soldados De La Campaña Nacional (1856-1857)* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2007), 8. Mercedes Muñoz Guillén, *Estado y La Abolición Del Ejército En Costa Rica (1914-1949)* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1990), 21.

⁵⁵⁴ Arias Sánchez, Raúl Francisco, *Los Soldados De La Campaña Nacional (1856–1857)*, 9, 12.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11. Records show that it is possible that at least another 2000 rifles were acquired later that same year.

and after the declaration of war against Walker and his filibusters, 2,000 more men were enlisted from the provinces of Heredia and Alajuela, the latter the city where Juan Santamaría was born, and of which regiment he formed a part.⁵⁵⁶

The military victories during the war of 1856 helped to consolidate the position of the army in Costa Rica. The victory against the filibusters in Santa Rosa, in the northern Costa Rican province of Guanacaste, provided encouragement and helped to boost the confidence of the troops. The bloody battle of Rivas, in Nicaragua, where Juan Santamaría became a legend, saw many acts of heroism, becoming the center of the myth created around the war. While a cholera epidemic made the Costa Ricans retreat to the Central Valley, small forces continued fighting at the border, especially across the San Juan River, in order to occupy strategic positions that would impede Walker's replenishing of troops from New Orleans. Finally, during the last battle against the filibusters, in 1857, Costa Ricans formed part of a larger united Central American army. The Filibuster War was by then the most traumatic event in Costa Rican history, defining the importance of the military as part of the social structure.

After the war, the first indications of an interest in commemorating the event connected the military efforts to defend the sovereignty of the country with the creation of a Costa Rican national identity. In 1857, the Costa Rican Senate approved a motion that promoted the creation of a national "monument that would

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 10. Research by Arias Sánchez demonstrates that there were no more than 4000 soldiers enlisted at any specific time, see page 104.

eternize the memory of the triumphs at Santa Rosa, Rivas, and San Juan.”⁵⁵⁷ Among the efforts, the war against the filibusters started to be remembered during the annual celebrations of Independence. It is important to note how, in 1864, a search for military heroes promoted the first mention of Juan Santamaría’s name as one of the main Costa Rican heroes by the ex-president of New Granada, José de Obaldía.⁵⁵⁸ At the same time, the fact that there was no official report of Santamaría’s action makes this speech even more important, since it also shows the importance of popular culture, which, under the veil of oral history, kept alive the memory of Santamaría. Since there was no written account of Santamaría’s feat, and his action was witnessed only by a few, there is no doubt that Obaldía learned this because it was a common story in the Alajuela of the 1860s. The fact that Obaldía lived in Alajuela for some time would explain how he was able to collect the story.⁵⁵⁹ Since there were many heroic actions during the battle in Rivas, for Obaldía to focus on Santamaría meant that, for some reason, his story was strongly imprinted in the popular memory of the war.

The Filibuster War marked the beginning of the peak of military involvement in politics. Although military support had been sought before to consolidate power or to overthrow presidents, the war against the filibusters

⁵⁵⁷ Annie Lemistre Pujol, *Dos bronce conmemorativos y una gesta heroica: la estatua de Juan Santamaría y el Monumento Nacional* (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1988), 25.

⁵⁵⁸ José de Obaldía. “Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Don José de Obaldía, en el salon del Palacio de Gobierno el día 15 de setiembre de 1864.” *11 de Abril*, Cuadernos de Cultura, 10. (Alajuela: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 1989).

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, x.

stimulated a militaristic period in Costa Rican history. Colonel Lorenzo Salazar and Major Máximo Blanco, both veterans of 1856, became the most important figures for years in Costa Rica, establishing a control of the military forces that allowed them to subtly rule the country. In 1859, they withdrew support for Mora, and declared José María Montealegre as the new president. A similar plot was repeated in 1868, when Jose María Castro Madriz was forced to resign with the intervention of both military leaders.⁵⁶⁰

The main transformation of the army was accomplished after 1870, when General Tomás Guardia, also a veteran of the Filibuster War, took control of the government. In 1871, Guardia established a system of Liberal reforms to modify the organization of the country, most of them designed to create a more efficient and bureaucratic government, as well as the promotion of Costa Rican exports in international markets. This administrative approach and his long military career made obvious his particular interest in reforming the army. In 1871, a military code was created, establishing a semi-bureaucratization of the army through the creation of a regulated structure of defined military duties, behavior, and discipline for the soldiers.⁵⁶¹ Other features of Guardia's regime included the constant increase of salaries for the military forces, the professionalization of the army, the creation of military academies, and the creation of a second military code in 1884. Furthermore, with Guardia's rule, for the first time in Costa Rica

⁵⁶⁰ González Murillo, *Los Militares En Costa Rica: Génesis, Apogeo y Caída Del Ejército En Costa Rica, 1821–1919.*, 29–30.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 35–37.

the executive was administered by a military, signaling the fusion of the positions of President of the Republic and Commander in Chief of the Army. By 1877, when the population of the country reached 150,000 people, at least 15,000, representing ten percent of the population, were enrolled in the army, while another 10,000 served in the military reserve forces.⁵⁶²

The expansion of the military was prompted by internal and external factors. The government was aware of the importance of the army for issues of internal control. Police forces were not yet organized, and the military was in charge of public order. One of the main functions of the army was to prevent any threat to Guardia's rule. Guardia's long dictatorship provoked the reaction of those looking for a return to a democratic system. There were at least six different attempts to overthrow Guardia between 1875 and 1881, which helped to reinforce the importance of the military as the only force that could repress these revolts. The second reason for the growth of the military was the development of international conflicts, especially in connection to the expansionist policies of Guatemala and its intention of reuniting the Central American Republics under its rule. The former capital of Central America looked to repeat the process undertaken by Germany and Italy in Europe, applying the ideals of the formation of nation-states based on military control, forcing the cohesion of smaller states into larger units. The years 1878, 1879, and 1885 represented the biggest threats

⁵⁶² Solís, Edwin and Carlos González, *El Ejército En Costa Rica: Poder Político, Poder Militar* (San Pedro de Montes de Oca, Costa Rica: Ediciones Guayacán, 1992), 86–87.

to Costa Rican independence coming from other Central American Republics.⁵⁶³ These threats reinforced the idea of the need for a strong military. At the same time, it helped to keep alive the memory of the war and the search for inspiration on the events and people of the Filibuster War.

During that period, the name of Santamaría was recalled in an article published by Honduran writer Alvaro Contreras, published first in 1883, and then again in 1885, the year Justo Rufino Barrios, Liberal dictator of Guatemala, officially and unilaterally declared the forced Unification of Central America. The article called for the Costa Ricans to remember the feats of its heroes, among them Juan Santamaría.⁵⁶⁴ A month later the government named one of its new vessels with the name of the Alajuelan hero, the other one with the name of president *Mora*.⁵⁶⁵ On April 11th, articles were published in the *Diario de Costa Rica*, analyzing the war against Walker and remembering Santamaría's action in Rivas.⁵⁶⁶

At this time, contrary to what Palmer asserted, Santamaría was not the only one considered for the position of national hero. The name of Colonel Lorenzo Salazar was at certain point an unequivocal synonym of patriotism. As

⁵⁶³ Rafael Obregón Loría. *Confictos militares y politicos de Costa Rica*. San José: Imprenta La Nación, 1951.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 45. The article was published by the *Diario de Costa Rica* on March 5th, and reproduced in *La Gaceta*, the official newspaper, on March 6th. The article was originally published in an Alajuelan newspaper, *El Tambor*, number 4, September 9th, 1883. The name of the newspaper refers to Juan Santamaría's position in the army as a drummer.

⁵⁶⁵ Luis Dobles Segreda. *El Libro del Héroe*. (San José: Editorial Unversidad de Costa Rica, 2006), 59. It refers to Accord number 46 of April 25th, 1885.

⁵⁶⁶ Palmer, "Getting," 46.

one of the most important officers during the war of 1856, Salazar was nominated in 1860 to receive an award called the Sword of Honor. Although this kind of military hero has been the main object of commemoration in most of Europe and the Americas, as Costa Rican historian Rafael Méndez mentions, Salazar was not recognized as national hero because this would have implied a confrontation between him and other high ranking officers, like Major Blanco, who also had pretensions of personal glory, as well as enough political power to begin an internal conflict.

In 1887, Congress finally approved the creation of a monument to Santamaría. By 1888, Alajuela, his city of birth, was chosen as the ideal location for erecting the statue. In 1891, it was finally unveiled, and the celebrations that surrounded the event are a reflection of what would later become an annual festivity. In the context of the consolidation of the Liberal State under the rule of the *Alajuelato*, it was obvious that commemorations of Santamaría would be mainly a military affair. One reason that supports the idea of Santamaría as recognition to the military is the fact that the monument was to be originally paid for by funds collected among soldiers and veterans. In the end, the government had to donate the money to cover the rest of the costs, the main goal of getting the army involved in the construction of the hero's monument was to "reinforce the military image" of Santamaría.⁵⁶⁷

The commemorations of Independence Day, on September 15th, served as the perfect background for the unveiling of the statue. The celebrations followed a

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 101.

strict program. On September 14th, infantry troops from San José, Cartago, and Heredia entered the city. At 8 p.m. the soon-to-be-inaugurated Juan Santamaría Square was illuminated by electric lights, an innovation that had arrived in Costa Rica just seven years before. This was followed an hour later by fireworks. Music accompanied these festivities: newly composed hymns to Santamaría were played, and classics by Verdi and Bizet were performed. September 15th started with *dianas* (reveilles) and artillery shots to wake up the city, followed by the reception of the governmental officers and war veterans at the train station. At the square, anthems were played intermittently between a series of speeches delivered by the President of the Republic, Rafael Iglesias, as well as by the President of the Congress, the President of the Supreme Court, and municipal authorities of Alajuela. The army paraded and military honors were given to the statue when it was finally unveiled.⁵⁶⁸ The Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío described the event, mentioning that a dance open to the public was held after the official ceremonies ended. The municipal bands of the four major cities played for the people's enjoyment until dawn of the next day.⁵⁶⁹

The transformation of Costa Rican society during the Liberal period can explain the emphasis in the spread of Santamaría's commemorations. The Liberal period was marked by two different eras. The first one between 1870 and 1902 represented the consolidation of the military and the growth of their importance as an institution. The second one, between 1902 and 1948 represented a reformist

⁵⁶⁸ Lemistre Pujol, 107-108.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

Liberal. After 1902, the Liberal governments started to behave more democratically, and the Army started to lose its importance. This happened due to a generational change in the Liberal ranks, but also because a series of educational reforms promoted by the military governments of the 1870s and 1880s. The transferring of investment from the military forces to education was directed to strength the new state apparatus created by the Liberal reforms. The consolidation of a bureaucratic state needed the expansion of positions of clerical and administrative personnel, which could only be developed by changing the investment from military to educational areas. On the other hand, the need for agricultural labor convinced the government of the necessity of reducing the number of soldiers in order to release workers for the coffee and banana plantations. The economic crisis of the 1900s also helped in this process, since the government needed to reduce its military budget. Since international conflicts were less common, police forces were employed for internal control instead of the military. All these factors combined to reduce the size of the army, and by default, its influence. Although by 1900 the army grew to as much as 49,200 soldiers, a decree in 1904 reduced the military forces to a mere 1000.⁵⁷⁰ The educational reforms of the Liberal period marked a new era in the commemoration of Juan Santamaría. The School Festivity, or *Fiesta Escolar*, became the new instrument the state used to propagate its values. Based on the French and Argentinean

⁵⁷⁰ Muñoz Guillén, *Estado y La Abolición Del Ejército En Costa Rica (1914–1949)*, 31.

experiences, the Costa Rican government created civic festivities where school children took the main role.⁵⁷¹

The tradition of connecting the Filibuster War with Independence Day created during the 1891 celebrations continued for a short time. In 1895, the inauguration of the National monument dedicated to the Filibuster War was unveiled on September 15th. Five years later, a newspaper commenting on the September 15th celebrations in the city of Cartago mentioned the singing of the anthem to May 1st, as well as the anthem to Juan Santamaría as part of the program.⁵⁷² The same day, in Alajuela, Independence Day was celebrated around the statue of Juan Santamaría, the anthem to Juan Santamaría was also sung.⁵⁷³

At the same time, local authorities in Alajuela started to promote the celebration of April 11th as separate from Independence Day. In 1901, a newspaper announced a masked ball to commemorate Juan Santamaría's day on April 11th in Alajuela.⁵⁷⁴ In 1904, Alajuelans played a serenade in honor of the hero on that day as well.⁵⁷⁵ In 1907, children from all local schools joined to sing anthems to the hero at the feet of his statue.⁵⁷⁶ In 1908, the governor of Alajuela ordered the statue to be illuminated for the night of April 10th, while an orchestra

⁵⁷¹ David Díaz Arias, "Ritos escolares y símbolos nacionales en la fiesta de la independencia en Costa Rica, 1899–1921," *AFEHC Asociación para el Fomento de los Estudios Históricos en Centroamérica*, no. 19 (April, 2006): 1–24., 2.

⁵⁷² *La República*. (September 20th, 1900), 2–3.

⁵⁷³ *La República*. (September 20th, 1900), 3.

⁵⁷⁴ Méndez, 110-111. *La República*, April 12th, 1901, p.2.

⁵⁷⁵ Méndez, 111. *La República*, April 12th, 1904, p.3.

⁵⁷⁶ Méndez, 109. *El Noticiero*, April 12th, 1907, p.2.

played classical music. The next day, a student parade was organized, followed by speeches and patriotic anthems.⁵⁷⁷ In 1912, the celebrations of April 11th showed a strong military presence. An infantry battalion, led by General Perdomo marched through Central Street until they reached Santamaría Square. There, as afterschool students and the general public arrived to the plaza, the battalion deposited a laurel crown in front of the statue.⁵⁷⁸ In 1913, the national anthem and the anthem to Juan Santamaría worked as introductions to a series of speeches closed by the presentation of a flower crown at the feet of the monument.⁵⁷⁹ The importance of Santamaría as an Alajuelan symbol was acknowledged by a national newspaper that mentioned that “every year the neighbors of Alajuela celebrate this patriotic party.”⁵⁸⁰ One curious example of the Alajuelan identification with Santamaría during this period is the case of a restaurant’s ad in a local newspaper that declared itself to be the best from the city of *El Erizo*, the nickname of the hero.⁵⁸¹ Another newspaper at the national level titled a column dedicated to Alajuela “Erizadas,” making a clear reference to the connection between the hero and his native city.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁷ *La Información*. (April 12th, 1908). *La Prensa Libre*. (April 14th, 1908).

⁵⁷⁸ *La Información*. (April 12th, 1912).

⁵⁷⁹ Méndez, *Imágenes Del Poder: Juan Santamaría y El Ascenso De La Nación En Costa Rica (1860–1915)*, 109–111.

⁵⁸⁰ *La Información*. (April 12th, 1912).

⁵⁸¹ *Ecos de Alajuela*. (April 6th, 1902), 1. Year 1, number 1.

⁵⁸² *La Prensa Libre*. (May 2nd, 1908).

The growing importance of Santamaría's celebrations in Alajuela on April 11th promoted the adoption, by the national government, of this day to commemorate the war of 1856. As Rafael Méndez says, "there is no doubt that the Alajuelan soldier reached throughout this period a popularity that made him the favorite hero of the Costa Rican people."⁵⁸³ It is for this reason that President Alfredo González Flores decided in 1915 to declare April 11th as a national holiday.⁵⁸⁴

Starting on April 11th, 1916, Santamaría has been celebrated each year without interruption. The celebrations of April 11th serve to understand the relation between the dominant ideology and the subordinate, as used by Ginzburg. The official discourse represents the dominant ideology, and it is mostly represented by the military presence during the celebrations, due to the military nature of the Filibuster War. The subordinate ideology is represented instead by the popular participation in the celebrations, especially when the popular groups have some agency on the shape and style of the commemorations. During the González Flores administration, and to place emphasis on school participation in the national festivities, the army was banned from having an active role in civic celebrations.⁵⁸⁵ After the creation of the concept of the *fiesta escolar* and the involvement of school children in the April 11th celebrations, this event marked the beginning of the disconnection between Santamaría's image and his military

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 120.

⁵⁸⁴ Dobles Segreda, 75.

⁵⁸⁵ David Díaz Arias, *Historia Del 11 De Abril: Juan Santamaría Entre El Pasado y El Presente (1915–2006)* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2006), 6.

background. To take a glimpse into the activities of the 1916 commemorations provide to us the framework in which later celebrations were supposed to reflect themselves, as well as the ideas the government had for the use of the holiday and its symbolism. On April 10th, the organization of the activities focused in the city of Alajuela. Directed to attract the common citizen, music was played in several parks, a torch parade was organized, and an open air free movie was shown. The official celebrations took place on April 11th, beginning with the Grand Parade that started in the Church of the Agony, in the eastern part of the city, and stopping first in front of the house where Santamaría lived, where a speech was delivered. The parade continued then until it reached the feet of the statue of the hero. Again, speeches and anthems closed the event.⁵⁸⁶

While the army had been banned from the organization of the celebrations, there was still a strong military presence. The Grand Parade included the participation of the few veterans from 1856 still alive. The veterans were not the only representatives of the army; military bands and a company of infantry also walked in the parade. This demonstrates the argument promoted by Høivik and Aas, which points out that the process of demilitarization of a society takes usually small steps. Militarization permeates several levels of the society, the presence of the military can be felt both in physical and symbolic ways, and both are perceived as real.

⁵⁸⁶ Municipalidad de Alajuela, *Memoria De Las Fiesta Cívicas Celebradas en Alajuela El 11 De Abril De 1916* (Alajuela: Imprenta y Litografía del Comercio, 1916), 17–18, 35.

A new activity that had become very popular in Costa Rica since the beginning of the twentieth century was included as a motivation for the common citizen to participate in these celebrations. A football (soccer) match between two teams, called *Morazán*, from San José, and *11 de Abril* from Alajuela, both possibly improvised groups, attracted the attention of the people. This can be interpreted as part of the official efforts to involve the common citizen in the celebrations of April 11th.⁵⁸⁷ The *fiesta escolar*, a forced inclusion of young students in the official celebrations can be understood as a way for the State to promote nationalism and patriotic values to the citizens from an early age. The fact that Santamaría was a hero whose memory was kept alive by popular culture, worked very well for the State. By incorporating his image as part of the official discourse, the government was able to please both local and popular aspirations. By assuring the participation of the people, the government ensured that the image of Santamaría did not become an exclusive symbol of the state, allowing for the popular identification with the hero. These efforts included the establishment of local committees in charge of the illumination of Santamaría's Square, as well as convincing the neighbors to ornate their houses with flags and special lights. Others made sure the same happened to public buildings and electric poles.

The music played during the celebrations point to the value military symbols continued to have. A chronicle of the celebrations described the performance of the military bands at dawn as similar to “those martial plays that

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., 18.

awakened the bellicose feelings of our elders The past seemed to come to life again...”⁵⁸⁸ Later in the evening, the mood changed dramatically. From the eleven pieces of music planned to be played between 5 p.m. and 7.30 p.m., only two, including the anthem to Juan Santamaría, had a martial style. The rest were a selection of waltzes, overtures, and fantasies by European composers. This can be explained by the fact that military ceremonial activities are traditionally restricted and do not extend to the evening. The evening is a moment of relaxation, which could also explain the change of mood from one series of musical selections to the other. The attempt by the authorities to attract common citizens to the events played an important role on the music selection. Military and official representatives were long gone after the parade, and only the neighbors could easily hear the bands playing. If we take into account that the beginning of the musical performance at 5 p.m. coincided with the end of mass, and that the cathedral is located just a block and a half away from Santamaría Square, we can conclude that the intention was to captivate the common people and remember the celebrations in a communal mood similar to the one they had when leaving the church.⁵⁸⁹

The speeches given that day reflected very well the official discourse. Remembrance of the military victories of 1856, calls for patriotism, and nationalistic phrases all were clear representations of an official discourse typical

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 27. “aquellos toques marciales que despertaron el sentimiento bélico de nuestros mayores El pasado parecía resucitar”

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 28.

of the process of construction and consolidation of the nation-state. The government's attempt to appropriate the image of Santamaría was made obvious by Claudio González, Secretary of State, who said that "Alajuela is the owner of a hero, who, because he belongs to her, is also from Costa Rica."⁵⁹⁰ Of course, to be able to appropriate Santamaría as a symbol, the state had to first consolidate the image of Santamaría, bestowing it with legitimacy. The lack of official documentation about Santamaría's feat had generated a controversy about his existence. This was especially true during the first two decades of the twentieth century, which serves to explain why González stated in his speech that "Alajuela gave existence to Juan Santamaría, arming him with the shield of faith . . . and of patriotic love..."⁵⁹¹ In 1916, Santamaría became a national hero, and during the celebrations of April 11th, his image was acknowledged as a local phenomenon, given official recognition and legitimacy, elevated to national hero and, in the process, offering it to popular groups as a symbol of national identity. In order to do so, the state had to push the army a little bit to the side.

Starting in 1916, Santamaría has been officially celebrated on April 11th. The centenary of the hero's birth, in 1931, represented a special occasion that the state could not forget if it wanted to imprint the image of Santamaría on the minds of common Costa Rican citizens. That year, in addition to the celebration of April

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 51. "Alajuela, poseedora de un héroe que, por ser suyo, es de Costa Rica."

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 52. "Alajuela dio existencia a Juan Santamaría y lo armó con el escudo de la fe. . . , y del amor patrio."

11th, a series of special activities were held during the last four days of August to commemorate Santamaría's birthday on August 31st.

Undeniably, the military aspect continued to be present during Santamaría's commemorations. On the morning of August 29th, twenty-one cannon blanks were shot to announce the beginning of the parade. The schools were organized in military companies bearing the names of some of the heroes of 1856. Although this time no soldiers marched during the parade, the high school students carried with them the original rifles used during the Filibuster War, which had been in storage for decades.⁵⁹² Other military symbols included a float shaped in such a way as to resemble the vessel *11 de Abril*, a military boat lost during the war in 1856. On another float, a group of soldiers guarded a young female student representing the nation.⁵⁹³

But, besides the strong military symbolism and the participation of governmental representatives, the commemorations were mostly a popular celebration, signaling a decreasing militarization of the celebrations. The program of activities included athletic competitions and sports directed to attract the crowd. For August 30th, a bicycle race was planned, as well as a football (soccer) game and a basketball game. On August 31st, a football (soccer) game was played between two of the most popular teams of the Costa Rican first division, and during the late afternoon, a horse race took place. Music, though, was the main

⁵⁹² Instituto de Alajuela, *Libro Del Centenario De Juan Santamaría* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1934), 18, 25.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

attraction. On August 28th, the local military band awakened the city while playing through the streets of Alajuela. That same evening, popular balls were organized, and the public enjoyed a special presentation of the *comparsa*, a flamboyant and colorful dancing troupe traditionally associated with carnivals. For the next three days, the local military band played in the Juan Santamaría Square, and the *comparsa* was in charge, again, of demonstrating the festive spirit of the celebrations.⁵⁹⁴ The lack of a military presence, already forbidden since González Flores' government, confirmed once more the lack of identification of the population with the military.

The celebrations of 1916 and 1931 both had a strong military symbolism, understandable since they commemorated a military event and they happened during a period in which Costa Rica continued to have an army. Still, the fact that the military forces were banned from the parades, and the growing interest on popular participation, shows a decreasing importance of the military in Costa Rican society, corresponding to a period in which the size of the army had been already drastically reduced when compared to the nineteenth century. By the early 1940s, Costa Rica has less than one thousand soldiers, not even a quarter of the size of the army in 1856, and not even five percent of its size during the *Alajuelato* period. The abolition of the army, in 1948, created a different set of circumstances, raising the question of the position of military values in a country without an army.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 18-20.

The 1930s and the rise of socialism promoted changes in the political arena that severely affected the destiny of the army in Costa Rica. Although the Liberal groups that had ruled Costa Rica since the 1870s continued to apply the same economic and political patterns they had for decades, a reformist attitude started to gain strength. In 1940, the National Republican Party won the elections. Although the party had been associated with the coffee producing elites, and the Liberal groups traditionally in power, the new president, Rafael Calderón Guardia, introduced to Costa Rica Social-Christian principles he possibly learned during his years as a college student in Belgium. Based on social values of the Catholic Church and a social reformist attitude based on the *Rerum Novarum* Papal encyclical, Calderón Guardia promoted an increased involvement of the state in the welfare of the common Costa Rican citizen. In order to reach a majority in Congress, the National Republicans allied with the Communist Party, who in exchange for their support asked for the promotion of social reforms. This produced a double effect: first, since the communists allied with the government, the need for an army as an agent of social control was weakened even more. Second, the expansion of expenditures in the areas of popular housing, universal health, and education, forced a reduction on the budget allocated to the army. The one thousand men that had been the core of the professional army since the beginning of the twentieth century were reduced in 1942 to only 324. By 1948, this number was reduced even more, reaching just 300 soldiers and officers.⁵⁹⁵ That same year, between March and April, a civil war caused by reports of

⁵⁹⁵ Muñoz Guillén, *Estado y La Abolición Del Ejército En Costa Rica (1914–1949)*, 104.

electoral fraud destroyed the alliance between Liberals and Communists, and a new era of governments defined by Social-Democratic policies redefined the direction of the country. The new Liberación Nacional Party, the winners of the civil war, kept the reforms of the former regime and took them even deeper. One of the first actions of importance, and one that represents a core element of modern Costa Rican national mythology, was the abolition of the army as a standing force in December of 1948.

The abolition of the army redefined the identity of Costa Ricans, since it represented the definite extinction of a traditional sector of society. Institutional changes promote cultural change, but this change, as expressed in the terms of Høivik and Aas, is gradual.⁵⁹⁶ The disappearance of the army as an institution does not represent an automatic demilitarization of a society. It can be considered that the abolition of the army in 1948 was just a *coup de grâce* to an already dying institution. The demilitarization of the country had a direct correlation with the diminishing of the participation of the army in the celebrations of the Filibuster War. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the participation of young students in the army in the *fiesta escolar* coincided with the reduction of the size of the army. In 1916 the army was expelled from the celebrations of April 11th, and only a small infantry division was allowed to march during the parade. In 1931, some military symbols continued to be used, but the army did not participate in the parade, nor were there soldiers present in any other activities.

⁵⁹⁶ Høivik, Tord and Solveig Aas. "Demilitarization in Costa Rica: A Farewell to Arms?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 18:4 (1981), 333–351.

The demilitarization of Costa Rica is reflected in the demilitarization of the commemoration of Juan Santamaría. Still, the abolition of the army did not represent an immediate cultural transformation from a militarized to a non-militarized society. This was possible only with the active participation of the popular groups, showing, as Ginzburg demonstrated, some independence of popular culture from the dominant ideology, and its capacity to transform society.

In 1956, Costa Rica celebrated the first centenary of the Filibuster War, but eight years after the abolition of the army, not much had changed in the way April 11th and Juan Santamaría were celebrated. On one hand, popular culture had the most important position in the program of activities. On the other hand, military culture continued to be present. The plans for the festivities started a year before, when the municipality of Alajuela proposed moving Santamaría's statue from its current location to a square just across his place of birth. By August of that year, the opposition to the idea had grown so much that the committee in charge of organizing the celebrations decided to eliminate the project.⁵⁹⁷

Due to the importance of the commemoration of the first centenary of the Filibuster War, this time the celebrations lasted more than a week, starting on April 7th and ending on April 15th. Music and dance performances were a constant. There were two parades instead of only one, and a myriad of other activities were enjoyed by the crowd. On Saturday the 7th, the coronation of the Queen of the Festivities was celebrated with a ball in the *Instituto de Alajuela*.

⁵⁹⁷ Comité Alajuelense Pro Festejos del Centenario, *Libro De Oro Del Centenario* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1958), 16.

Just one hour later a public ball started at the recently remodeled Juan Santamaría Square. At noon of April 8th, marimbas played throughout the city of Alajuela. At 3 p.m., the Siboney Orchestra, a very popular group that performed cumbia, merengue, and other tropical music made its presentation at the *Instituto de Alajuela*. To close the day, the Philharmonic of Grecia performed a concert. Marimbas appeared again in the program twice on April 9th, once on April 11th, and again on April 12th. Orchestras playing classical music also performed in various places on April 9th, 10th, and 11th. Balls were organized for all nine days, sometimes more than once a day, featuring bands performing popular music. Of course, a football (soccer) game, “being the favorite sport” of the people, could not be left out of the celebrations.⁵⁹⁸ This time the local team and one of the most important in Costa Rican history, Liga Deportiva Alajuelense, confronted a Brazilian team that was visiting the country those days. Other activities, including fireworks and a horse parade, were also performed.⁵⁹⁹

The main parade, on April 11th, was preceded by a series of speeches, in which the image of Santamaría was invoked. The Minister of Education made a special observation in his speech in connection with the participation of students in the parades. In it, he remembered that he himself paraded once in front of Santamaría’s statue, making clear that it was the students who were now the main force behind the celebration, rather than the military. Between speeches, the official discourse was reinforced by the anthems played, performing the Costa

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 173–176.

Rican national anthem, the anthem of each of the Central American Republics, the anthem to Juan Santamaría and a nationalistic song appropriately titled “Patriótica Costarricense,” an anonymous song dating from 1856 that had become recognized as a second national anthem.⁶⁰⁰ Another tradition that had its ups and downs was reenacted at this time, when during the evening of April 10th, 1957, a torch parade performed by elementary school students marched from the location where Santamaría’s house used to stand, (now the *Fountain of Freedom*), to the Santamaría Square where his statue is located.⁶⁰¹ The same route was used the next day for the main parade.

Some military symbols continued to be present. Most students were dressed in uniforms with a strong militaristic style, resembling those used by high school bands in the United States or by soldiers of the Napoleonic era. The martial attitude of the students deserved comments in the memoirs of the celebrations of being “like the roots of an army, but an army for peace.”⁶⁰² This phrase shows how the contradiction between the celebrations of a military hero in a country without an army began to emerge. A couple of weeks before, to celebrate the Battle of Santa Rosa on March 20th, hundreds of followers of the governing Liberación Nacional Party gathered at the site of the Hacienda Santa

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 169.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 179. In 1931, a fountain and a small park were built where the house of Santamaría was once located. In the center of the fountain, a stone is inscribed with the words *Fuente de Libertad*, (Fountain of Freedom).

⁶⁰² Ibid., 189. “*un ejército en ciernes, pero ejército para la paz.*”

Rosa dressed in military uniforms and helmets. The reason for this militaristic attitude and the controversy it sparked will be analyzed in the following chapter.

In general, the Costa Rican attitude toward the army and militaristic values has been ambivalent throughout history. As early as 1834, just thirteen years after independence, influential groups in Costa Rica were already promoting the abolition of the army.⁶⁰³ Also, in 1844, the press pushed for a reduction of the army to the minimum, in order to avoid conflicts promoted by the strong localism affecting the country during this period.⁶⁰⁴ The particularity of the Costa Rican culture, in which the identification with the military was poor at the best, can be reflected by the fact that during the early period of Liberal governments, when the army took a preponderant position in society, was precisely the time when the myth of Costa Rica being a country where there were “more teachers than soldiers” was created.⁶⁰⁵ The contradiction is exemplified by the fact that during the same period this myth was being promoted, President Guardia increased the army to 15,000 soldiers, representing about ten percent of the population of the country at that time, and three decades later, it grew to be composed by almost 50,000 soldiers and officers.

The strength of popular culture

During the late nineteenth century, the topic of students and teachers as civil symbols of the country continued to be contrasted against the military,

⁶⁰³ Acuña Ortega, Víctor Hugo, "La Invención De La Diferencia Costarricense, 1810–1870," *Revista de Historia*, no. 45 (enero-junio, 2002 2002): 191–228. , 204.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

nationalistic official discourse. The government developed a growing emphasis on speeches, music, and symbols that promoted a sense of cohesion typical of the process of nation-state consolidation, while popular participation in official activities was reduced to mere witnesses. The unveiling of Santamaría's statue in 1891, for example, helped to create an official discourse of the Filibuster War that emphasized institutional and patriotic involvement. There was no space for popular activities. The consolidation of Santamaría as national hero in 1916 introduced an element of popular culture that, years later, changed the meaning of the celebrations of the Filibuster War in detriment of the official discourse.

While the crisis of the Liberal state during the early twentieth century was confronted with the elevation of April 11th in detriment of May 1st, the figure of Santamaría was never easy to manipulate. By the 1940s, the Liberal state was substituted by a welfare state that lasted until the 1980s and 1990s. The end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twentieth-first century has been characterized by the imposition of a neoliberal state based on the Washington consensus, better known in the United States with the nickname of Reaganomics. The dismantling of the welfare state has been resisted by popular organizations, and the parades of April 11th served as another theater in which popular culture protested against the betrayal of the state.

The case of Santamaría is unique in the western world. His image and the manner of his rise do not fit the classic representation of a national hero. Washington, Bolívar, Bismarck, and Garibaldi are classic heroes that define the meaning of the nation-state at its birth. They fit the description of the founding

father, the one that establishes the initial structure and framework of the nation. Santamaría instead is a late hero, his feat happening thirty-five years after the country became independent. Therefore, he does not fit as a symbol for the foundation of the country. Due to the fact that Costa Rica did not have a war of independence, it also lacks a hero that could be defined as a founding father. The Costa Rican government tried to fill this gap, unsuccessfully, by connecting the war of 1856 with Independence Day, a movement promoted especially during the 1890s, but this association has not developed in full in the Costa Rican mind. Therefore, Santamaría's legacy cannot be connected to the specific moment in the past that is necessary in the definition of the birth of the nation-state.

Also, because of his popular roots, both as a hero and as a person, Santamaría is a symbol that cannot represent the state in an exclusive manner. Santamaría was not a leader of any kind. He was not a president, nor a general, or a commander, the kind of material used for most national heroes. Instead, he was a humble drummer boy, which is to say that he was not even a full soldier. In the Costa Rican collective memory, this point is clearly established. One of the popular nicknames for Santamaría is *el tamborcillo*, or the little drummer. In this case, the nickname is a reflection of the image of Santamaría as a humble young man with no natural inclinations of accomplishing heroic feats in great battles. This understanding is reflected, among other places, in a little plaque at the old entrance to the Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, which portrays a drum over two dates, 1831–1931, representing Santamaría in his drum, and the dates of his birth and its centenary.

Another issue created by the official adoption of the figure of Santamaría is the enemy he fought against, causing serious problems for the official discourse and the state. The Costa Rican government has usually been extremely friendly to the United States, when not submissive. The image of Santamaría is that of a hero who died fighting and defeating the advances of a growing empire: the United States. For this reason, an anti-imperialist image of Santamaría has been effectively used not only by the government, but also by non-governmental groups, from the communist party in the early twentieth century, to the anti-CAFTA movement of the early twenty first century.⁶⁰⁶

The rise of the figure of Juan Santamaría as the Costa Rican national hero par excellence has therefore created serious difficulties for its official interpretation. In most speeches, Costa Rican presidents failed at their objective of making the people identify with their pledge, basically because the descriptions of Santamaría are demagogic and inconsistent. Also, the causes Santamaría memory is urged to defend are too abstract and usually disconnected from the Filibuster War and its values. On his April 11th speech in 2005, for example, President Abel Pacheco urged Costa Ricans to be prepared to confront the new enemies of Costa Rica, described as “poverty, disengagement, the loss of civic and moral values,

⁶⁰⁶ CAFTA, or TLC in Spanish, is a free trade agreement between Central America and the United States that caused a great upheaval in Costa Rica. The obvious threats to sovereignty and the lack of security for fair trade and labor rights promoted the creation of a popular movement that forced the government to stand back and call for a referendum before being allowed to continue the negotiations. Although the ballots favored CAFTA, it was by a very small margin, and protests against the agreement are still frequent. The image of Juan Santamaría was one of the most used by the anti-CAFTA groups.

the destruction of nature, and pessimism.”⁶⁰⁷ In other cases, the abuses of political demagoguery created an open confrontation between the official discourse and the people. In 1999, President Miguel Angel Rodríguez was engaged in a large controversy related to his insistence on the privatization of state property. The selling of the Costa Rican Electric Institute (ICE, Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad) was strongly opposed by the people, promoting some of the largest demonstrations ever seen in Costa Rican history. In his April 11th, 1999 speech, Rodríguez expressed that the enemy this time was at home, that the “new filibusters” were those against the selling of national property to international corporations.⁶⁰⁸ It is obvious that such unpopular attitude of the president did not find a sympathetic echo in the people, and in fact it was severely criticized by ex-presidents, congressmen, and unions alike. To declare the Costa Rican people to be filibusters is contradictory to any logical discourse related to the Filibuster War. It is especially controversial when, as in this case, the state declares itself to be the representative of the nation, assigning to the people the figure of the enemy.

It is precisely the lack of consistency in the official discourse that has disenfranchised the people, impeding them to identify with the manner in which the state tries to define the Filibuster War and its celebrations. The meaning gap

⁶⁰⁷ *La Nación*, April 11th, 2005. “Celebran con desfiles 149 años de batalla contra filibusteros.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2005/abril/11/ultima-sr337179.html. “*la pobreza, el inmovilismo, la pérdida de valores cívicos y morales, la destrucción de la naturaleza y el pesimismo.*”

⁶⁰⁸ *La Nación*, April 12th, 1999. “Planes del ICE sin plazo: “nuevos filibusteros.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/1999/abril/12/pais3.html.

produced by this cultural dissonance allowed for the people to look for a new manner to understand the celebrations of April 11th. The first step for the popular groups was to recover the image of Juan Santamaría as belonging to the people, not to the state. After that, it has re-appropriated a festivity that since its beginnings was always based on a popular origin. If the official culture stole the hero from the hands of the people, the people decided to take back Santamaría by eliminating the militaristic and official meanings of the celebrations.

To understand the process of re-appropriation of the image of Santamaría by the people, Ginzburg's concepts, mentioned above, prove to be useful tools. Since popular culture does not usually leave a printed document of its plans and intentions, it is possible to find its expressions precisely in the encounter between official and popular discourse. In the case of the Filibuster War, this is represented by the celebrations of April 11th. That day, the state commemorates the military victories against the filibusters, imbuing their meaning with a discourse that celebrates the state as well as the effort of common citizens in protecting the nation during the war. By analyzing changes to the performance of the celebrations it is possible to understand the redefinition of the commemorations of the Filibuster War promoted by popular culture.

One of the first elements was disrupting the traditional framework of the April 11th commemorations by including new elements closely associated with popular celebrations, not with official culture. In 1997, a newspaper published as a novelty the presence during the parades of the "rhythmic band of Squirres, directed by Antony Wilson, which traveled from that city in order to inject a little

Caribbean touch to the percussion.”⁶⁰⁹ The note does not represent a revolutionary movement, but it is significant in some aspects. It is important to note that in Costa Rica, each school or high school is responsible for their own organization for the parades, including the design of their uniforms, music played, marching style, etc. Up to that point, the April 11th parades had always used militaristic or patriotic songs, most of them following a military rhythm, the march. The introduction of Caribbean rhythms is, in itself, an affront to the militaristic basic framework of the parades. Since the main figure of the celebrations of April 11th is Juan Santamaría, it is not difficult to imagine that during the parades a young drummer has a stronger symbolic association with the national hero than, say, the President of Costa Rica. To see a drummer boy playing popular music instead of a military march is a signal to those standing along the parade route of the power of the individual over institutions. This was just the beginning. The takeover of the parades did not include only music, but other elements. While the bands traditionally had played nationalistic songs such as “Patriótica Costarricense,” the “Anthem to Juan Santamaría,” “Tan Linda es mi Costa Rica,” as well as other traditional songs as “Caña Dulce,” and “Morena de mi Vida,” by April of 2000 we can find an article stating that: “the bands delighted the public with all kind of melodies, from folkloric music as “Caña Dulce,” to the 70s classic rock, or the most popular tropical songs of the moment. To the rhythm of each song, young

⁶⁰⁹ *La Nación*, April 12th, 1997. “Sol y orden recordaron al héroe.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: <http://www.nacion.com/linea/1997/abril/12/sol.html>. “banda rítmica de Siquirres, dirigida por Antony Wilson, que viajó desde esa ciudad limonense para inyectarle un toque caribeño a la percusión.”

girls wore dresses of bright colors and fine details, moving their bodies to even touch the ground.”⁶¹⁰ In just a few years, popular culture was able to change the cultural expressions associated with parades to transform them from a traditional militaristic parade into a *comparsa*. Marches became samba, and the traditional martial air of the majorettes became the colorful and sensual dance of the carnival. The official parade was transformed into a popular *fiesta*.

Also in 2000, another tradition was broken. Usually, as the oldest and most traditional high school of Alajuela, the *Instituto de Alajuela* closed the parades. Its position is so closely attached to the city that its coat of arms shows Santamaría’s torch. That year, for the first time, and against the express desire of the government, the *Instituto de Alajuela* did not close the parade. Instead, workers of the Costa Rican Electric Institute, the same that president Rodríguez tried to sell some years earlier, received the honor. Behind them, thousands of members of the community walked with signs supporting the Electricity Company, protesting the government’s intention of privatization. Since then, April 11th became a center of protest against the government. In an interview in 2003, a high school teacher disgusted by the decision of the government to symbolically support the U.S. invasion of Iraq, said to the newspapers that “the government, they are the filibusters. If they join the warmongers, they are like the

⁶¹⁰ *La Nación*, April 12th, 2000. “Fiesta cívica inundó Alajuela.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/In_ee/2000/abril/12/pais2.html. “las bandas deleitaron al público con todo tipo de melodías desde música folklórica como *Caña Dulce*, pasando por los clásicos del rock de los 70s o las más populares canciones tropicales del momento. Al ritmo de cada tonada, las jóvenes que lucieron atuendos de llamativos colores y finos detalles, movieron sus cuerpos incluso hasta llegar al suelo.”

filibusters.”⁶¹¹ On April 11th, 2005, a group of protestors against the government’s insistence on signing the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) carried signs stating “it will always be April 11th” and “today’s filibusters come along with dollars,” in a clear defiance against the government’s actions.⁶¹²

The people started to redefine the meaning of the celebrations, and to empower themselves by taking away the right to define what a filibuster was and what the commemoration of Santamaría was supposed to represent. In popular culture, a festivity is clearly a celebration, therefore, a party, and that is how popular culture started to redefine the celebrations. The defiance against the official discourse was followed by more protests, as well as other more subtle ways of expression. In 2003, the government, concerned by the decreasing length of the skirts used by the baton twirlers during the parades, forbade the use of mini-skirts. The ban included the use of cowboy hats or midriff-bearing blouses. The reason, according to the government, was that the celebrations to Juan Santamaría were losing its patriotic meaning. The Minister of Education failed to understand that the meaning of April 11th did not belong anymore exclusively to the government. On April 12th, 2005 the newspapers reported that most of the

⁶¹¹ *La Nación*, April 12th, 2003. “Celebración salpicada con protestas.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2003/abril/12/pais2.html. “*Los filibusteros son ellos, el Gobierno. Si se unen a los guerreristas son como los filibusteros.*”

⁶¹² *La Nación*, April 12th, 2005. “Bastonerías sin miedo a advertencia del MEP.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2005/abril/12/pais2.html. “*siempre será 11 de Abril*”, “*Los filibusteros de hoy vienen con los dólares.*”

high schools had defied the order.⁶¹³ With regard to the defiant attitude of the students against the new Manual for Celebration of Patriotic Festivities, nobody expressed the idea better than an article written the following day stating that “it is necessary to accept that no manual has the strength of reggaeton or the convincing power of MTV.”⁶¹⁴

Popular culture is dynamic, and therefore constantly changing, being influenced from many avenues, including foreign pop music. That explains why in recent parades the music played by the bands included songs by Shakira, Ricky Martin, and Celia Cruz. The baton twirlers are now dancing to the *comparsa* rhythm, resembling more of a carnival than a patriotic parade.⁶¹⁵ The battle against the mini-skirts was lost by the government, and the Minister of Education was forced to declare in 2007 that “measures to regulate the way of dressing and the music played during the parades were eliminated.”⁶¹⁶ It is true that expressions of popular culture can be superficial, but this is due to a flexibility that allows for the inclusion of a variety of ideas and influences. It does not have, as the official discourse, a distinctive rhetoric, and it can also be erratic.

⁶¹³ *La Nación*, April 12th, 2005. “Bastonerías sin miedo a advertencia del MEP.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2005/abril/12/pais2.html.

⁶¹⁴ *La Nación*, April 13th, 2005. Cordero, Juan Fernando. “Buenos Días: De Erizos y Vaqueritas.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2005/abril/13/opinion1.html. “Hay que aceptar que ningún manual tiene la fuerza del reggaetón ni el poder de convencimiento de MTV.”

⁶¹⁵ *La Nación*, April 11th, 2007. “País celebró el 151 aniversario de la gesta heroica de Juan Santamaría.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2007/abril/11/ultima-sr1059822.html.

⁶¹⁶ *La Nación*, April 11th, 2007. “País celebró el 151 aniversario de la gesta heroica de Juan Santamaría.” Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2007/abril/11/ultima-sr1059822.html

The image of Santamaría has belonged, since its beginnings, to popular culture. Oral culture kept the memory of the humble drummer boy alive. Therefore, popular culture has the right to recover its meaning and use it, as it has been done recently, to represent popular meanings. When the people accused the government of being the real filibusters and at the same time defied government regulations disguised as patriotic and civic virtues, popular culture started recovering the power to define the memory of the events, and to recreate a sense of identity once co-opted by the state. It is not casual that Santamaría is used as a symbol by popular anti-imperialist movements; it has been done before, and it is in the very nature of Santamaría's feat. But now, instead of military music, the songs played by the bands also include anti-war lyrics. An example is "La vida es un carnaval," which was made famous by Cuban singer Celia Cruz. The song is a cry against war, describing it as a continuous carnival, criticizing anything that does not lead to happiness.⁶¹⁷ It criticizes "all those that use weapons, all those that create pollution, and all those that make war." Another example comes from 2007, when a high school band played an old Costa Rican song called "Violencia." A very popular song in the 1970s, "Violencia" is an outcry against all kind of abuse.⁶¹⁸ The lyrics say: "violence, damn violence, why don't you let peace reign, let love reign." This is the transfiguration of Santamaría's image by popular culture, from the military hero that the official discourse still wants to use

⁶¹⁷ *La Nación*, April 12th, 2007. "Desorden y calor marcharon en desfile." Retrieved on April 13th, 2008: http://www.nacion.com/ln_e/2007/abril/12/pais1059805.html.

⁶¹⁸ A video of the song played at the parade can be seen at: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=QFEjvvn9xI&feature=related>. Retrieved on April 13th, 2008.

in a demagogical way, to an instrument of criticism from a people that defines itself by its immediate needs: family, friends, love, work, and peace.

Chapter 7

SANTA ROSA, OR FAILING ON INVENTING TRADITIONS

The battle of Santa Rosa, which took place on March 20, 1856, was the first encounter between the invading filibusters and the Costa Rican army. It was also the first victory for the Costa Ricans and a devastating moral and tactical defeat for Walker's forces. While this battle set the course for the war, only once did March 20th have a chance of becoming an official holiday, and it was during the Costa Rican celebrations of the centenary of the Filibuster War in 1956. This chapter analyzes the case of a failed effort to create a new holiday related to the Filibuster War. It studies the qualities of invented traditions as explained by Hobsbawm in his now classic *Invented Traditions*.⁶¹⁹ Based on his theories, this chapter explores what went wrong for the government's attempt to create a new holiday celebrating the Filibuster War, pointing out the political uses and abuses of the past in which it incurred.

During the 1940s, Costa Rican politics became increasingly polarized. The elections of 1947 were stained with several denunciations of irregularities. Electoral fraud was even suspected. A subsequent civil war resulted in a drastic change to the political arena. In 1948, while a Constitutional Congress was assembled to create a new Constitution, a temporary Junta was selected to be in charge of the executive power. Its president was José Figueres Ferrer, leader of the military movement that contested the official result of the 1947 elections.

⁶¹⁹ Hobsbawm, *Invented Traditions*.

Under his leadership, Costa Rica saw a new group coming to power under the flag of the newly created Liberación Nacional party.

Although the civil war officially lasted only a few weeks, political instability continued for years, leading to the events of 1955.⁶²⁰ In 1949, a new Constitution was established. The Junta, therefore having accomplished its goal, was disbanded, and a new president, Otilio Ulate, was inaugurated. Figueres decided to run in the 1953 elections, and his victory at the polls revived the resentment of the Calderonistas, the group defeated during the civil war.⁶²¹ In 1955, a group of exiled Calderonistas forged an alliance with Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza and invaded Costa Rica from the north. On one hand, the Calderonistas allied with the Communists during the 1940s to maintain political control of Costa Rica, something that Somoza and other U.S. backed dictators would not forgive. But, on the other hand, Figueres was a leader of the Caribbean Legion, a non-official armed movement directed to overthrow all dictators in the region, and Somoza was a main target for that organization. The strange coalition between Calderonistas and Somoza can only be explained by the fact that Figueres was a common enemy.

⁶²⁰ At least one author has considered the invasion of 1955 as part of the civil war started in 1948. See: Aranda B., Jesús. *Los excombatientes de 1948-55: ensayo sobre la guerra civil de Costa Rica*. San José: [s.n.].

⁶²¹ Calderonista is the term used to describe the followers of Dr. Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, Constitutional president of Costa Rica between 1940 and 1944.

The invasion started in January 1955, although rumors of a possible attack were reported since October 1954.⁶²² The land invasion started on January 10, 1955, followed by a bombardment over San José on January 12th.⁶²³ On January 15th, a battle ensued in the northern province of Guanacaste, around the site of the Hacienda Santa Rosa, the same place in which Walker's filibusters were defeated almost a hundred years before.⁶²⁴ The battle, a victory for the Costa Rican forces after three days of fighting, was immediately named "the battle of Santa Rosa."⁶²⁵ To argue that the government chose the Hacienda Santa Rosa cannot be supported, but it is clear that Figueres did not miss the opportunity, connecting the battle of 1955 to the March 20, 1856 victory over the filibusters.

By February, the invasion was stopped and the invaders were under control. The political use of the battle started immediately. As soon as victory was secured, national newspapers described the 1955 battle in direct connection to the Filibuster invasion with headlines such as "The battle of Santa Rosa was as definitive as the one a hundred years ago."⁶²⁶ A few months later, during the celebrations of April 11, 1955, president Figueres reminded Costa Ricans of the

⁶²² The Costa Rican National Library has a great compilation of all books and newspaper notes related to the invasion: Biblioteca Nacional Miguel Obregón Lizano. *Invasión desde Nicaragua a Costa Rica: Octubre 1954 – Diciembre 1955. Bibliografía*. San José, 1955. Available in PDF format at: <http://www.sinabi.go.cr/Biblioteca%20Digital/BIBLIOGRAFIA/Bibliografias/Bib%20Invasion.pdf>

⁶²³ *Diario de Costa Rica*. January 13th, 1955.

⁶²⁴ *Diario de Costa Rica*. January 16th, 1955. January 19th, 1955. *Diario Nacional*. January 17th, 1955.

⁶²⁵ *La Nación*. January 18th, 1955.

⁶²⁶ *La República*. January 18th, 1955.

recent events, naming one by one the fallen during the battle of Santa Rosa almost three months before.⁶²⁷ The tactic of using the Filibuster War's legacy to legitimize himself while at the same time invalidating the opposition was common for Figueres even before he came to power, as demonstrated in several speeches he gave during the 1940s.⁶²⁸ In them, Figueres constantly compared his political struggle to the Filibuster War.

The following year, 1956, commemorated the first centenary of the Filibuster War. Costa Rica prepared a special series of celebrations in advance. That year, the government supported the publication of several books honoring the memory of the Costa Rican participation during the Filibuster War.⁶²⁹ Parades celebrated April 11th in many cities and not only in Alajuela as had been customary.⁶³⁰ Radio stations transmitted several hours of shows presenting stories about the Filibuster War. Newspapers published several articles commenting on the importance of the celebrations. Also, they published several interviews with

⁶²⁷ *La Prensa Libre*. April 11th, 1955.

⁶²⁸ José Figueres Ferrer. *José Figueres: Escritos y Discursos, 1942-1962*. (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1989) 81–82, 87.

⁶²⁹ Carlos Meléndez Chaverri. *Santa Rosa: Un Combate por la Libertad*. San José, 1955. Rafael Obregón Loría. *La Campaña del Tránsito, 1856-1857*. San José: Editorial Universitaria, 1956. Joaquín Bernardo Calvo. *La Campaña Nacional contra los filibusteros en 1856 y 1857, una reseña histórica*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954. Published as No. 1 by the Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857, and republished in 1955. Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. No.2. *Juan Santamaría*. San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954. Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856-1857. No. 3. *Proclamas y Mensajes*. (San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954). Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. No. 4. *La Batalla de Santa Rosa*. (San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1954). Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. No. 5. *La Batalla de Rivas*. (San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955). Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña Nacional de 1856–1857. No. 6. Segunda Campaña. (San José: Editorial Aurora Social, 1955).

⁶³⁰ *La Nación*. April 11th, 1956.

relatives of the veterans of the war, as well as important primary documents and narrations.⁶³¹

This anniversary was also the scenario for an unusual celebration. While the battle of Santa Rosa on March 20, 1856 was of extreme strategic importance for the final defeat of Walker, it had only been mentioned on a few occasions in government speeches or newspapers since 1856.⁶³² Certainly, March 20th has never been an official holiday, as April 11th and May 1st had. It also had never been the reason for celebrations and parades or the motif for any monument or statue. In 1956 this changed. The government of Figueres, understanding that the connection between the two battles at Santa Rosa could serve to establish a positive narrative for the consolidation of his political project, decided to make the most of it. After all, Liberación Nacional was not just the winner of the civil war; it was now the government and defender of Costa Rican sovereignty. It was logical to assume that Costa Ricans would rally to support a national narrative that made Figueres the unquestioned leader of a country united around the party he founded. As Hobsbawm says, invented traditions “are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations.”⁶³³ The crisis of 1948 was a break with the past and the moment, the Liberacionistas thought, to impose a new narrative of the past. In that position of power, it seemed logical that whatever narrative created by the government would become the national

⁶³¹ *Diario de Costa Rica*. April 11th, 1956.

⁶³² *Diario de Costa Rica*, March 20th, 1885.

⁶³³ Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invented Traditions...*, 2.

narrative. By owning the possibility of creating a myth, the Liberacionistas were now ready to own history.

Indeed, in January, 1956, the first anniversary of the 1955 invasion was celebrated with a ceremony in Santa Rosa. On January 14th, several veterans met at the Hacienda, where a message sent by President Figueres was read. In it, he exhorted Costa Ricans to remember the sacrifices of the past, in a subtle reference to both battles, one against the filibusters on March 20 1856 and the other between two different Costa Rica factions in January of 1955.⁶³⁴ To make this connection even more clear, the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT – Instituto Costarricense de Turismo), a government institution, sent that same day a team to study the possibility of creating a national park in the area, which would include the Hacienda Santa Rosa.⁶³⁵ The goal of creating the park was to transform the *Casona* into a museum, since Santa Rosa, according to the president of the ICT, Fritz A. Leer, “evoked an epos of heroism and sacrifice, tightly linked to the country’s most brilliant history.”⁶³⁶ The idea of establishing a link between both battles of Santa Rosa became a normal occurrence when two days later an article in *La Nación* titled “The pride of being Costa Rican” named both Juan Santamaría and Timoleón Morera as national heroes representing the struggle for Costa Rican

⁶³⁴ *La Nación*. January 15th, 1956.

⁶³⁵ *La Nación*. January 15th, 1956.

⁶³⁶ *La Nación*. January 19th, 1956.

institutions and sovereignty.⁶³⁷ Santamaría, the national hero of 1856, was directly connected to a victim of the political turmoil of the 1940s. In that manner, the Filibuster War became a precedent for 1948, and therefore of 1955. The connection created in January was just a warm-up for what was to come during the centennial celebrations of March 20th and April 11th.

On March 16, 1956, the government published an ad in various newspapers asking for Costa Ricans to participate in the official commemorations, for the first time, of the battle of Santa Rosa. The ceremony was scheduled for March 20th, and was planned to be held at the Hacienda. According to the ad, the idea was to celebrate the battle “in the same fields where the fight against the filibusters took effect, on March 20th, 1856, guaranteeing Central American independence.”⁶³⁸ The same ad asked for neighborhoods and stores to put flags on the front of their houses and buildings, and to illuminate their windows during the nights of March 19th and March 20th. Also, on March 16th, several other ads called veterans of the recent invasion of 1955 to gather in order to be transported to the Hacienda Santa Rosa on March 19th.⁶³⁹ It was obvious that the government, while celebrating for the first time in history the 1856 Battle of Santa Rosa, in reality decided to celebrate the recent battle of 1955. This was a great exercise in inventing traditions, one at which Figueres’s

⁶³⁷ *La Nación*. January 22nd, 1956. Timoleón Morera died in 1944 during a confrontation between Calderonistas and the opposition due to electoral conflicts.

⁶³⁸ *La República*. March 16th, 1956.

⁶³⁹ *La República*. March 16th, 1956.

government was not as successful as those that made May 1st and April 11th the center of Costa Rican national identity.

To support the celebration, Rodrigo Facio, President of the Universidad de Costa Rica, and a close ally of Figueres, organized a series of events that included the publication of a book about the Filibuster War and a series of conferences. Facio also organized a group of professors and students to be sent to the Hacienda Santa Rosa to join the celebrations prepared for March 20th.⁶⁴⁰

The Liberacionista use of the Filibuster War centennial celebration to commemorate a partisan event soon received criticism from the opposition. On March 17th, the day after the ads were published, the Ulatista newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica* accused the government of denaturalizing the commemoration of the battle of Santa Rosa.⁶⁴¹ By including a commemoration of the 1955 invasion, argued the daily, the government threatened to transform the celebration of the centenary into a political and demagogic act. The *Diario* rejected as pure propaganda the comparison of what it called a small confrontation between brothers to the glory of the Filibuster War, admonishing that with its attitude the government was creating a larger gap between the two political factions that had divided the Costa Rican family.⁶⁴²

On March 18th, *La Nación*, a traditionally anti-Figueres newspaper, published an editorial that summarized the critiques against the government's

⁶⁴⁰ *La República*. March 17th, 1956.

⁶⁴¹ Ulatista is a follower of Otilio Ulate, Costa Rican president between 1949 and 1953, and owner of the *Diario de Costa Rica*.

⁶⁴² *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 17th, 1956.

plans. The article, titled “The centenary of the Patria” corroborated, once again, the Costa Rican belief that while the nation became independent from Spain in 1821, it was through the fight for survival and sovereignty during the Filibuster War that the nation became a viable project. It was understood that 1956 was a moment to remember and honor the sacrifice of past generations. Therefore, to join the celebrations of the Filibuster War with a commemoration of the invasion of 1955 was, simply put, nonsensical. The newspaper was careful to explain that the fallen in the battle of 1955 in Santa Rosa deserved respect, but:

(T)o risk a bias on the commemoration of the centenary of the date that has a universal character for Costa Ricans, we cannot agree in any way to simultaneously remember the national heroes of the 1856 campaign and those that lost their lives in 1955. To join both historical events imply, among other things, to limit the commemoration to a small group... The Patria was configured by those that made us free and sovereign, and does not understand of political differences, neither of temporary party divisions.⁶⁴³

The newspaper *La República*, with close ties to the government, disregarded instead the critique and continued to promote the celebration of March 20th with a series of articles connecting the battles at Santa Rosa of 1856 and 1955. In an editorial titled “Centenary and Anniversary,” published on March 18th, the newspaper declared the official position of the commemoration.⁶⁴⁴ The article started by reminding the reader of the importance of the battle of Santa Rosa in 1856, as an event that signaled Walker’s demise and the Costa Rican struggle for sovereignty. Then, it promoted the commemoration organized for

⁶⁴³ *La Nación*. March 18th, 1956.

⁶⁴⁴ *La República*. March 18th, 1956.

March 20, 1956, as a moment in which the new generations could renew their commitment to the nation, originally acquired and assumed by their grandparents and great-grandparents. Independence and sovereignty were established in that Hacienda, said the article, “there, our right to be free has been confirmed.” The end of the third paragraph shows a smooth shift in the narrative, starting to connect 1856 and 1955:

There, there are the heroes of 1856, and next to them, underlining the heroism of their grandparents, the sacrifice of their successors. God wanted to give Santa Rosa the double honor of being the scenario of two battles in which, with a hundred years distance, Costa Ricans fought for the same goal and achieved the same success.⁶⁴⁵

The only difference between the filibusters and the Calderonistas, according to the author, was that the first were foreigners and the second “saw the light under the national sky.”⁶⁴⁶ In this article, not only did *La República* equaled the Calderonistas to the greatest Costa Rican nemesis, but the euphemism used portrayed them not as real Costa Ricans, but as accidental residents of the country without a connection to the nation.

The attitude of the government was too dangerous for the sake of national unity, but on the other hand, to pursue a political project, the new elites would have to destroy the traditional connection with the past by establishing a new interpretation of it. Following Hobsbawm’s formula seems easy: the establishment of a new holiday has the purpose of inculcating “values and norms

⁶⁴⁵ *La República*. March 18th, 1956.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”⁶⁴⁷ If the real connection with the past is irrelevant, says Hobsbawm, what is important is the establishment of a link that portrays a new norm or value as having a clear precedent in the past. This is easier to perform when a society is passing through a moment of crisis or radical change. Maurice Halbwachs argues that, indeed, memory legitimizes power, and that memory is malleable. Social frameworks, rites, and ceremonies define our understanding of the context we live in.⁶⁴⁸ Crises and periods of social change are moments in which those frameworks are shaken, sometimes broken, and therefore, moments in which the establishment of new values and norms are easier to accomplish. In order to do so, says Halbwachs, we can either distort the past by creating precedents to the new values we want to impose, what Hobsbawm called an “invented tradition.” or limit the field of memory to encompass only a very short and recent period.⁶⁴⁹ Traumatic events, such as a civil war, make this possible, since remembering the past can bring unresolved pain and disillusionment.

The Liberacionista celebration of March 20th was an attempt to incorporate all these elements. First, the establishment of a new official holiday signaled the intention of creating a new set of values and norms. Second, the fact that March 20th was already recognized as a day of great significance for the creation of the nation and the defense of sovereignty made it easier to connect it

⁶⁴⁷ Hobsbawm, *Invented Traditions...*, 2.

⁶⁴⁸ Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*, 121–122.

⁶⁴⁹ Halbwachs, *Collective Memory...*, 134–135. Hobsbawm, *Invented Traditions...*

to the new battle of Santa Rosa of 1955. Not because of the date coincidence, but because of the geographical coincidence. The fact that there was, in both battles, an invading side that came from the north helped to create the condition of a precedent established by Hobsbawm. Third, Costa Rica had recently suffered a severe political crisis that ended in civil war, making the social frameworks more flexible. More importantly, as Halbwachs asserts, the Liberacionistas could expect a limiting of the field of memory centered on the traumatic memories of the war and its consequences, making it easier to impose symbols connected to those events.

On March 20th, the activities to commemorate the battle of Santa Rosa clearly showed the purposeful conflation of images of 1856 and 1955. At 8 a.m., the event started with a ceremony to remember those fallen in 1955, followed by homage to Alvaro Monge, a veteran of 1955, by the Municipality of San José, where he used to work. The events included the unveiling and inauguration of two monuments directed to establish an immediate and direct connection between both battles at Santa Rosa. First, President Figueres lighted the Flame of Patriotism, a torch shaped monument dedicated to those fallen in 1955. This was followed by the unveiling of a monument commemorating the centenary of the battle of 1856. The fact that no monument at all had been constructed on the Hacienda in a hundred years also served to connect the two events of 1856 and 1955. In his speech, the president of the Costa Rican Historical Academy, Francisco María Núñez, described the 1856 battle of Santa Rosa, examining the strategic importance of that victory and its meaning for future generations. Then,

he proceeded to promote the objective established by the government: “fields of Santa Rosa, so many times watered by Costa Rican blood: blessed you will always be, because here were written glorious pages and here our political independence was ratified.”⁶⁵⁰

The government seemed to have gained the upper hand on the controversy. After March 20th, only a few comments were directed by the opposition to chastise the decision of the government to celebrate the battle of 1955. But then, on March 22nd, the newspaper *Diario de Costa Rica* published a photo of the commemorations of March 20th on its front page (see figure 5). The image is titled “more soldiers than students,” showing how the holiday was directed at celebrating the veterans of 1955, all of them dressed in military uniforms, and not the nation as had been usual during past Filibuster War commemorations. This photo represented a strong critique against a government that usurped and distorted the traditional ideal of a peaceful and hardworking Costa Rica.⁶⁵¹ It also showed a great contradiction. Just seven years before, Figueres, as President of the Junta, had abolished the army during a ceremony in which he personally defined this new symbol for the nation while smashing a huge sledgehammer into the walls of the main military fort and barracks in San José. As seen in Chapter 3, by 1956 the image of military institutions in Costa Rica was receding and in decay. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the military had been pushed aside when it came to civic and patriotic celebrations,

⁶⁵⁰ *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 22nd, 1956.

⁶⁵¹ *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 22nd, 1956.

favoring instead students of primary and secondary education. The process was natural for the expansion of the nation-state. While the army originally gave a strong patriotic meaning to the celebrations, the inclusion of students was directed to establishing a straight connection between the state and the inhabitants of the nation through the institution that had stronger ties to the Costa Rican population.

The photo in figure 5 portrays the main house of the Hacienda Santa Rosa standing on the top of a hill. President Figueres and other speakers appear on the top, talking from the balcony. The crowd is composed almost absolutely by veterans of the 1955 invasion, which are all dressed in military uniforms, some of them wearing U.S. World War II-like helmets. Under the photo, the scene is described merely as a political and military celebration, instead of one that is related to the festivities of the Filibuster War centenary. While the abolition of the army represented a drastic change of the social framework of Costa Ricans, it was a welcomed one, since it contrasted with the recent events of the civil war and was an obvious conclusion of a process already in development since the beginning of the twentieth century. The strong militaristic presence at the March 20th celebrations contradicted the newly accepted values, and was therefore immediately rejected.

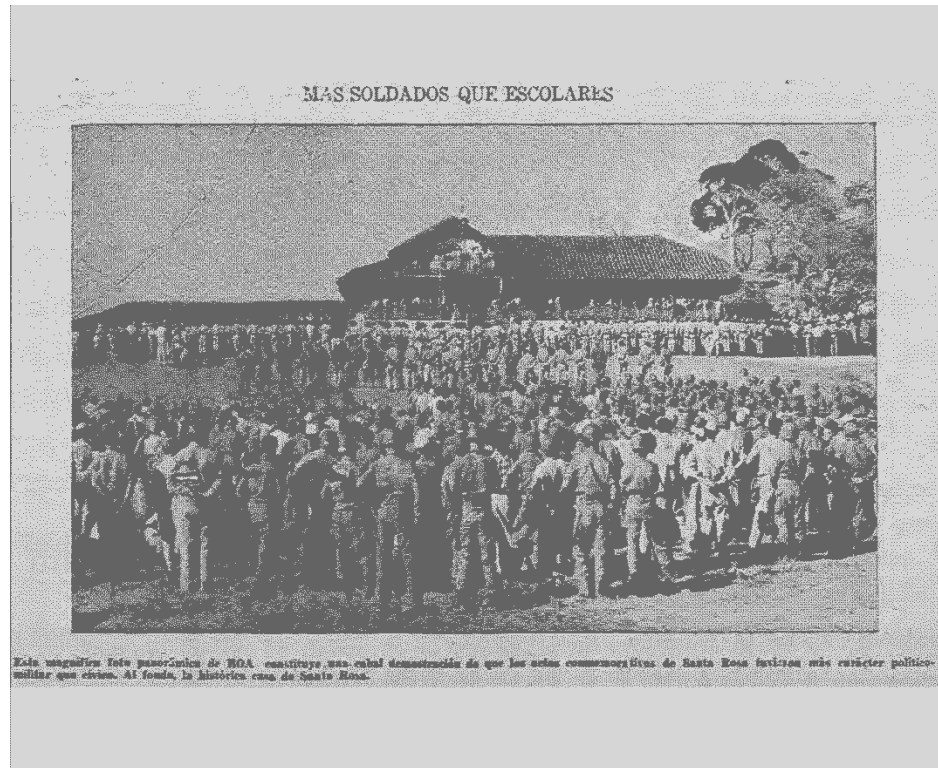


Figure 5 *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 22nd, 1956. Title: “More soldiers than students.”

The government continued on the offensive to consolidate a connection between the events of 1856 and 1955. On March 20th, Francisco J. Orlich, presidential candidate for the Liberación Nacional party (president of Costa Rica between 1962 and 1966), criticized the March 18th editorial published by *La Nación*, defending the joined commemoration of both events, stating that “the heroes that in 1955 had defended national sovereignty were not less than those that in 1856 had done the same.”⁶⁵² Another article published on May 25th defended the decision of celebrating 1955 along with 1856, arguing that in both cases sovereignty and the Costa Rican democratic tradition were at peril. This last

⁶⁵² *La República*. March 22nd, 1956.

article mentioned that 1955 was a consequence of the struggle started in 1948 to defend Costa Rican institutions and values.⁶⁵³

The narrative created by the government was not very successful, though, due to the biased purpose of connecting the most important event in the construction of Costa Rican national identity to a historic moment that was still perceived as an unresolved social trauma. A cartoon appeared on those days depicting the ceremony held at Santa Rosa, stating that not all of those at Santa Rosa were in fact real heroes.⁶⁵⁴ As shown above, the press initially reacted with criticism against the way in which March 20th was celebrated. After that day they changed their course by simply ignoring the government's pretenses and refocusing on the commemorations of the Filibuster War as if March 20th never happened.⁶⁵⁵ The general reaction of the population was diminished support for the general celebrations planned for that year. While there were still celebrations in the larger cities, such as Heredia and Alajuela, most people simply did not participate in the commemorations. On March 25th, the *Diario de Costa Rica* commented about this phenomenon, describing the government's behavior as resulting in the confusion and disinterest of the public. The newspaper assured

⁶⁵³ *La República*. March 25th, 1956.

⁶⁵⁴ *La República*. March 24th, 1956.

⁶⁵⁵ *La Nación*. March 22nd, 1956. *La Nación*. March 23rd, 1956. *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 22nd, 1956. *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 23rd, 1956. *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 24th, 1956.

that the disrespect for the “real and only history the people understood” promoted their indifference.⁶⁵⁶

The creation of a Santa Rosa celebration in 1956 relied on a concept that perceived Costa Rica as a nation broken by the civil war. In order to heal it, the government thought that the country needed new symbols to establish a sense of continuity with the past. This coincides with Pierre Nora’s findings about the use of history, in which the creation of new symbols is pertinent to moments of crisis in which a narrative of the nation suffered an unrecoverable break.⁶⁵⁷ Nora refers to moments in which the community dynamic experiences a shift, as when peasant societies were threatened by industrialization, or when democratic regimes established a new relationship between the governed and the governing.⁶⁵⁸ While war can create such a break in continuity, and the Costa Rican civil war definitely deserves to be classified as a national trauma, the civil war was not directed at destroying the nation. In fact, it was the opposite; it was a war for national consolidation. For example, the U.S. civil war, in which one side wanted to establish a new separate nation, explains why some of the symbols of the South, such as the Dixie flag, are still used to represent non-conformity against the national government. The Costa Rican civil war followed instead the path of redirecting the nation. As traumatic as it was, the goal was to establish (or

⁶⁵⁶ *Diario de Costa Rica*. March 25th, 1956.

⁶⁵⁷ Pierre Nora. “General Introduction: Between Memory and History.” In: Pierre Nora. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. I. Conflicts and Divisions*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

⁶⁵⁸ For a classic work on this topic, see: Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

to keep) a specific political or economic path for the nation that was just starting to develop after the crisis of the traditional Liberal state. While there were casualties, the goal of the war was not the annihilation of the opposition. Therefore, it was a mistake to consider, as Figueres's government did, that Costa Rican society was experiencing an identity vacuum, and that new symbols and a new narrative could be easily established.

The critiques to the commemoration of the battle of Santa Rosa in 1956, instead, were based on the premise that the celebrations were not directed to reinforce national unity, but that the government focused on the creation of a specific narrative that appealed only to the winners of the civil war. This was easily questioned by the losing side, which claimed that they were as Costa Rican as the current government, and had therefore as much right to interpret the symbols of the Filibuster War as anyone else. The Santa Rosa celebration of 1956 did not help to consolidate a narrative of national unity. Instead, it reinforced the feeling that Costa Rica was divided, reopening very fresh wounds while most Costa Ricans were looking for healing. The trauma of 1948 was painfully revived in 1955, but the Santa Rosa celebration of 1956 was not a remedy; instead they were mocking the nation. The Calderonistas saw it as an inappropriate insult, and even some Liberacionistas found it extremely rude and unnecessary, especially when the main symbol of the nation became a cheap political tool. It is not a strange occurrence to associate traditions with new concepts and meanings, after all, memory is a dynamic process. But in this case, the March 20th celebrations were considered by many as a blatant desacralization of the most important Costa

Rican *lieu de mémoire*: The Filibuster War. This symbol is the strongest vessel of Costa Rican national identity. The Filibuster War established the Costa Rican imagined community; it was a war for the survival of the nation, for its sovereignty. The Santa Rosa celebration of 1956 implied that some Costa Ricans were not real Costa Ricans for the simple fact that they took a different ideological stand. It threatened the sense of community by tearing apart the national fabric. Resistance to the new national narrative was just an obvious reaction.

It will always be April 11th

Still, there was April 11th, and with it a new controversy sparked. By 1956, the figure of Santamaría was well established as the main popular image of the Filibuster War.⁶⁵⁹ Therefore, and especially after the March 20th fiasco, the peak of the centenary celebrations was focused on the festivities surrounding April 11th. The Juan Santamaría park was remodeled; a literary contest was opened for poets, historians, and writers to celebrate the national hero; a beauty contest crowned the Queen of the centenary; Congress held on April 9th a special session dedicated to speeches celebrating the sacrifice of Juan Santamaría; a radio corporation broadcasted a special show dedicated to the battle of Rivas in three of the most important stations around the country, including the playing of the national anthem and other patriotic songs related to the memory of 1856, speeches, poems, and a dramatization. Several parades were celebrated, mostly in

⁶⁵⁹ This does not deny the importance or even the recognition given to other heroes, especially president Juan Rafael Mora.

Alajuela, on the days previous to April 11th, including a military parade and a student's parade. On the night of April 10th thousands of children carried self-made torches in a parade that started in the location where Juan Santamaría's old house, now the Fountain of Freedom, used to stand, ending at the Juan Santamaría Park. A soccer match pitted the local team, Liga Deportiva Alajuelense against the Bon Sucesso of Brazil, in which the Queen of the centenary was honored by performing the initial kick.⁶⁶⁰ It seemed like a patriotic effervescence was directed to put aside the Santa Rosa disaster.

The militaristic and politically biased approach of the government on celebrating March 20th had already created some resentment among Costa Ricans in general. Still, April 11th continued to be used by the government to spread the same propaganda. Military parades, abandoned decades before, became favored by the government, and speeches were used to congratulate members of the governing party. On April 10th, the governor of Alajuela gave a speech at the Juan Santamaría Park celebrating the official presidential candidate, Francisco Orlich; his remarks were considered to be in poor taste.⁶⁶¹ The worst scandal, though, came from the speech given by none other than president José Figueres on April 11th, at the Juan Santamaría Park just before the parades started. First, while looking back to the statue of Santamaría, he compared himself to the national hero calling him "brother Juan." Then, he celebrated himself by stating that while Santamaría burned down the Mesón, he was continuing his liberating efforts by

⁶⁶⁰ *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 10th, 1956.

⁶⁶¹ *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 11th, 1956.

burning down the “Mesón of the oligarchy.”⁶⁶² Finally, he compared, once again, the Filibuster War to the events of the civil war in 1948 and 1955.⁶⁶³ Critiques rose immediately. Some called him a hypocrite by defining himself as a fighter against the oligarchy while being himself a millionaire. Second, a nativist attack against the president reminded the public that while Santamaría was a model of the noblest Costa Rican values, Figueres was instead the son of two Spanish immigrants, and therefore did not share a drop of blood with the common citizens of the country.

⁶⁶² *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 13th, 1956. *La Nación*, April 14th, 1956.

⁶⁶³ *La Nación*, April 14th, 1956.



Figure 6 *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 15th, 1956.

Figure 6 shows a cartoon published in a newspaper reflecting the indignation against the speech of president Figueres. In it, president Figueres holds a weapon while looking back to Santamaría's statue, stating "we are also burning mesones." Santamaría responds: "Careful, do not get burned," in a clear reference to the president's *faux pas*.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁴ *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 15th, 1956.

Newspapers continued to critique Figueres for several days, accusing him also of doubting the existence of the national hero by questioning during his speech if he was not just a myth.⁶⁶⁵ A letter sent by a reader to the newspaper *La Nación*, and published on April 15th, described the government as full of neo-filibusters promoting foreign militaristic symbols. Looking like soldiers everywhere, students were dressed as “Prussians and French...with so many military decorations and ornaments that they looked like colorful guacamayas.” The letter described a fictional encounter between the reader and Santamaría, in which the hero expressed his disgust and impotence, threatening to take up again his torch and rifle, knowing that by doing so he would certainly be abolished by the government as a patriotic symbol.⁶⁶⁶ Possibly recognizing the mistake of trying to impose a new meaning over the Filibuster War for political gain, the government remained silent against the new wave of critiques, abandoning the efforts of inventing a new holiday. Indeed, March 20th and the battle of Santa Rosa were never again celebrated as official holidays, and the comparisons between 1856 and 1948–1955 were soon forgotten.

The new official narrative created by the government of Figueres about the Filibuster War raises the question of its failure. After all, several cases have been analyzed in which new invented traditions have been developed and

⁶⁶⁵ *La Nación*. April 15th, 1956.

⁶⁶⁶ *La Nación*. April 15th, 1956.

accepted.⁶⁶⁷ The representation of the past is by definition a debate about the present, and a battle of readings of the past by two or more groups.⁶⁶⁸ The problem with Figueres's approach was that he tried to establish an openly political invented tradition, and "people do become indignant when history is taken over as an integral part of politics," as Claudio Pavone recently stated.⁶⁶⁹

The first issue with Figueres's attempt to connect the Filibuster War with the 1948 civil war was that he confused his own rhetoric about a restoration of the Republic with reality. The Filibuster War delivers a clear and simple message for Costa Ricans: it was the moment in which the nation gained a place as a viable project. That is why the main topic related to the memory of the war relies on the concept of sovereignty. That simple word encompasses all the other concepts of Costa Rican national identity: nation, independence, anti-imperialism, negotiation with the powers, and recognition of diverse views of the world, solidarity, social order, respect, and support for institutions. There is a marked difference between the Filibuster War and the civil war of 1948: the Filibuster War threatened to

⁶⁶⁷ For example, see the cases explored in: Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer. *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Spaces*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. Especially revealing are the cases of Prague's Marian column (Cynthia Paces, 47-64), the Monument to the Nation in Sri Lanka (Kanishka Goonewardena, 65-82), and the Chilean torture sites of memory (Teresa Meade, 191-209). Also see: John R. Gillis. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994. On reconstructing the nation after war, especially World War II, see: Patrick Finney. *Remembering the Road to World War Two: International History, National Identity, Collective Memory*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Olga Sezneva. "Dual History: The Politics of the Past in Kaliningrad, former Königsberg." In: John Czaplicka and Blair Ruble. *Composing Urban History and the Construction of Civic Identities*. Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003 (58-85).

⁶⁶⁸ Alejandro Cattaruzza. *Los Usos del Pasado: La historia y la política Argentina en discusión, 1910-1945*. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2007), 19.

⁶⁶⁹ Claudio Pavone. "The Two Levels of Public Use of the Past." In: Jacques Revel and Giovanni Levi. *Political Uses of the Past: The Recent Mediterranean Experience*. London: Frank Cass, 2002.

destroy the system of ideas that Costa Ricans were applying to their imagined community; it was a moment of national crisis. Instead, the civil war of 1948 was a struggle for the consolidation of institutions.

Figueres's mistake was based on a view of the world based on his Spanish background: the creation of a Second Republic. For him, military victory meant a rupture with the past, which granted him the ability to create a new sense of national identity based on the values of a new system. Figueres failed to realize that his project was in fact not a break with traditional values, but part of a national dynamic. He may, throughout the years, helped to redefine certain policies and institutions, but some of the changes were already happening, as is the case of the abolition of the army, an institution was already at the fringe of disappearing, as we saw in chapter 3. The new constitution of 1949 was in reality a modernization, and very modest by the way, of the constitution created during the times of President Tomás Guardia, during the 1870s. Figueres's social policies followed most of the reforms created during the government of his two nemeses, President Calderón Guardia and President Teodorico Picado during the 1940s.

Second, Figueres misread the support he had among Costa Ricans as a referendum on his personality. By connecting the two battles of Santa Rosa, the President appealed to his supporters, not realizing that what most Costa Ricans were looking for was reconciliation. After all, most Costa Ricans were still licking the wounds of the civil war of 1948 when the invasion of 1955 happened. A more humble Figueres could have used the centenary of the Filibuster War to

consolidate cohesion among Costa Ricans, focusing on the nation. Instead, he thought he could redefine the nation with a politically biased discourse.

These two mistakes summarize one of the reasons why March 20th did not become an official holiday after 1956 and why there is no established connection in the Costa Rican collective memory between 1856 and 1955 (and 1948 for that matter): lack of repetition. To explain this it is important to refer to Eric Hobsbawm's work, which created in the 1980s a blueprint for invented traditions.⁶⁷⁰ Hobsbawm argues that sudden or drastic social transformation can weaken or destroy "the social patterns for which old traditions had been designed, producing new ones."⁶⁷¹ In other words, a social or national crisis can produce a vacuum that has to be filled with new representations and explanations, leading to the creation of new traditions and symbology. In this sense, Figueres tried to redefine the meaning of the Filibuster War to fill the void left by the trauma of civil war. He definitely believed that Costa Rica had experienced a break with the past in 1948, and that therefore a new narrative was needed to create a new society. While the civil war was a moment of national crisis, it did not represent a schism. The Costa Rica of the 1950s was in most ways a natural product of the social changes experienced since the 1920s, and not an exclusive result of the civil war.

⁶⁷⁰ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge, 1983.

⁶⁷¹ Hobsbawm, 4.

The establishment of invented traditions, such as the one Figueres tried to incur in 1956, “seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition,” says Hobsbawm, and this repetition “implies continuity with the past.”⁶⁷² By connecting 1856 to 1955, Figueres tried to establish a link with the past to create continuity between the values of the Filibuster War and the new values he wanted to associate with the civil war. The problem was that his approach produced such a negative reaction that to try to repeat the message in 1957 would have been a political disaster for his party. It can be argued that democratic governments have a harder time establishing new paradigms than authoritarian regimes. The media, for example, was one of the most important actors rejecting Figueres’s new traditions, something he could have controlled if he had the power to do so. Instead, it is clear that the failure to establish a new invented tradition relied on two issues connected to the social trauma that the civil war represented: the lack of understanding by Figueres and his party of how the invasion of 1955 was perceived by Costa Ricans, and the lack of political capital needed to create institutional support for a new national narrative.

⁶⁷² Hobsbawm, *Invented Traditions...*, 1.

Conclusion

The Filibuster War is considered in Costa Rica to be a substitute war of Independence, a moment in which the nation came together and sacrificed in order to save itself from foreign intervention and conquest. With its triumph over Walker and his filibusters, Costa Rica demonstrated to be a viable project deserving international recognition. This was possible due to President Mora's policies of modernization and expansion of the army as part of an initial process of consolidation of the nation-state. This process included the state's ability to demand the support of the general population, including the economic elites for the defense of national sovereignty. Mora was also responsible for establishing the first commemorations of the war, including the decree of a national holiday on May 1st and the building of a statue in memory of the fallen. With Mora, official nationalism took the first serious steps to establish the Filibuster War as the symbol of the nation.

This early period of modernization presents challenges to traditional theories based on a central European understanding (mostly French and German) of the creation of nationalism. In fact, when it comes to Latin America, Costa Rica was a late comer, developing national symbols and national narratives during the 1850s; decades after nations like Argentina had done so already. The problem is that Costa Rica did not become a separate nation until the declaration of the Republic in 1848. Therefore, the narrative based on the independence movement of the 1820s responded to a Central American national narrative, and not

exclusively a Costa Rican development. The Filibuster War, in 1856, filled a vacuum on Costa Rican identity.

Latin America developed an initial process of expansion of the nation-state immediately after Independence. Several national museums were created during the 1820s and 1830s in Latin America. They formed part of a modernizing project representing a symbol of the goals of the early liberal republics. National museums, in general, have been part of the modernization project associated with the consolidation of the nation-state during the late nineteenth century, which demonstrates that nationalism in the region enjoyed a different process than in Europe.

The Costa Rican case is exceptional in that it challenges modernizing theories based on the European chronology, while at the same time it does not fit with the regular Latin American efforts of early nationalism during the 1820s. In fact, as a national symbol, the Filibuster War creates a totally different set of values than the Independence movement, making Costa Rican nationalism different from the rest of the Americas. There are no founding fathers, neither a hate-love attitude against the former colonizer.

Even so, the importance of modernization theories cannot be denied. In a second round of official nationalism during the rule of the Alajuelan liberal dynasty (Guardia, Fernandez, and Soto, between 1870-1889) coincides with the period of liberal modernization in Europe and the Americas of the early 1870s. This period was characterized by the consolidation of the nation-state and the expansion of institutionalization. Positivist ideas of order and progress

promoted the adoption of railroads as new transportation systems, and introduction of technological advances as telegraphs and electricity, which were accompanied by the development of institutions to spread ideological instruments to coalesce the nation around the liberal project: expansion of the education system, creation of national museums, national archives, national literature, and a national narrative.

The adoption of national symbols definitely grew with the consolidation of the liberal project, which made Steven Palmer assure that by 1885, the state was mature enough to create and spread a national narrative based on the Filibuster War. In reality, the Filibuster War had been the center of official nationalism since 1856. With the only exception of the ten year hiatus between 1859 and 1870, May 1st was continuously celebrated in Costa Rica after the war for more than 60 years. During the 1870s, national flags adorned all public buildings during the commemorations of Walker's surrender. In 1883, the original tradition of shooting 21 blanks was reinstated. The threat of war against Guatemala in 1885 revived, once again, as it did in 1873 and 1878, the fears of the return of the filibuster under a new mask. Palmer also argued that 1885 signaled the definitive establishment of Santamaria as national hero. In fact, Santamaria was not recognized as the main symbol of the war until much later, and the myth of the return of the filibuster proves to be a constant that was only activated when a threat to national sovereignty seemed imminent.

The image of Santamaria was invoked in two occasions before 1885. In 1864, Jose de Obaldia mentioned his name as the main symbol of the Filibuster

War in a speech commemorating Independence Day. In 1883, a local Alajuelan newspaper published an article that followed Obaldia's early discourse. This same article was reprinted in 1885, and is considered by Palmer as proof of the crowning of Santamaria as national hero. That same year, though, several names were mentioned as relevant during the war. The erection of Santamaria's statue in 1891 definitely shows his unique position, but only because it was imbued by a strong local taste and as a result of the promotion given to the Filibuster War by the Alajuelan dynasty. Until 1916, the Alajuelan soldier was sporadically celebrated, and only in his native city.

The Alajuelan dynasty directed a major liberal project to eliminate the traditional strife between Cartago and San Jose/Alajuela. This confrontation, based on strong localist sentiments, threatened the stability and unity of the nation. The liberal project devised a national narrative to coalesce the nation focusing on the glories of the Filibuster War. The effort included the naming of a ship with the name of President Mora, and the unveiling of the National Monument in 1895.

By the early twentieth century, April 11th substituted the traditional celebrations of May 1st. Since 1913, May 1st started to develop a strong connection to the commemoration International Labor Day. Anarchist and socialist ideas of social justice collided with the traditional nationalistic meaning of the Filibuster War. For decades, May 1st had been associated with the national liberal project, and therefore with the status quo. Labor Day claims of social reform under an internationalist anti-imperial agenda used a nationalist message

that was anti-oligarchic and anti-liberal. The presence of a competing nationalist discourse was deemed problematic. The state directed efforts to disconnect any possible nationalist symbolism attached to the Filibuster War from Labor Day commemorations. Arbor Day was used to confuse the meanings of May 1st, while April 11th took over the meanings related to the Filibuster War. The massive celebrations of Santamaria in 1916 and 1931 confirmed the position of the Alajuelan drummer as the undisputed symbol of the Filibuster War.

As a symbol of national sovereignty, the Filibuster War was constantly recalled during the early twentieth century. During that period, U.S. imperial advances and expansionism were perceived as a threat, resulting on a anti-imperialist reaction present in nationalist literature, newspapers, and popular protests. The war against Panama in 1921 also helped to revive the memory of the Filibuster War, becoming a central theme on government speeches, newspaper articles, poetry, and in the naming of the battalions sent to defend the southern border.

During the 1940s, Costa Rica became severely polarized. The alliance between the ruling National Republican Party and the communist Vanguardia Popular promoted the reaction of the most traditional sectors of society. The right accused the government of being filibusters for giving away national sovereignty to the designs of Moscow, while the communists protested against Truman's expansionist intentions in the international arena using references to Santamaria's feat and Walker's surrender as symbols of anti-imperialist resistance. 1948

marked the end of a cycle in Costa Rican history. A civil war redefined politics, and with it, developed a new economic model for the country.

The winning faction of the war, grouped under the banner of the Liberacion Nacional Party won the 1953 elections. In 1955, a group of exiles organized a military invasion to Costa Rica with the support of the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. The Costa Rican government organized the resistance and was able to gain a definitive victory at the site of the Hacienda Santa Rosa. In 1956, the year of the centenary of the Filibuster War, the government promoted the celebration of a new holiday, on March 20th, anniversary of the victory over Walker at Santa Rosa in 1856. The celebration also commemorated the battle of 1955, in an obvious move to connect the government to the glories of the past, while condemning the opposition and reducing it to the level of filibusters. The commemoration received a strong rejection by members of the opposition, some members of the Liberacion Nacional group, and the general public. The disapproval responded to a need for national reconciliation, while the commemorations of Santa Rosa were a symbol of division and polarization. This episode demonstrates the importance of the existence of a critical moment when it comes to create new traditions. Hobsbawm and Nora argue that collective memory created during the late nineteenth century was successful because European societies were suffering a general crisis. Social transformation promoted by modernization severed the ties with traditional values, either by dislocation or by cultural influence. The vacuum left was filled by new values attached to symbols and traditions designed to establish a fictitious

connection to the past. The Costa Rican civil war was such a moment of crisis. The result was the adoption of a new economic system, stronger institutionalization, expansion of social reforms and the consolidation of democracy. In 1956 the government attempted to introduce a new tradition that proved to represent dividing instead of uniting values, and therefore, discarded by the population.

As part of the new set of values created after the civil war, the Liberacion Nacional group abolished the army. The goal was to reduce military costs in order to finance social and education projects, as well as to eliminate a possible source of political instability. Social transformation, like the elimination of a traditional institution as the army, creates a gap on the social dynamic that reshapes some of the basic values of a nation. The abolition of the army diminished the value of the Filibuster War due its strong militaristic imagery. This affected the representation of Santamaria, who after all was a soldier and was a hero because he participated in a military event. Official nationalism continued to use military rhetoric to refer to Santamaria's heroism, but as new generations substituted those that remembered the existence of an army, these speeches became irrelevant. The end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twentieth-first century are periods of social transformation promoted by the entering of Costa Rica into the globalized economy following a neoliberal economic system. The Filibuster War, as the symbol of the nation, was revised and resurrected by this crisis. As the welfare state eroded and the government was seen less and less as a protective entity, and more as a corrupt one, the

rhetoric used by the government became suspicious and dissociated from the sense of national unity derived from social justice. During the 1990s, the traditional parades celebrating Santamaria experienced changes designed not by the authorities, but by students participating in the parades. Music and uniforms started to lose their martial aspect and the parades became a popular festivity. The parades were also used to accuse the government of selling out the country and betraying the values of peace that became a staple of national identity for decades. The peak of these demonstrations was present during the debates about the signing of CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement) between 2003 and 2007. The Treaty has been considered by many as a threat to national sovereignty. During the campaign before a referendum on the issue was held, the Filibuster War became the main symbol used by those opposing the agreement. This is a topic that complements this dissertation and still needs analysis. It is clear that Costa Rica is suffering a new process of social transformation and that the following years may provide plenty of new symbols, traditions, and values, altering the meaning of what is to be a Costa Rican.

The Filibuster War continues to be the symbol of the nation because continuous threats to national sovereignty: the threat of Walker's invasion (1856-1860), the threat of Federico Mora's Invasion (1873), the conflict with Guatemala (1878), the forced unification of Central America (1885), U.S. expansionism in the Caribbean (1898-1933), the war with Panama (1921), the ALCOA issue (1970), the CAFTA referendum (2003-2007), border issues with Nicaragua

(2010-2012). The lack of direct threats to national sovereignty, or a redefinition of the nation may promote a loss of interest in the Filibuster War.

This dissertation proves that national identity is a dynamic construct shaped by several social actors. While official nationalism has an important place on defining a national narrative, it is for the popular groups to decide which values to accept and hold. The influence of official nationalism on popular groups depends on receptivity. Social transformation may open a gap that can be filled with new official traditions, but also, when official nationalism does not respond to social changes, popular groups may develop their own values and transform symbols and their meanings in order to make them fit new social narratives.

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