FROM LOBSTERS TO COCAINE:
THE SHIFTING COMMODITY LANDSCAPE ON THE MISKITO COAST OF HONDURAS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation project examines the shifting commodity landscape—from lobsters to cocaine on the Miskito Coast of Honduras. This commodity-based, extractive economy fits within a long political economic history on the coast extending back to the 17th century colonial era to more recent neoliberal initiatives in the form of the USAID-sponsored Global Fish Alliance and Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras and the U.S. "War on Drugs." The Miskito are entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the lobster dive industry exposing an economic vacuum of opportunity on this desolate coast in the transnational traffic of cocaine. This ethnography makes two contributions: Biopolitical regulations, designed to promote lobster conservation over the cultural survival of the Miskito, serve as a form of Foucauldian governmentality and biopolitical control, driving indigenous laborers into the underground economy of illicit cocaine traffic, fueling a militarized and violent anti-drug war.

This extractive, commodity-based economy forces Miskito *buzos*, divers, into deeper and more dangerous waters to extract lobsters at a diminishing rate of return. The costs of deep-water diving are inscribed on the male Miskito body in the form of decompression sickness, or the "bends," which include neurological damage and paralysis. While most *buzos* understand a neurological explanation for decompression sickness, a complementary and parallel understanding circulates on the coast. Locally understood as *liwa mairin siknis*, divers explain decompression sickness as a curse from the mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of her lobster resources. The second contribution recognizes that the political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation. *Liwa mairin*, the mermaid goddess responsible for spiny lobster and natural resource conservation, is not siphoned from the

cash economy or transnational market transactions. Culture seeps into the political economy as politics seeps into the cultural domain.

INTRODUCTION:

FROM LOBSTERS TO COCAINE

The commodity landscape on the Miskito Coast of Honduras is shifting from lobsters to cocaine. The indigenous Miskito are entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the spiny lobster dive industry, revealing an economic vacuum of opportunity on this desolate coast in the transnational traffic of cocaine. The Miskito have become dependent on a cash economy because of the history of external contact, the commodification of nature, and neoliberal political economic intervention in this quintessential banana republic. This ethnography makes two contributions: Biopolitical regulations, designed to promote lobster conservation over the cultural survival of the Miskito, serve as a form of Foucauldian governmentality and biopolitical control, driving indigenous laborers into the underground economy of illicit cocaine traffic, fueling a militarized and violent anti-drug war. Secondly, the political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation. *Liwa mairin*, the mermaid goddess responsible for spiny lobster and natural resource conservation, is not siphoned from the cash economy or transnational market transactions. Culture seeps into the political economy as politics seeps into the cultural domain.

The spiny lobster, or *Panulirus argus*, is plucked from the floor of the Caribbean Sea by Miskito divers, who dive at increasingly great depths for this 'red gold,' as locals refer to it, as they are paid per lobster pound. The Honduran commodity-based, extractive economy has a long history, extending from the 17th century when British and American colonists contracted with the Miskito as migrant wage-laborers. The Miskito Coast has largely been influenced by and externally oriented to Britain and the United States rather than its Spanish interior. While Spain granted Honduras its independence in 1821, the Miskito Coast and Bay Islands remained a

British protectorate until 1859. The Honduran "capitalization of nature" (Faber 1992: 27) extends from gold, mahogany, and bananas to lobster and cocaine. Honduras became so ubiquitously identified with with banana exports through the United and Standard Fruit Companies in the 19th and 20th centuries that it became known as the "banana republic" (Acker 1988). United States political intervention, interference, and "diplomacy" have shrouded economic penetration for cheap commodities. The neoliberalization of the global economy, whereby I draw on Peck's definition of neoliberalization as "the mobilization of state power in the extension of market (or market-like) rule," has perpetuated an extractive commodification of nature. Preferential trade conditions under the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) have eliminated tariffs on exports and completely eradicated them across Honduras since 1998 after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, after which the entire country was declared a Free Trade Zone (McCallum 2011). These uneven trade regulations have let to economic exploitation, social inequality, and ecological devastation as *buzos*, lobster divers, translated from Spanish[1], report diminishing lobster populations, forcing them to dive in deeper and more dangerous waters.

The costs of deep-water diving are inscribed on the male Miskito body in the form of decompression sickness, or the "bends," which include neurological damage and paralysis. Without depth, pressure gauges or watches, divers estimate their multiple plunges a day over a two-week period to be over 100 feet, which far exceed SCUBA guidelines or that of a recreational diver. Because of the history of external contact and economic dependence, the Miskito are structurally tied to this economy at sea as the primary form of cash flow into their communities.

[1] The etymology of the Spanish term *buzo* comes from the Portuguese *búzio*, meaning snail, and from the Latin *bucina*, meaning cow's horn.

While most *buzos* understand a neurological explanation for decompression sickness, a complementary and parallel framework circulates on the coast. Locally understood as *liwa mairin siknis*, divers explain decompression sickness as a curse from the mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of her lobster resources. The spiritual landscape is animated by invisible spirits and witchcraft, simultaneously creating a liminal space that is marked by spiritual benevolence on one hand, tempered by the possibility of danger on the other. The prevalence of neurological damage, paralysis, and death make comprehensible the indigenous frame of mermaid magic. Mythical and medical landscapes blur into one another. The political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation, nor is *liwa mairin* siphoned from the cash economy or from transnational market transactions.

The relationship between the spiritual world and the ecological domain is one based on reciprocity. *Sukia* shaman healers, such as Doña Betullah, offer cash payments to certain plants in return for the lasting powers of *sika* herbal remedies. *Buzos*, on the other hand, extract resources from *liwa mairin's* domain, creating imbalance and discord where their punishment is *liwa mairin siknis*. Other invisible forces in the social world parallel the balance and stability of the spiritual. Rumor and gossip serve as mediating forces that attempt to limit egos and excess, trying to maintain Miskito social rules of equality. Accusations of stinginess and hoarding are usually aimed at those who are perceived to have more. With cash from lobster dive earnings and more recently, from the traffic in cocaine, social stratification and inequality, both perceived and real, are increasing.

On the Miskito Coast, "development" ensued from within a neoliberal framework and U.S. interventionism. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and organizations such as USAID emerged to usher in market-based development and expand economies, filling the space

of a weak state. It is under this guise that the USAID-sponsored Global Fish Alliance and the Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras emerged. The initiative prioritized lobster sustainability over Miskito self-determination. Somewhat independent from the Spiny Lobster Initiative, the fisheries managing body of the Honduran government (DIGIPESCA) signed in 2009 a regional Central American agreement terminating the 40-year lobster industry that has long provided the basis for the Miskito cash economy, replacing divers with traps.

These biopolitical rules and regulations swirl above the indigenous Miskito, inattentive to their lived, local experience. Foucault developed his concept of governmentality later in his career. The notion is most often traced to his 1978 lecture at the Collège de France entitled, "Security, Territory, and Population." Governmentality refers to the expansion of government as a broad institution of social control where government permeates all aspects of an individual's life. Surveillance serves as form of social control to produce "docile bodies" (Foucault 1979). Bentham's prison Panopticon is often used by Foucault to illustrate the watchful eye of the state. Biopolitics extends Foucault's notion of governmentality, specifically to citizen subjects and the body politic where political power governs all aspects of human life. Biopolitical rules, designed to promote lobster conservation over the cultural survival of the Miskito, illustrate how the expansion of Honduran state control has permeated the daily lives of the Miskito. The Miskito have become dependent on a cash economy through a long history of external contact, commodity extraction and political economic intervention.

The Miskito Coast has been externally oriented in the circum-Caribbean, towards the United States and Britain. While Mosquitia is remote and largely geographically insular, it is a node in "a sea of islands," as encapsulated in the words of late Tongan anthropologist Epeli

Hau'ofa. It is a way-point in the traffic of things from mahogany and bananas to lobsters and cocaine.

The Miskito are entangled and squeezed by regulations that threaten to close the 40-year lobster dive industry, by recruitment into the local drug economy, and by the threat of displacement from their natal and patrimonial tracts by Spanish-speaking *ladinos/colonos* for the traffic of cocaine. The façade of cattle ranching is employed by these outsiders as a cover for the illicit trade in cocaine. The political economic history of commodity extraction, the politics of U.S. interventionism, and the neoliberalization of the global economy are both structurally uneven and oppressive. They have long favored and continue to favor the developed economies of the global North at the expense of the developing global South, in this context, Honduras and Central America. The U.S. "war on drugs" perpetuates this narrative of structural inequity, militarizing a transit commodity and economy that is trafficked through Moskitia to feed "the insatiable North American nose" (Aguilar Camín in Keefe 2012). The biopolitical and structural regulations that are currently terminating the 40-year legal industry of lobster dive fishing are pushing indigenous laborers into the underground economy of illicit cocaine traffic, fueling their own internal, militarized and violent anti-drug war.

Honduras is infamously the murder capital of the world, as documented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The increased militarization employed to mete out drug trafficking is linked to this increase in violent crime. As Elana Zilberg (2011) traces the transnational deportation of criminals in the United States to their home countries in Central America, she exposes the explosion of transnational violence and the reproduction of the "transnational gang crisis" in the hardening of "neoliberal securityscapes" and immigration laws that willingly accepts goods, not people. We witnessed this in the summer of 2014 when the

drove of 60,000 women and children Central America migrants sought refuge in the United States from their countries' warzones, largely generated by U.S. policy.

This context warrants the lenses of political ecology and a commodity chain analysis, which provide a theoretical and methodological framework to ground a place-based, ethnographic study of the commodification of nature on the Miskito Coast of Honduras. Political ecology addresses the political environment at the global scale. It emerged from cultural ecology as a way to connect ecology to the political economy where ecological resources are viewed within the socio-political context. Early political ecology "combine[d] the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy…[which] encompasse[d] the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources" (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987: 17). In the words of Biersack, political ecology could be "understood as a merger of political economy with cultural studies" (1991: 10). Amendments extended political ecology beyond using poverty as a causal explanation of land degradation and beyond an emphasis on land-based resources to include any natural resource (Peet and Watts 1996). Further modifications infused politics into an apolitical political ecology (Moore 1993, 1996; Peet and Watts 1996; Bryant and Bailey 1997). Bryant and Bailey (1997) examine the actors involved in the politicized environment of Third World environmental change and pay special attention to the dual and often conflicting role of the state in promoting both economic development and environmental conservation. Other approaches attend to disciplinary strengths such as geographic attention to scale, capable of addressing human-environment interactions across scales and examining the impact of global processes in specific locales (Grossman 1998; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003; Swyngedouw 2005; West 2005).

A dichotomy along the nature/culture divide has plagued and polarized the interdisciplinary field of political ecology (Descola and Palsson 1996). The discipline underwent a post-structural shift and discursive turn emphasizing "regional discursive formations" (Peet and Watts 1996:16) on one hand, while elsewhere it also took a "natural turn," incorporating biophysical factors, underscoring its materiality in ecological analyses (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003: 3; Zimmerer 1994). The "new ecology" infuses dynamics into ecological systems by addressing biological uncertainty and nonequilibrium dynamics (Turner 2003), a move beyond the homeostasis of a cultural ecology systems approach.

The post-structural and discursive shift problematized the social construction of 'nature' (Escobar 1996; Latour 1994) and the cultural norms and power dynamics that inform seemingly unbiased (Western, Euro-centric) theories/truths such as 'development,' management,' 'science,' and 'nature' (Escobar 1996, 1999; Ferguson 2000; Latour 2004; Nadasdy 2007). While some political ecologists (such as Latour 1994, 2004; Descola 1996; Escobar 1996) debate the social constructedness of nature, Moore (1993) illuminates the simultaneity of material and symbolic perspectives. He critiques the over-determined structure of political ecology that has overlooked and neglected symbolic relationships to nature at the expense of material ones. For Moore, a symbolic relationship does not negate the real materiality of natural resources. While Escobar admits a social constructivist bias (1996), he argues (1999) for an anti-essentialist idea of hybridized *natures* attentive to its biological *and* cultural manifestations. This dissertation takes the position that commodities, such as lobsters and cocaine, have very real and tangible material existences while also having rich and diverse cultural and symbolic meanings.

A global commodity chain approach traces the transnational movement of a commodity from source point to production, by "following the thing" (Marcus 1995), elucidating the labor

and capital involved in the making of this global commodity. A commodity chain tactic exposes Marx's concept of commodity fetishism where social relations appear as "material relations between persons and social relations between things" (Marx 1976: 166). The scale of the global political economy was encapsulated in the world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein and Terence Hopkins, who defined a commodity chain as a "network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity" (Dicken *et al.* 2001: 98). The coordination of the distinct and distant phases of production culminates in a finished commodity at the end of a chain. While I detail this more fully in Chapter Two, sociologist Gary Gereffi expanded the concept of the commodity chain across a global territory to account for value-added economic activities and a governance structure that regulates the flow within the chain (1993: 96-97).

By merging political ecological approaches with a commodity chain analysis framework, I trace the scalar dynamics involved in the transnational exchange of lobster and cocaine as they move from the Miskito Coast of Honduras to consumers in the global North. The Miskito are entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the lobster dive industry, revealing an economic vacuum of opportunity on this desolate coast in the transnational traffic of cocaine.

Chapter Organization

Chapter One sets the geographic and historic stage along the Miskito Coast of Honduras, situating the Miskito coast as a node in a "sea of islands," providing historic background and mapping external orientations. I chronicle colonial contact in the 17th century, British control until 1859, U.S. political and economic intervention, interference and "diplomacy" beginning in 1823 in the banana republic, and the neoliberal commodification of nature (Faber 1992:27), including mahogany, bananas, turtles, lobsters and cocaine. I further expand upon the theoretical

framework of political ecology and a commodity chain analysis to explore the transnational flow of lobsters and cocaine from the Miskito Coast.

Chapter Two provides an ethnographic window into the lives of lobster divers and the lobster industry, originating in the Caribbean waters off the Miskito Coast, extending to the industrial purchasing-processing plants in La Ceiba and the Bay Islands and finally to a consumer's plate at a Red Lobster Restaurant off a highway ramp in the United States. The tail is served "fluffed" on the shell, as a Red Lobster menu reads, belying any trace of its origin or the working conditions under which it was caught. I detail the biopolitical rules and regulations of the USAID Spiny Lobster Initiative and the Central American regional agreement barring the lobster dive industry, replacing divers with traps. These external rules and regulations serve as a form of Foucauldian governmentality that intersect with local, Miskito lives and affect their self-determination.

Chapter Three follows the lives of Miskito divers from four neighboring communities through one dive season, extending from July 2010-February 2011, as well as one powerful Miskito woman, to provide an ethnographic portrait of the lives that feed these commodity chains and to reveal the socio-economic conditions in which these lives unfold. I examine concepts of masculinity in a matrifocal society set against the backdrop of danger from deep-water diving. I chronicle the injury inscribed on the Miskito body in the form of decompression sickness, or the "bends," signaled by neurological damage and paralysis, locally referred to as *liwa mairin siknis*, a curse from the mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of her resources.

Chapter Four presents the spiritual landscape of the Miskito, animated by spirits and witchcraft, concurrently creating both a benevolent and dangerous space. I explore the reciprocal relation of extraction and compensation where indigenous *sukia* healers offer cash payments to

certain plants in return for the lasting powers of *sika* herbs, perpetuating a balanced cosmic loop. *Buzos,* on the other hand, extract resources from *liwa mairin's* domain, creating imbalance and discord, for which their punishment is decompression sickness. I explore the mythical and medical landscapes in which Western understandings of decompression sickness are locally understood through the idiom of mermaid magic. I situate *liwa mairin* within a corpus of Latin American works that critique the over-extraction of natural resources such as June Nash's (1979) *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* and Michael Taussig's (1980) *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. I argue that the political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation, nor is *liwa mairin* siphoned from the cash economy or transnational market transactions.

In addition to mermaid magic, I chronicle other invisible forces, rumor and gossip, arguing that they serve as a form of social control, attempting to level the playing field and restore social equity and balance. These social institutions of control serve much like the relationship between the spiritual and ecological realms in the extraction of natural resources. I examine situations where rumor and gossip are deployed and find that they are Miskito social principles aimed at maintaining social equality. With cash from lobster diving funds and now, increasingly from the trade in the traffic of cocaine, the economic landscape is increasingly more stratified. Some not only are perceived to have more but actually do.

In the later section of the chapter, I explore the relationship between Miskito social and kinship ties and Moravian Christian values of democracy, non-hierarchical relations, and egalitarianism, pointing out how the values of the Moravian missionaries were readily accepted into Miskito social ties because of these shared values. The British influence along the Miskito Coast paved the way for Moravian Protestants, who began missionary work in Nicaragua in 1849

and 1930 in Honduras. Protestant conversion was made more palatable through the social institutions of medical clinics and schools.

Chapter Five traces the emerging commodity chain of cocaine with traffic from Colombia and Venezuela through the rural corridor of Moskitia. In this chapter, I highlight the remote geography and "ungoverned spaces" of the Miskito corridor as a prime way-station in the transnational northern movement traffic of cocaine. While I was somewhat familiar during my fieldwork with a drug economy and stories of bales of cocaine that would end up beached on the Miskito sands, evidence tossed aboard from a smuggling ship, I reveal how I stumbled upon cocaine as a prominent research theme in a form of accidental ethnography. Because I never dared once ask a single question about the trade, in many ways, this ethnography is an ethnography of silences, of reading and interpreting the silences, and of secrets.

I examine the nexus of neoliberal biopolitical regulations that outlaw the legitimate lobster dive industry and in a sense expose the underground economy of illicit cocaine traffic, which the U.S. further militarizes in a "war on drugs." The Miskito are squeezed between regulations that outlaw a licit industry and the emergence of the illicit transnational traffic of cocaine.

Accessing the Miskito world and a note on orthography:

Most Miskitos speak their indigenous language, Miskitu, to one another, in passing, and amongst lobster divers. Miskitu is a Misumalpan Macro-Chibchan language of South American origin most similar to Sumu, spoken in Honduras and Nicaragua. Like the culture history of contact, it reflects a hybridization with the incorporation of English and Spanish terms, such as *tebil* for table and *ispun* for spoon. Spanish is taught in the schools and serves as the *lingua*

franca throughout the Miskito corridor. I conducted my fieldwork in Spanish, gradually learning Miskito to more fully understand and capture the local meanings and interpretations in the native tongue.

Throughout this dissertation, I interchangeably refer to *Moskitia* and *Mosquitia* as the Miskito Coast of Honduras. Likewise, I refer to *Miskitu*, the indigenous language of the Miskito, in the Miskito term or in the Spanish form as the *Miskito* language. These orthographic differences reflect the global forces at work on the coast a long history of contact, and the fact that the Miskito language is principally an oral language, documented by Westerners, so there is not always consistency in the spelling of Miskito terms.

This dissertation addresses issues well beyond the legal economy. I lived in different communities along the coast over the course of fieldwork over eight years. To protect the identities of people in these communities, I refer to a fictional village and in some cases, change names and use composite characters to protect the privacy and identities of my informants.

CHAPTER ONE

LA MOSKITIA: SETTING THE HISTORIC AND GEOGRAPHIC STAGE

Jumping Off

2003

Flying south from La Ceiba, the low-lying prop plane revealed the contours of the Honduran coast—the aqua Caribbean Sea on one side contrasted by the rise of the lush and green Cordillera Mountains. In Palacios, the landing strip was an open green field interspersed with grazing cows and playing children who inevitably altered their activities to accommodate the plane after a fly-over signaled that it would be landing. From Palacios, I boarded a *pipante,* a motorized wooden canoe that operates as a *collectivo* and a form of public transportation. The *pipante* navigated across the lagoon and then through the curvaceous waterways of the backwater channels.

Figure 1.1 Sinuous waterways in La Moskitia

The nutrient-rich black water lay calm and still like black ice, creating a perfect reflection of the buttress roots, climbing vines, and lianas in its still darkness. Villages appeared in small sections with women washing clothing and children splashing in the lagoon. Though early in the morning, the equatorial sun beamed down. Its warmth was countered by the cool breeze created by the moving canoe. The air smelled of sea air—the Caribbean Sea just on the other side of a narrow spit of land that separated the ocean from the backwater lagoon.

In this tropical rainforest, the air is warm and heavy with humidity, smelling of organic decomposition. The vegetation is lushly green. Mangoes periodically plop to the ground and little children race to capture the sweet fruit. Evenings and nights are marked by the sound of cicadas, croaking frogs, and sounds of critters scuffling in the rafters overhead while an erratic rooster announces the coming of the day.

In the rainy season from September to January, blustery storms pass through as tropical storms, which sometimes turn in to hurricanes and sometimes don't. The winds blow across the misty ocean, stirring up white caps on the ocean's surface. It is under these conditions, under all conditions, that indigenous Miskito men undertake a fifteen-day journey on the high sea to dive for *Panulirus argus*, the spiny rock lobster that inhabits the depths of the Caribbean.

Little communities extend like an irregularly strung strand of pearls along the narrow spit of land that separates the sea from the lagoon. Families cluster together to form the broader village. Buildings and homes are constructed of wooden boards, or are, increasingly, made of concrete. They sit on the ground or are propped up on stilts to improve ventilation and cleanliness. They are topped with corrugated tin, speckled with rusty orange sections and leaky patches. Oftentimes, kitchens are housed in separate structures with thatched roofs blackened

Figure 1.2 Miskito communities between the Caribbean Sea and Laguna Ibans

from the smoke of clay ovens, to better enable ventilation. A fire is kept consistently alight for the pot of soaking beans and to keep water ready for coffee. Rice and beans are cooked on a daily basis with occasional additions of eggs, meat, or fish or shellfish from the sea, especially conch, green sea turtle, and undersized (contraband) lobster caught on a dive trip, too small (and technically illegal) to sell to the processing companies. Laundry is washed in the lagoon and hung on a clothesline of barbed wire to dry in the hot sun. Kids play with plastic jugs tied to the end of a string, twirl rubber bike tires, and play soccer with empty two-liter plastic Coke bottles. The daily routine of life on the coast centers around the female domain of the house and land-based household production with occasional jaunts to socialize or run errands. Even before the

advent and arrival of cell phones, which now dot the cultural landscape, communication and gossip travelled amazingly quickly even when passed along at the pace of passers-by.

Figure 1.3: Footpath between Belén and RaisTa. Photo taken by Elias Esteban, October 2010.

While little appears to have changed in the eight years that I have been working on the Miskito Coast, houses are dismantled, often without a trace, from the force of hurricane winds. Foot paths swerve to accommodate new constructions, slightly altering the geographic landscape and my memory of it. More noise seems to punctuate a once calm landscape, from the buzz of the gasoline-operated weed whacker, to *motos* speeding past. *Plantas* housing generators, *pulperias* (little shops) and satellite dishes hum from the generators within. Shakira's *waka waka* music echoes in and out as periodic pistol pops pierce the air.

The Miskito Economy

Agriculture has historically provided the backbone of Miskito sustenance and subsistence[2] even as Miskito men have participated as external wage laborers since the 1860s, integrating Miskito society into a broader exchange network and introducing purchased goods (Helms 1971). Agriculture has been divided into two arenas—*kiamps*, or upriver agricultural plots, and local gardens (Dodds 1994). While fruit trees such as mango dominate local, household gardens, larger *kiamps* have been responsible for bananas and plantains, manioc, rice, beans, and maize. A pot of soaking beans is generally kept alight in the kitchen to be paired with rice with the occasional addition of fish, meat or eggs. Because of external wage labor and a proclivity to purchase goods, many families are purchasing items from the local *tiendas* (stores), staples including flour, salt, sugar, and butter; indulgences such as cookies, crackers and soda; non-food staples including candles, matches, and soap (along with recharging cellular minutes); meat, eggs, and cheese and even local agricultural products such as rice and beans. I asked two of the divers' families to document a daily and weekly household economy so that I could get a sense of the family budget while the diver was at sea. Both budgets seemed heavily exaggerated when tabulating a daily average. Elias Esteban's household economy averaged $25 USD per day, with one outlier that included shoes and clothing. When taking out that outlier, the reported daily spending still averaged $16.25 USD per day. Daniel Derek's household economy averaged a daily spending of $21.50 USD per day. While these numbers appear embellished to me, there is a growing dependence on purchased goods from the market over agricultural products. This buying-power is also a symbol of status and prestige. One of the more striking purchased items

[2] Bowie (1992) debunks the romantic myth of the Thai subsistence economy by examining textile production in 19th century Thailand and detailing the dynamic exchange networks both regionally and internationally.

was sardines, given the village's location on a coastal spit of land nestled between the sea and freshwater lagoon.

Marriage and the family

The notion of family is a very flexible concept on the Miskito Coast. In my preliminary attempts to unravel kinship, I was confused by broad categorizations for ‘son,’ mother, and aunt. Older women, other than the mother, are often referred to as aunts and there is great effort to incorporate a stranger and make sense of that relation. I was sister and sister-in-law in my adopted Miskito family. Apart from genealogical relation, women take in their sister’s children and call them their own, as Exy did with Gordo, or take in other people’s children and absorb them into the family fold. People flexibly move throughout Moskitia and even from the city of La Ceiba to help care for a relative’s younger children or cook for a family. The concept of family is plastic, extending to the institution of marriage. Even with the influence of the Protestant Moravians, marriage in coastal Miskito life is most often a result of common law rather than ritual ceremony.

Getting acclimated

The notion of time varies in coastal Miskito life, where the tempo slows to accommodate a tropical routine. I had to adjust my time frame and expectations to this coastal rhythm and learned that the flow and cadence of life may elude the observer when trying to force a narrow, microscopic gaze and perspective. The juice of life happens when you least expect it—outside of a structured interview or planned appointment.

As I cemented a research project lured to lobster, I wrestled with the appropriate balance of listening rather than pursuing the threads of my research agenda as I acclimated and people acclimated to me. I grappled with issues of accuracy as I collected reports of lobster catches, prices paid per pound for lobster and population estimates. Often, numbers varied and appeared quite exaggerated to me. The inaccuracy of responses—from wild numbers for the price paid per pound for lobster at the opening of the season to population estimates and household economic indicators, accumulated as frustration. I learned that early on, as my Miskito informants acclimated to me, they often responded to please and placate rather than to speculate or admit uncertainty. This strategy fits within James Scott's (1985) findings in *Weapons of the Weak* that the subaltern employs forms of everyday resistance, such as exaggerated estimates, as a way to cope with unequal power dynamics. Frustrated that an informant had failed to mention a meeting between injured lobster divers from the *Asociacion Miskito Hondureño Buzos Lisiados* (AMHBLI), the injured divers association, and governmental officials, the day after our interview, I began to understand that early on, he, like other informants, responded best to specific and direct questions. I could not assume that he would alert me to pertinent information and events related to my research. The data represented here reflects my best efforts to convey accurate and steadfast information, accumulated with diligence over nine months between June 2010 and March 2011, supplemented by five months of ethnographic information that I gathered over eight years beginning in 2003, especially through research in the summer of 2008 and fall of 2009. As a fieldworker, I had less than perfect field days, succumbing to weariness and diarrhea. While catch sizes or prices paid per pound may have diverged early in my notes, over the course of nine months, I cross-checked divergent accounts with others and reconciled seemingly wayward responses with participant observation and my own experience on the coast.

Methodology

The methodology employed here relies on ethnography, or in the words of Clifford Geertz, "deep hanging out" (1998). Ethnography is both a process and a product. The process of ethnography involves personal interviews and participant observation. Partial snippets and tidbits of information gathered over time accumulate to form a composite of a people and their place and these gathered impressions enable me to tell a story. Zora Neale Hurston refers to it as "poking and prodding with a purpose" to get at the "boiled down juice of human living" (Andersen 2008). Further, ethnography enables the fieldwork interviewer to chronicle nuanced responses and to document scrunched noses and furrowed brows, further enhancing the context and adding dimension to pure transcriptions.

Figure 1.4: Fieldworker, La Moskitia, Honduras, 2010

Lobster diving is pervasive on the coast. Nearly every household that I encountered is connected to the lobster diving industry through the work of husbands, brothers, or sons. Hence, my project fit into a locally understandable frame and was easily accepted. I established friendships and relationships stretching along the length of the coast between Cocobila and Kuri, roughly eight to ten miles. Those contacts sometimes became informants, or often introduced me to informants.

I frequented services in the Moravian churches in Belén and Cocobila to indoctrinate me into local Miskito rhythms and routines. The coast is outwardly Moravian Protestant where Tillman (1999) documents that approximately 68% of the Miskito in the department of Gracias a Dios, which roughly corresponds to the Miskito region, are Moravian. While most Miskito identify as Moravian, more women and children attend the services than do men. This number is also not to discredit the lively spiritual landscape simultaneously alive on the coast. I used the first Sunday after my entry to formally announce my presence and research interests. A formal announcement was not always necessary, as my reputation and research interests usually preceded me. Lobster divers would sometimes stop me in passing to offer up their tale and offer to document their work by taking photographs at sea. This grassroots support reflects the ethnographic development of my research project. I also supplemented Miskito perspectives with first-hand accounts from Moravian missionaries, through hand-written and electronic mail, who had worked in the Moskitia—in either Honduras, Nicaragua or both.

To hinge the story of lobster diving on the Miskito Coast of Honduras, I followed the lives of four lobster divers from different villages over the course of a diving season (July-February). I had to carefully negotiate my position as a single woman since I was interested in men's work and primarily interviewed men.

Lobster divers and photography

To chronicle the experience of a diver's 15-day journey on the high sea, I distributed disposable cameras to my four principal informants. This methodological technique enabled me to capture a diver's experience while also not subjecting me to a sea journey with an all-male crew and the suspicions of their wives and girlfriends. I was able to supplement oral tales with visual and artistic documentation. I developed the photographs in between dive trips and used the printed photographs as a prompt for the diver to chronicle his dive experience. This methodological technique came about through conversation with anthropologist Laura Herlihy, who may have been inspired by Ratna Radakrishna. There is a rich and long literature on visual anthropology from Edward Curtis's photographs among Native Americans in the early 1900s to the second half of the twentieth century, when ethnographic filmmaking and cinema vérité became popular. Particularly influential was the seminal work of anthropologist John Adair and filmmaker Sol Worth, who in 1966 distributed cameras to a group of Navajo Indians in Arizona and taught them how to capture 16 mm film with the idea that the Navajo art would reflect the 'perceptual structure' of the Navajo world. This work has inspired the work of photovoice and virtual museums where cameras are given to locals as a strategy for empowerment. Collier and Collier (1986 [1967]) reason that the "camera is another instrumental extensions of our senses," which enables for the incorporation of the non-verbal, which "makes the camera a valuable tool for the observer" (7). Specifically, photo-elicitation interviewing can be a collaborative tool of mutual discovery (Harper 2002). While a precedent had long been set, my approach in the distribution of disposable cameras is novel in the context of Miskito lobster divers for I don't believe this evidence exists and the experiences and conditions on the dive boats are not known to outsiders beyond the stories that divers relay.

The most unexpected and surprising discovery about this methodological technique is that this photo-documentation became an empowering act of storytelling. As a diver relayed his experience to me, he was also able to share his experience and the conditions of his work with his family and neighbors, taking pride in work that takes place at a distance. The photographs, credited to the divers, are interspersed throughout the dissertation to supplement my written word with a visual prompt of their experience. Only a fraction of the actual photographs are reprinted and described below, those most pertinent and varied that complement the narratives of lobster dive work.

Ethnographic bias

I entered graduate school and the discipline of anthropology with a broad interest in human-environmental relations. My gratitude for wilderness has incrementally accrued from the time I was a young summer camper on Lakes Shelby and Michigan to long, quiet hikes through Wyoming's Wind River Range to treks through Patagonia's untamed mountains and craggy shoreline and Australia's geographically unique northern and western landscapes. Interlaced with my ecological curiosity was an interest in human beings' relationship to the natural world, particularly indigenous peoples' and their notions of religiosity, as inspired by the landscape. This frame, along with a broad interest in Latin America because of my experience in Patagonia, informed my graduate pursuits.

Western approaches to the human environment have long dichotomized nature and culture as autochthonous realms. The notion of 'nature' and the grand narrative of 'science' have long been heralded as rational and culture-free. Nadasdy (2007) points out that resource 'management' is inextricably tied to a political economy of resource 'extraction.' "Management" itself, as a concept, is based on a set of underlying assumptions about the world that are rooted in

the political and economic context of capitalist resource extraction" (Nadasdy 2007: 223). A post-structural and discursive turn as seen in political ecology has problematized the social construction of 'nature' (Escobar 1996; Latour 1994) and the cultural norms and power dynamics that inform seemingly unbiased (Western, Euro-centric) theories/truths such as 'development,' 'management,' 'science,' and 'nature' (Escobar 1996, 1999; Ferguson 1990; Latour 2004; Nadasdy 2007). The boundary separating nature from culture dissolves with the understanding that nature and culture are mutually reinforcing categories. The symbolic portrait of the Miskito spiritual landscape as presented in Chapter Three, illustrates the interplay between culture and nature on the Miskito Coast of Honduras.

I was first introduced to the Honduran Moskitia as a master's student in anthropology at the University of Kansas. Geographer Peter Herlihy and anthropologist Laura Herlihy opened their fieldsite in Kuri, Honduras to me and made it accessible for my initial ethnographic project in the summer of 2003. I had a geographic location, an abode and contacts. At that time, I was broadly interested in the relationship between cosmological belief systems and ecological landscapes.

My connection to that place was radically transformed when I received a *mandato urgente* on June 29, 2003 to call home. From Enrique's *pulperia* in Nueva Jerusalem, I called my father in the United States over a two-way radio to hear him say that my brother, John, had been tragically killed in a porch collapse in Chicago. *Stunned shock.* The place where one is when one receives that kind of debilitating news is indelibly imprinted on one's fiber—the imprint of place and the people with whom one shares and exchanges grief. I left Moskitia thinking that I would never return—that my connection to that place was permanently severed.

In the intervening years, I thought of Brazil, traveled there and learned Portuguese. In a 2007 seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with anthropologist Jane Collins on commodity chains, she encouraged me to mine my old fieldnotes and, for the first time, I was receptive to the idea and possibility of returning to Moskitia. In many ways, I had some unfinished business there—a tragic connection to a place that called my name. And the story that lured me was not only my brother's but those of other young men who dive for lobsters in the depths of the Caribbean, often at the expense of their lives. This project is for my brother, John, and for the *buzos*, lobster divers, in Moskitia—to make their stories and work visible.

Experience on the Miskito Coast

My early impressions of life on the Miskito Coast of Honduras were formed during my initial exposure in the summer of 2003. I was able to establish invaluable contacts on the coast—in Miskito homes and in conversations among lobster divers. I returned to the coast in the summer of 2008 to conduct pre-dissertation and exploratory fieldwork to refresh my understanding of life on the coast. Back in Madison in late March of 2009, I struck a fever. Weakened and four days later, I went to see my primary care doctor. I asked if this could possibly be malaria as I sweated through my dressing gown. Instead, he sent me home with a prescription. Later that night, with a splitting headache, I took a cab to the ER at the university hospital. After injecting me with some pain medications, the doctor, too, sent me home, scolding me and telling me not to return, as if I was an addict. The following day, after my mother and sister drove 10-hours through a snow storm, they took me back to the ER where my mother demanded that I be admitted, that something was truly wrong. I was quarantined. After eventual blood smears and test results, the medical team finally figured out that indeed I had malaria.

While this team of Wisconsin doctors had been trained in infectious disease in medical school, they were not experienced with seeing or treating the *Plasmodium vivax* malaria parasite, which can lie dormant in the liver until the disease manifests itself, perhaps with the warming weather of a Madison spring. I was a novel case in Madison, visited during grand rounds by medical students and physicians alike. While I had been on the broad-based antibiotic doxycycline, at every juncture, I asked if this could possibly be malaria. The irony is that despite our advanced health care, I would have been much better served if I was in Honduras where the anti-malarial chloroquine is sold over the counter. The incidence of malaria in Honduras is rated at 14% for high transmission (>1 per 1,000), 59% for low transmission (0-1 per 1,000), and 27% with zero malarial transmission where the predominance of cases occurs in Moskitia, in the Department of Gracias a Dios (WHO, World Malaria Report, 2014). Perhaps this was my official indoctrination into fieldwork, a tropical bug carried from the neo-tropics.

In June 2009 there was a *coup d'etat* as then-President José Manuel Zelaya was ousted in the middle of the night from his office in his pajamas because of his proposed constitutional amendment to extend the single four-year presidential term to allow for re-election. I returned again to Honduras in September 2009. I was in the city of La Ceiba when the ousted President Manuel Zelaya slipped into the country and took refuge in the Brazilian Embassy. In response to political riots in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, the national government imposed a curfew that brought an eerie stillness and a strange quiet across La Ceiba. My travel was complicated and postponed. Conversations circulated about the presidency of Mel Zelaya and his replacement, the then-President of Congress, Roberto Micheletti, over the constitutionality of the coup and overthrow.

I returned to Honduras from June 2010 through March 2011 for nine months of extensive fieldwork. My temporal perspective has enabled me to chronicle change over nearly a decade and more importantly, has augmented my rapport as I demonstrated a long-term commitment to the local community.

I was not the first anthropologist or researcher to appear on the Miskito Coast. In fact, when I sat in on a meeting of lobster divers, the question was turned onto me in terms of what I could do to help them. There had been enough poking and prodding without any attendant change by Peace Corps volunteers, NGO workers, and Moravian missionaries, so the question was put to me, "What can you do to help?" In many ways, I felt useless. I had no tangible skills; I was not a nurse. I observed and took notes and documented what I saw and heard. While I appeared wealthy to them, I was in fact a financially strapped student. My geopolitical identity enabled me to access resources, such as an education, and to situate commodity extraction within a broader political economic context. I believed that a thorough account could marshal some change. It was upon these perceptions of me—of my wealth and geopolitical mobility – that I believe many partially hitched their short-term and long-term dreams to me.

I was not impartial (*cf* Robben and Sluka 2007; Nordstrom 1995). I allied with the divers and their plight over work, fair wages, and poor working conditions. How could I not when I saw, heard, and lived the vagaries of life on the Miskito Coast with them? I developed friendships, and their stories of injury inscribed upon me the reality of this work and its dangers. The stories came alive and I lent an empathic ear. On the other hand, while I didn't go around parading or proselytizing my views, I also didn't ask certain questions. The region has increasingly become a corridor for drug trafficking. As a lone North American chronicling and

collecting data, I didn't want suspicions or assumption circling that I was a DEA agent. I continually reiterated that I was a student interested in the lobster industry. While people cited planes overhead and freely spoke of the drug trade, it was something that I never asked a single question about.

I was burglarized on several occasions, and there is one particular incident that I recount in the drug chapter that defined the end of my fieldwork experience when a group of young male traffickers came to live in my place of residence. Single-plank boards separated my room from theirs and the boards didn't extend up the length of the space separating our rooms. I knew they were not local since they spoke Spanish, not Miskito. And I could hear the clicking of metal as they cleaned and loaded their weapons. It was at that time that I began to question my safety. While Honduras has the highest per capita murder rate in the world with 90.4 homicides per 100,000 (six times the rate in Chicago), I had never felt particularly unsafe until that moment. I was outside of urban areas, protected by the community that had come to know me. But, as a single, white North American woman in a rural area, who was there to protect me against these outsiders? There were no authorities, no police.

After much struggle and deliberation, I decided to terminate my fieldwork since the violence had moved in. The threat of these traffickers affected my ability to remain calm and clear and my faculty to carry out the fieldwork that I had envisioned. The commodity landscape was shifting—from lobsters to cocaine—beneath my very eyes. Locals felt little moral condemnation of the drug trade, for it, like the lobster trade, is a way a mother feeds her child. The trouble, to me, is the violence associated with it. While I had the ability and geopolitical mobility to escape, the hardest part was leaving, knowing that my friends didn't have that same

option and that their social and economic lives were entangled in a war zone—in the politics of lobster diving regulations and the economics of cocaine trafficking.

Lobster, and now cocaine, are the most recent manifestations of commodity extraction and export extending from the Miskito Coast, northward to the United States, a history that includes mahogany, bananas, and turtles. The external orientation of the Miskito Coast has made it an ideal waypoint: a node in a sea of islands.

Setting the Geographic and Historic Stage

The Miskito Coast constitutes the "Caribbean edge" (Nietschmann 1979) of Honduras and Nicaragua, a lowland, coastal area of tropical rainforest interspersed with pine savanna extending from the Río Tinto in Honduras to the Pearl Lagoon in Nicaragua.

Figure 1.5: Stretch of fieldsite along the Miskito Coast of Honduras situated in the global exchange between Venezuela and Colombia and the United States. Map by Mark Livengood.

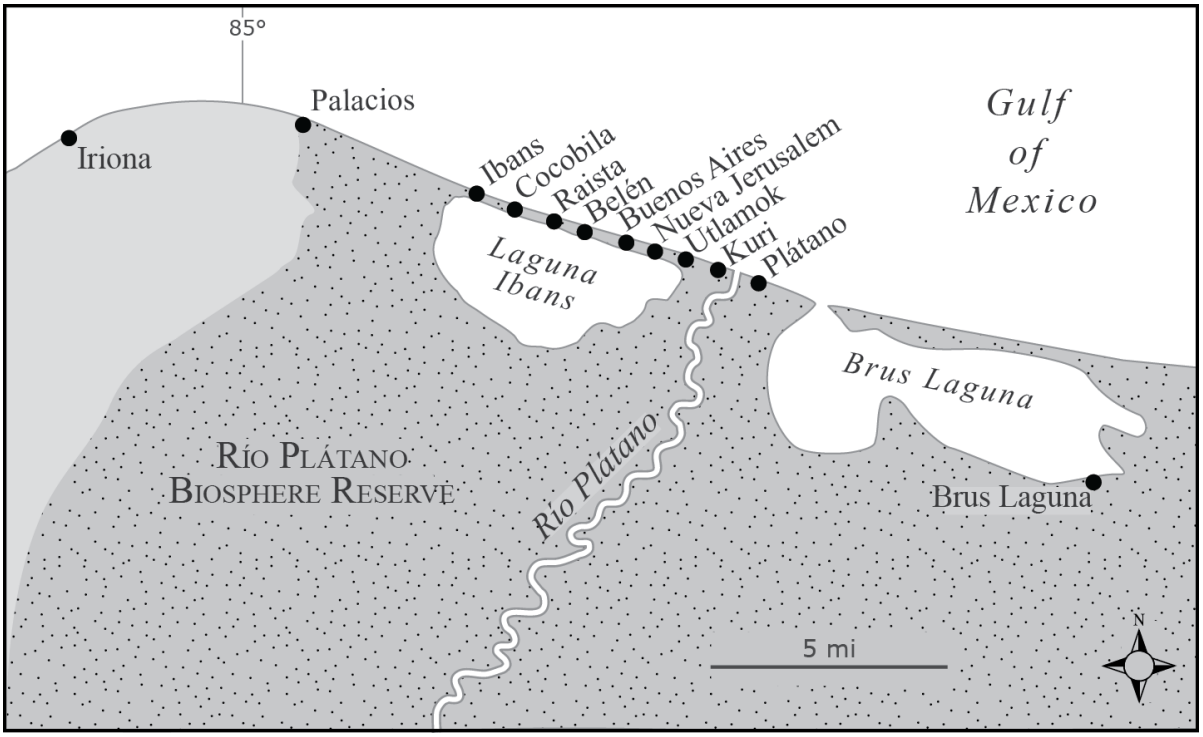


Figure 1.6: Map of fieldsites stretched along the length of the Honduran Miskito Coast. Map by Mark Livengood.

The remoteness of the northern Honduran coast is highlighted by its difficulty of access. It is accessible by a single engine propeller plane or, more commonly, by bus to the end of the paved road in Ironia. This trip is followed by an overland journey by 4x4 that travels along the uninterrupted sandy beach, dodging the surf and requiring being buoyed by a make-shift ferry across flooded tributaries during the rainy season. The final stretch of the journey is via a canoe or speedboat with an outboard motor that navigates the backwater channels and lagoons that separate the spit of land between the mainland and the Caribbean Sea.

Figure 1.7: A make-shift ferry on the way to Ironia, across the flooded tributaries in the rainy season

This coastal geography has made the Miskito Coast susceptible to outside influences—from early British and European colonial exploits in the 17th century to Moravian missionaries and U.S. corporate interests in the form of the United Fruit Company. These historical linkages, coupled with a Honduran state that has largely withheld political and economic responsibility for

its coastal, indigenous population, have inspired an external orientation among the Miskito. U.S. foreign policy and U.S. corporate economic interests have pursued neoliberal policies that have integrated Central America and Honduras into the global capitalist market as a supplier of cheap, ecologically unregulated commodities. This history of natural resource commodity extraction includes mahogany lumber, bananas, turtles (Helms 1971; Nietschmann 1979) and most recently, the spiny Caribbean lobster.

Miskito Identity

Contact is a defining feature of the Miskito in terms of the constitution of their population and their history. The Miskito have a Creole identity and are hybrid Amerindians. This history of contact has informed their constitution—Amerindians with admixtures of African and European influences. The Miskito Coast was dotted with Amerindian groups such as the Pech, Tawahka Sumu plus another Misumalpan, Macro-Chibchan speaking group of South American origin (Conzemius 1932). As early as the 17th century, the Miskito Coast felt the impact of contact from British and European colonists and buccaneers. Conzemius (1929:58) notes that:

> In 1641 a Portuguese slave ship, captained by Lourenco Gramalxo, sailed from the Guinea Coast towards Brazil in order to dispose of its black cargo. While on the high sea the Negroes decided to set themselves free and they threw their guardians overboard. Not being acquainted with the arts of navigation, their vessel was carried by the trade winds and the ocean currents towards the coast of Central America and wrecked on the Mosquito Keys situated a little south of Cabo Gracias a Dios. The Africans made for the shore; some of them died for want of food and fresh water, but the remainder were captured by the Indians (probably Sumu) and reduced to slavery. They were, however, allowed to intermarry with their masters and their children became free members of the tribe. Thus originated the Miskito.

While historical sources conflict on the origin of these slaves and the nationality of the crew, African immigration continued through both free blacks and African slaves “who sought the

isolated shore as refugees from Spanish and West Indian colonies or were brought to the coast as laborers by English planters" (Helms 1976:9). Amerindians mixed with the British and European colonists, buccaneers, free blacks and African slaves, and the Miskito were born. The ethnogenesis of the Miskito is similar to that of the nearby Garífuna in coastal Honduras and Belize, who are an admixture of Carib Indians and Africans from a shipwrecked slave ship on the island of St. Vincent (Davidson 1976). The threads of these African and European influences intermixed with Amerindians to create a diverse and pluriethnic cultural space. The Miskito were born out of contact (Helms 1971).

The Miskito were referred to as Zambos, or Zambos y Mosquitos or Zambos-Mosquitos, where zambo is a derogatory term literally meaning baboon, in the colonial period because of their mixed Indian and black ancestry. The British enacted a colonial policy of indirect rule over the Miskito Coast and even named a local Miskito king, in ceremonial title, over the Miskito kingdom (Helms 1971). While the coast remained a British protectorate until 1859, the British abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1833-1835 whereas slavery was not abolished in the wider Caribbean until 1841. As the Miskito began intermixing with the Pech and Tawahka in the 1800s, they became more identified as "Indians." Identity exists along a spectrum, and as anthropologist Laura Herlihy (2012) discusses, the Miskito employ situational identities to play up their "blackness" or "Indian-ness" depending on the shifting context. The casting of "Indian-ness" has been most recently used in land tenure debates with the Honduran government over legal land title. The use of indigeneity is a strong force in ancestral claims and original stewardship. In addition to the Miskito, Pech and Tawahka Amerindians along the Miskito Coast, other groups include Ladinos, or Spanish-speaking mestizos, locally referred to as Indios by the Miskito; Black Caribs, or the Garífuna; English-speaking Creoles and Isleños, also known

as Caracol, or conch, from the Bay Islands, just north of the Miskito Coast. These English-speaking islanders are of European descent and/or British-Afro-Caribbean descent.

Situating the Miskito in Context:

The Miskito population, one of the largest indigenous groups in Central America, numbers roughly one hundred and seventy five thousand, with two-thirds of the population in Nicaragua and one-third in Honduras (Herlihy 2002). While the Miskito are one cultural group divided by the contemporary national boundary between Nicaragua and Honduras, much of the literature to date has heavily referred to the Miskito of Nicaragua (Barrett 1992; Dennis 2004; García 1996; Hale 1997, 2005; Helms 1971; Jamieson 1997, 2001; Kindblad 2002; Nietschmann 1973, 1979; Offen 1999). Anthropologist Mary Helms and geographer Bernard Nietschmann are key scholars of ethnography and ethnohistory in the Nicaraguan Miskito region. Helms's research highlights the Miskito "purchase society," or external dependence as a result of market exchange among the Miskito of Asang, Nicaragua during her fieldwork in the 1960s. While the local economy was largely sustained through subsistence activities, the external economy included chicle, lumbering and mining. She witnessed these boom and bust cycles as a result of a purchasing proclivity and the ebbs and flows in the economy as a result of cash and cash dependence. Nietschmann provides rich geographic and ethnographic portraits of the Miskito of Nicaragua, along the Caribbean edge, especially chronicling the turtle commodity. An early description of Honduras includes the account of E. G. Squier, an American archaeologist, who surveyed for an interoceanic railroad in the 1850s. Eduard Conzemius conducted an Ethnographical Survey of Honduras and Nicaragua for the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1932. General contributions to the sociological and anthropological Honduran literature include

Jackson (2005) on development work; Pine (2008) on *maquila* (textile and apparel assembly) work, drinking and violence; and Stonich on resource development (1989; 1992). Recent research on the Honduran Moskitia include the sustainability of swidden agriculture in the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (Dodds 1994, 2001); participatory resource mapping (Herlihy 1997, 2001); gendered and situational identities, matrilocality, "female autonomy" and Miskito women's use of sexual magic (Herlihy 2002, 2007, 2012); cultural consciousness in a time of war (Perez Chiriboga 2000); and the Moravian Church's influence on the Miskito settlement landscape (Tillman 1999). While I historically draw upon both the Honduran and Nicaraguan literatures, my study specifically focuses on and extends the Honduran literature specifically, and the Latin American literature more generally.

This study also contributes to the food studies literature by examining the class and regional aspects of food consumers' behavior and values and how a U.S. chain restaurant helps to construct the elite fantasy of its consumers by specifically contributing to the literatures on food commodity studies, the transnational movement of commodities, and to the study of industrial foodways. In addition, this ethnography joins the conversation on the anthropology of drugs, specifically on cocaine and its transnational movement, as well as the study of transnational gangscapes, the indigenization of gangs, and migration studies. Further, this ethnography adds to the indigenous literatures on the animistic landscape of spiritual forces and the dangerous negotiations with the natural and spiritual world for the extraction of those natural resources.

Political Economic History

The Banana Republic

Honduran state formation has been inextricably tied to the capitalization of nature—from gold and mahogany to bananas (Faber 1992: 27; Morris 1984; Williams 1986). Although Honduras gained independence from Spain in 1821 and the north Miskito coast and Bay Islands from Britain in 1859, Honduras became heavily influenced politically and economically, beginning in 1823 through a series of diplomatic foreign policy relations with the United States government and economic relations with U.S. corporations.

After an early federal period (1821-1838) as part of a federation of Central American states and a democratic period from 1838-1899, Honduras experienced a period of *caudillismo*, or political-military rule by authoritarian power. As foreign economic interests penetrated the young Honduran state, U.S. corporate elites from the United Fruit and Standard Fruit companies developed clientelistic relationships with the caudillo government, as evidenced by the expanding banana industry and concomitant railroad construction (Bulmer-Thomas 1987; Morris 1984). The influence of these two companies in the late 1880s to the early 20th century became so strong that the Honduran nation was referred to as the "banana republic" by American writer O. Henry. The banana companies were politically and economically invested in protecting the Panama Canal and banana trade. Periods of relative stability (1911-1920; 1925-1931) oscillated with periods of instability (1919-1924; 1932-1949) under the *caudillo* government until a military dictatorship took hold in 1972 lasting for ten years. As early as 1981, the CIA financially supported the Contras against the communist Nicaraguan Sandinistas. A democratic government, which continues today, was elected in 1982 under Roberto Suazo of the Liberal

Party, under the watchful eye of the United States, as it maintained an interest in political and economic stability (Merrill 1995).

The liberties associated with a democracy have come under scrutiny since President José Manuel Zelaya was overthrown in June 2009. He was replaced by then President of Congress, Roberto Micheletti. Whether or not considered an official *coup d'etat*, this event aroused international concern that it could ignite further unrest in a historically politically unstable region. Both the United States, under the Obama administration, and the Organization of American States (OAS) called Zelaya's military removal an illegal coup and the OAS suspended Honduras from its membership. Scheduled elections were held in November and Porfiro Lobo was elected in what appeared to be fair and unfettered democratic elections, taking office in January 2010. While the United States's official position had considered the overthrow a coup, and had called for democracy to be restored and the reinstatement of President Zelaya, the United States restored diplomatic relations with Honduras's new government after Lobo's election. The Organization of American States reinstated Honduras in June 2011 after Mel Zelaya's safe return from Costa Rica and the Honduran courts dropped corruption charges and arrest warrants.

U.S. Interventionism as Diplomacy:

While the U.S. Monroe Doctrine (1823) asserted that European powers were not to interfere or further colonize any of the newly independent nations in the Americas, the force of the doctrine came in the form of the Roosevelt Corollary (1904), which permitted U.S. intervention in Latin America to stabilize the economic affairs of small nations in Central America. The Corollary, known as "Big Stick Diplomacy," enabled and legitimated U.S.

intervention with force—in the form of military "big sticks" and naval "Gunboat Diplomacy" (Perez-Brignoli 1989), often in the guise of the U.S. Marines to protect U.S. investments. In essence, the Monroe Doctrine attempted to limit European influence in Latin American while securing U.S. domination. The doctrine, bolstered by a corollary, set a symbolic precedent for U.S. policy and interventionism in Central America. In essence, imperial and economic interference were shrouded in the rhetoric of diplomacy.

This "diplomacy" shifted from political to economic in scope as represented by Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy." In the wake of Honduran political instability in the early 1900s and a debt over 120 million dollars, largely to Britain, Taft attempted to open Latin American borders for investment, replacing British and European bank loans with U.S. vendors, such as J.P. Morgan. The banks reduced the debt by issuing bonds and took control of the Honduran railroads while the U.S. government assured continued Honduran independence. Furthermore, FDRs "Good Neighbor" policy (1933-1945) legitimated US *political* non-interference and non-intervention but *economic* intervention and "development" ensued.

After World War II, the U.S., the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank invested in Central America to stimulate national economic growth and global capitalist enterprises. The creation of the Central American Common Market (CACM) in 1960 attempted to bring integration and industrialization to the Central American states and to diversify national economies based on export-led agriculture. But import-substitution industrialization failed to bring development and analysts argue that Honduras was more internally preoccupied with its national economy than with integration (Bulmer-Thomas 1987).

Economic stimulation continued through the 1961 Alliance for Progress, a U.S. response to Cuba's Revolution and the perceived threat of communism. The Alliance promised social and

economic stability but rather than securing economic independence, it integrated Central America into the world economy as a supplier of cheap agricultural commodities (Faber 1992). External aid agencies such as USAID helped to finance agricultural diversification of "nontraditional" exports in Honduras, such as shrimp, lobster, melons and flowers, in response to the 1970s economic crisis (Stonich 1992).

In a further attempt to stave off the spread of communism, the United States extended the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to Honduras in 1984, which enabled Honduras to gain access and export duty-free to U.S. markets. Jackson (2005) shows how USAID promoted and created *maquiladoras* in Honduras, textile and apparel assembly companies, as part of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to promote free-trade between the United States and the Caribbean through Export Processing Zones (EPZ)[3]. Honduras has evolved from the banana republic to the "Maquila Republic," with the third largest maquila sector in the world (McCallum 2011). These maquiladoras include Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, Jockey, and Wrangler and have faced allegations of illegal child labor in the production of celebrity Kathie Lee Gifford's clothing line for Walmart (243).

U.S. efforts to avert the threat of communism have exposed the U.S. in charges in the puppeteering and interference in the Iran-Contra affair. The CIA, with covert support from the Pentagon, used Honduras as the training ground for counter-insurgency efforts for the training of Contras in the secret war against Nicaragua's Sandinistas (Paglen 2009). Reagan administration operative Oliver North funneled funds to the Contras through arms sales to Iran. Many Miskitos were coopted into this war on the part of the Contras. The date of the landing strip in Belén is

[3] The special force of the CBI has lost some of its competitive edge since Mexico signed NAFTA in 1994. The CBI is in effect until 2020 but may be replaced by a broader and stronger agreement, the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA).

disputed. Some date it to 1981 as construction for the Contra-Sandanista war while others date it to the 1960s as development for Moravian mission access (Dodds 1994). This airstrip and the legacy of AK-47s, remnants of the Contra-Sandanista war of the 1980s, are some of the "blank spots" on geographer Trevor Paglen's (2009) map, now paving the way for the illicit penetration of cocaine traffic and increased violence into the daily lives of Miskitos.

Violence in Honduras has earned the country the infamous title of murder capital of the world—with an average of 90.4 murders per 100,000 inhabitants according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime—a result of increased drug traffic, organized crime and corruption. The country is plagued by human rights abuses and police corruption where liberties typically associated with a democracy are not always guaranteed. More than twenty journalists have been killed in Honduras since the 2009 coup, and two university students were murdered by the state police. In response to police corruption, there is increased militarization of the streets as the military has been granted increased power and presence in civilian policing under Operation Lightning. This political preoccupation in the capital's interior has diverted security forces and attention from Honduras's coastal areas, leaving the region vulnerable to increased illicit cocaine traffic. Or as Taussig (2004) found in Colombia, the Honduran state may be complicit in this new cocaine boom as a way of stimulating the Honduran economy.

The fact that a major revolutionary movement was staved off in Honduras has intrigued scholars given the political instability of its Central American neighbors (Morris 1984; Booth 1991; Brockett 1991; Stokes 1991; Euraque 1996; Goodwin 2001). Like its Central American counterparts, Honduras confronted landlessness, poverty, inequality, external dependence, the 1973 oil crisis and the "lost decade," or debt crisis of the 1980s, where foreign debt exceeded their earning power and ability to repay it (Goodwin 2001). Booth (1991) notes though that

wealth and income inequalities increased less severely in Honduras than among its neighbors. The idea of "flexibility" surfaces in accounts of Honduras—in reference to its political "cycle of frustration" between conservatives and reformists (Morris 1984) and what Goodwin (2001) refers to as the "semi-openness" or lack of extremism in Honduran political regimes. What emerges in reading these two accounts is that, in contrast to El Salvador and Guatemala, no landholding oligarchy, or coffee elite, developed in Honduras. Special dispensation was granted from the small Honduran ruling elite to the banana companies. They argue that the lack of a strong, cohesive oligarchy defused an organized response in the form of a revolutionary movement.

The 1980s "lost decade" failed to bring economic development as the Central American economies were troubled by debt crisis and an economic recession. In response, economist John Williamson from a D.C.-based think tank initiated the "Washington Consensus," a neoliberal set of policy initiatives dominated by trade liberalization, deregulation, privatization, marketization and commodification, popular among the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the U.S. Treasury Department at the time. It is oft referred to as global market capitalism or, in the words of David Harvey, "the financialization of everything" (2005a: 33). It is a development strategy that privileges the market over government (Williamson 1990, 2000; Oxhorn 1998; Peck 2002). In theory, neoliberal policies extend economic aid through fundors such as USAID, the World Bank, and the IMF to stimulate economic development in peripheral countries by integrating them into the global economy. These development terms invite developing countries to the "World Economy Roundtable" where they must comply with the "conditions" of trade liberalization and tariff reduction and/or elimination.

Honduras' recent strategy for stimulating the economy has resulted in deregulation and an opening of national borders to U.S. penetration and commodification. Though the Central American Common Market (CACM) failed to bring development and industrialization in the 1960s-1970s (Perez-Brignoli 1989), Honduras tried to leverage its bargaining power by joining the Central American Integration System (SICA) in 1993. SICA, a regional economic trade organization, eliminated most tariffs on exports originating in Central America, while eliminating all on seafood in 1998 (WTO 2003) and agreeing to import tariffs not to exceed 15% of the price as an effort to enhance trade (WTO 2005). These tariffs do not apply to special regimes such as Industrial Export Processing Zones or Free Trade Zones where imports and exports are free of duty and all transactions are tax exempt (WTO 2003). All of Honduras was declared a Free Trade Zone after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

Honduras signed the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the United States in 2005, which eliminates all tariffs and barriers to trade. The trade agreement opens new trade areas between Central America and the United States. In theory, the agreement opens new markets in both directions. Supporters tout it as a means to modernize Central American economies, ensure workers' rights and labor laws and protect the environment. Critics argue that the agreement airs of failed neoliberal rhetoric, much like the Central American Common Market (CACM) while others argue that it is more geopolitical than economic for free trade cannot occur when inequality exists between two trading partners. To this day, Honduras operates under the slogan, "Honduras is Open for Business," a political strategy to attract economic investment in Honduras.

This "outward-oriented economic policy" inherently leads to uneven economic and geographic development (Williamson 1990; Harvey 2005b). The problem is that the costs and

benefits of trade liberalization are often unevenly distributed socially, economically, and ecologically. This commodification of nature and the capitalization of nature (Faber 1992: 27) have resulted in economic exploitation, social inequality, and ecological degradation on the land- and 'waterscapes' (Swyngedouw 2005) of the Miskito Coast of Honduras (see Stonich 1992).

Stonich (1989, 1992) has documented the economic disparity and ecological degradation associated with natural resource-based development in Honduras. She has documented the shifting land use patterns from small, domestic farms to large commercial landholdings for the production of elite, high value export goods, such as grazed cattle and farmed shrimp and the attendant soil fertility loss and mangrove destruction associated with intensive commercial agriculture and shrimp farming.

But economic development under neoliberal trade policies has not brought attendant reductions in poverty or inequality, what Fernando Fajnzylber (1990) refers to as the "empty box syndrome" in Latin America (Korzeniewicz and Smith 2000: 8). Honduras is the second poorest Central American country, the fourth poorest in the Western Hemisphere following Haiti, Nicaragua and Guyana. It has a relatively low population density with 72 inhabitants per square kilometer, ranking fourth in Central America after El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. It is ranked as one of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) by the IMF and World Bank (State Dept. 2002). In 2010, 60% of households were below the poverty threshold where 47% fell into the extreme poverty category. It is a country plagued by poverty where per capita GDP was valued at was $4,200 USD by the U.S. Department of State in 2010 (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1922.htm, accessed June 11, 2012). Honduras, a heavily indebted poor country, has opened up its waterways and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) so that

99% of commercially valued fish species can be harvested for neoliberal commodification schemes for economic and state development (Holt and Segnestam 1982).

Large-scale commodity extraction began in Honduras in the colonial trade of the luxury hardwood, mahogany. Cutting of Rattan mahogany began along the Miskito Coast in the 1740s. It was principally shipped to Britain, from which it was transshipped to the rest of Europe. British cutters were also occupied in the cutting of logwood, a dyewood in high demand in Europe. When enormous amounts of logwood had inundated the European market, cutters turned to Honduran mahogany, *Swietenia macrophylla*, which made its way to Britain in 1764. The French Revolution of 1789 had a remarkable impact on the mahogany trade in the Americas with the essential collapse of French and Spanish colonial empires. This departure opened virgin areas of mahogany to the British. From the 1820s, Honduran mahogany was exported to North American and Europe until the end of the 19th century. It travelled by ship to London and to the United States through the port of New Orleans, up the Mississippi, and into New York and the East Coast. The mahogany trade peaked in the last quarter of the 19th century: in 1875, Britain imported 80,000 tons of mahogany. This number was not matched again by Honduran mahogany which increasingly became replaced with the African species *Khaya* from West Africa. *Swietenia macrophylla* was officially placed on Appendix III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in 1995 and was moved to Appendix II in 2003.

The banana republic is most famously known for its banana production and export of the Cavendish, a British variety. Mainland banana trade began in the 1880s. As elaborated earlier in this chapter, Honduran state formation has been inextricably tied to U.S. political and economic interventionism and the capitalization of nature as a sort of backyard, tropical garden for the United States. While the initial industry depended on local growers who sold to a variety of U.S.

steamers along the Atlantic coast, the industry quickly became dominated by three major players. In 1899, the Vaccaro brothers from New Orleans started the Standard Fruit Company, which merged with James Dole's Hawaiian Pineapple Company, eventually becoming Dole in 1964. The other dominant competitor, the American-based United Fruit Company, was also started in 1899, eventually becoming Chiquita Brands in 1984. Cuyamel, another American-based company, operated between 1911-1929 until it was absorbed into United Fruit. To attract investment, U.S. companies were offered incredible concessions in the form of free land and tax exemptions if they contributed to the country's infrastructure in the building of railroads and roads and by bringing new lands under cultivation. For example, in 1912, the Tela Railroad Company, a subsidiary of United Fruit, was granted 6,000 hectares of national land that was deemed vacant for every 12 kilometers of railroad track that they laid. Bananas were shipped on steamers, known by United Fruit as the Great White Fleet, to New Orleans, Mobile, Philadelphia and Boston.

The green sea turtle, *Chelonia mydas,* has provided subsistence to the coastal Miskito. The largest breeding grounds for green sea turtles existed off the Miskito Coast. For more than 200 years, relations between the coastal Miskito and English were based on sea turtles. Turtle meat provided sustenance to 17th century buccaneers and colonists (Nietschmann 1979). As turtles became valued in the international market, they became a commodity for extraction. A subsistence-based economy shifted to one that was market-focused. In order to serve the global demand and accrue a cash income, intensification and exploitation occurred within the turtle population. Foreign companies established factories to process green turtles for export (Nietschmann 1973, 1979). The industry started to show signs of decline in the 1940s when foreign companies shut down production. A revival of the industry took place in 1968 and 1969

when two turtle companies set up new operations. The height of the turtle boom occurred in 1974 but between 1969 and 1976, 10,000 green sea turtles were exported annually (Nietschmann 1979). The green sea turtles were over-harvested, leading to a depletion of the turtle population, as documented by Bernard Nietschmann in *When the Turtle Collapses, the World Ends* (1974). This resource decline had grave consequences on the subsistent and cash economies of the coastal Miskito and the traditional gift exchange of the Miskito moral economy.

State development within the banana republic has long been tied to the capitalization of nature. Political intervention, interference and "diplomacy" have shrouded economic penetration in search of cheap commodities ranging from mahogany, bananas, and turtles to lobsters and cocaine. While cocaine is an illegal commodity, the same neoliberal market principles that drive a legal exchange also apply to the illicit economy. The neoliberalization of the global economy has mandated that participation is conditioned upon, and only competitive, based on trade liberalization and tariff reduction or elimination. This is how consumers at Red Lobster restaurants find cheap lobsters "fluffed" on the shell during "Lobsterfest," the largest signature promotion of Red Lobster restaurants in which different species of lobster are showcased. These "Lobsterfest" advertisements are quite popular during Lent in regions such as Wisconsin, owing to the large number of Catholics in the state.

CHAPTER TWO

LOBSTER LINES: MISKITO LIVES AT THE INTERSECTION OF BIOPOLITICAL REGULATIONS

A small hajj was forming along the route to Cocobila for the first ritual send-off of the season. Women with paddles escorted their husbands, brothers, and sons. Divers and cayuqueros vied with the sacabuzo for a position on the boat and negotiated their "advans." The pulperia was bustling, women were selling cakes and baleadas, and the peddlers had lined up their second-hand clothes, perfumes, and plastic goods made in China under the shade of a few sparse trees to exchange for advanced diving funds. The equatorial sun's intense rays beat down on the congregants, some of whom escaped under a make-shift awning. Watermelon rinds, plastic soda bottles, and empty chip bags were strewn along the sandy beach and contrasted with the brilliant blue colors of the Caribbean—the darker waters further out contrasted by the aquamarine of the shallow shore. The smell of marijuana intermingled with the salty Caribbean Sea air. The imbibing of Plata vodka accompanied this pre-departure gathering for divers are prohibited from bringing alcohol onboard despite their ability to carry their pistols with them. Comanches and wives followed straggling divers and cayuqueros to make sure that they boarded the boat after receiving their advans and castigated inebriated divers as they sometimes dragged them to sea. A small motorboat scooped up divers and their cayuqueros from the coast and shuttled them to the Bucaneer II and Miss Keidi, anchored further out in the aquamarine sea to commence a two-week journey to capture lobsters.

Lobster is the most recent manifestation of commodity extraction on the Miskito Coast of Honduras, situated within a long history of the capitalization of nature in the banana republic. Lobster divers, or *buzos*, are structurally tied to this economy, paid per lobster pound. As the

resource is over-harvested and populations diminish, divers are forced into increasingly deeper and more dangerous waters. The costs of diving are inscribed on their bodies in the form of decompression sickness, or the bends, neurological damage, and death. They are sacrificed, part of the cost for a lobster tail dinner in the United States. Divers head to sea like soldiers prepare for war. It's especially distressing to watch men limp to the motorboat as they are helped inside. Their lives are disposable.

Commodity Chains and Structural Oppression

Social Relations between Things

In a string of commodity exports including mahogany, bananas and turtle meat, lobster is the most recent manifestation of commodity extraction on the Miskito Coast of Honduras. Miskito men dive for spiny lobsters, *Panulirus argus,* in the depths of the Caribbean, which provides the economic backbone of Miskito society. By envisioning a commodity chain, I explore the processes of globalization inherent in the transnational trade and exchange of Caribbean lobsters off the Honduran coast. I draw upon Anthony Giddens' definition of globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (1990: 64) as a frame to trace lobsters as a line of inquiry between the Miskito Coast of Honduras and the dining menus of Red Lobster restaurants in the United States.

Figure 2.1: Cutting off the head of spiny lobsters. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on the *Bocanel*, October 4-12, 2010.

Figure 2.2: Spiny lobster tails, probably undersized and too small to sell to the processing company.

A commodity chain approach anchors my analysis both theoretically and methodologically. This approach incorporates examples of ethnographic particulars in a broad, multi-sited analysis. The value in this approach is that one can "follow the thing," in the words of George Marcus (1995), as a unit of analysis in discussing larger global issues. Jane Collins invoked the eloquent words of art critic and essayist John Berger in her ethnography, *Threads*. Berger noted that "instead of being aware of a point as an infinitely small part of a straight line, we are aware of it as an infinitely small part of an infinite number of lines, as the center of a star of lines" (Berger 1974: 40 in Collins 2003: 5). To this end, I knot my analysis to lobster.

Both Adam Smith (1776) and Karl Marx (1867) recognized that the ideal value of a commodity reflects the amount of labor invested in the production of the thing. One of Marx's key revelations was to expose the fetishization of commodities. Marx argued that commodities and the commodification of things mask the social relations between people through a system of economic exchange. In his words, social relations appear as "material relations between persons and social relations between things" (Marx 1976: 166). "It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (ibid: 165).

That we live in a world of commodities is to recognize one part of this framework. While some people produce for subsistence, as Karl Polanyi argues, the social and economic lives of most people are integrated into some kind of market—a market for small-scale bartering to capitalist exchange on the global scale. As documented by Fernand Braudel (1979), Eric Wolf (1982), Sidney Mintz (1985), and Arjun Appadurai (1986) for other networks and commodities,

the scale of Miskito exchange has continued to expand from local and regional provinces in the 17th century to that of the global economy.

Eric Wolf's (1982) *Europe and the People without History* is an example of a political and economic history set within global world system. Likewise, Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1985) takes a Marxist political economic approach to the study of sugar and consumptive practices. It is a culture history of sugar embedded in a broader historical narrative of capitalism and colonialism, linking sugar production in the Caribbean with its consumption in Europe through global flows. Arjun Appadurai (1996) argues that the process of globalization consists in uneven disjunctures across his '*landscapes*' of our "imagined worlds" (51). Appadurai expands upon Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" in discussing imagined worlds—"the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations" of people across the globe (ibid). The development of print-capitalism allowed for the simultaneity transmission of ideas to masses of people in far reaching areas. This development implied a new form of imagined communities—as modern nations.

David Harvey (1990) terms the shared, instantaneous experience under the postmodern condition as "time-space compression," where far away events are experienced as near, almost simultaneously. He refers to this as the "speeding-up" of experience. Harvey (1990:300) espouses that "the interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds (of commodities) in the same space and time. But it does so in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production." In addition to "time-space compression," Harvey argues that the shift from modernity to postmodernity is also accompanied by a political-economic capitalist transformation in the 1973 transition from Fordism to "flexible accumulation." This "time-space

compression" and "flexible accumulation" facilitated the movement of mediated images, technology, and capital across global spaces—what Appadurai has termed mediascapes, technoscapes, and financescapes.

The scale of this global political economy was encapsulated in the world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein and Terence Hopkins. Hopkins and Wallerstein defined a commodity chain as a "network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity" (Dicken *et al*. 2001: 98). Sociologist Gary Gereffi expanded the modern world system to include a global territory. Envisioned by Gereffi, global commodity chains have three dimensions: (1) an input-output structure where a set of products and services are linked together in a sequence of value-adding economic activities; (2) a territoriality, a spatial or geographic dispersion or concentration of production and distribution networks, comprised of enterprises of different sizes and types; and (3) a governance structure, a framework of power and authority that determines how financial, material, and human resources are allocated and flow within the chain (Gereffi 1993: 96-7). The governance structure is further divided into producer-driven commodity chains (PDCCs) and buyer-driven commodity chains (BDCCs). PDCCs include capital and technology intensive industries such as automobile and computer industries and are most often located in core countries. BDCCs are associated with the labor-intensive consumer goods industries of apparel most often outsourced to Third World factories. Peter Gibbon (2001) offers the international trader-driven chain as a third type of governance structure. International trader-driven chains are composed of trans-national corporations (TNCs) who act as intermediaries and drive the trade between suppliers and processors.

The ethnographic discussion that follows explores the lobster industry, native to the Miskito waters off the coast of Honduras. I trace lobster as a commodity from the Caribbean

waters off the Miskito Coast of Honduras to the dining menus of Red Lobster restaurants in the United States. By tracing this, my goal is to expose the fetishization of commodities where social relations appear as relations between lobsters and unmask the lives that feed these chains.

Single food commodity studies abound from popular tales of Trevor Corson's secret life of lobsters in the Gulf of Maine (2004) to Mark Kurlansky's culture histories of single commodity foodstuffs such as cod (1997), salt (2002) and oysters (2007). Literary historian Rebecca Stott (2004) chronicles the story of the oyster and its pearl while Virginia Scott Jenkins (2000) offers a history of the banana in American culture (Jenkins 2000). Sociologist Melanie DuPuis provides a culture history of milk and how it became "nature's perfect food" (2002). Geographer Susanne Freidberg examines food scares in an anxious age by tracing two commodity chains for french green beans that follow colonial lines from Burkina Faso to France and Zambia to Britain (2003). Likewise sociologist John Talbot (2004) examines the ever-expanding political economy and commodity chain of coffee in a global world.

Given the abundance of single food commodity studies, Mintz and Du Bois (2002) lament the lack of anthropological attention. Classic and notable exceptions include Mintz on sugar (1985); Ohnuki-Tierney on rice (1993); Roseberry (1996) on yuppie coffees; Bestor (2000, 2001) on Atlantic Bluefin tuna and McIntyre (2002), a UW Madison Anthropology dissertation on fish sauce and the Vietnamese nation. In terms of yuppie coffees, Roseberry chronicles the break from standardization and the rise (and re-imagination) of the niche market. Bestor (2000, 2001) examines the transnational tuna trade and its commodity chains by specifically focusing on Tokyo's Tsukiji market and the Atlantic Bluefin tuna. While he chronicles how tuna was a mid-twentieth century development in the Japanese diet and originally a street food, before the globalization of the Bluefin market, Maine fishmongers would sell tuna for cat food. He shows

how a 1929 Ladies' Home Journal article on Japanese cooking specifically omitted recipes on raw fish. It wasn't until the 1970s when sushi appeared in the U.S. as a marker for the elite and a sign of class and educational standing. Sushi became a symbol of cosmopolitanism and sophistication.

Since Mintz and DuBois' (2002) critique, anthropological contributions to single commodity studies include Tokyo's Tsukiji market (2004), broccoli (2006), coca-globalization (2008), matsutake mushrooms (n.d, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), and coffee (2012). Bestor's (2004) ethnography on economy and commodification focuses upon the largest fish market for fresh and frozen seafood in the world: Tsukiji. Bestor reveals the supply lines, the vertical and horizontal relationships that govern auctions and distribution channels, and changes in consumption habits in an era of increasing globalization of the seafood trade. Fischer and Benson (2006) offer a rare anthropological lens into the commodity of broccoli, connecting American grocery shoppers with the Mayan farmers in the highlands of Guatemala who supply the chain and Foster's (2008) Coca-globalization examines the globalization of soft drinks and their role beyond mere commodities.

This chapter is an anthropological contribution to food studies, food commodity chains, and the transnational movement of commodities, specifically addressing environmental conditions by merging a political ecological approach with commodity studies. Commodity studies have surprisingly overlooked environmental considerations and relations. The few exceptions include the collaborative work on matsutake as a companion species among the Matsutake Worlds Research Group and Paige West's (2012) ethnography on coffee, *From Modern Production to Modern Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*, where she unravels the rules and regulations that confound fair trade and organic coffee

certification among the Gimi in Papua New Guinea. Anna Tsing and the more broadly and collaborative Matsutake Worlds Research Group examine the matsutake mushroom and its history as a commodity and companion species (Tsing n.d., 2009). They show that mushrooms, growing at the seams, can tell us about the human condition in historical perspective and offer a lens into forest management (Tsing and Satsuka 2008). Further, they extend human and non-human/matsutake collaboration as akin to the mychorrizal relations between fungi and tree roots (Matsutake Worlds Research Group 2009a, 2009b).

Mintz and Du Bois (2002) further call for attention to the industrialization of foodways. In addition to Durrenberger (1992) on industrial shrimp processing; McMichael (1994) on food and agricultural systems; Boyd and Watts (1997) on the chicken industry; Fischler (1999) on Mad Cow disease; and Stull and Broadway (2004) on the meat and poultry industry, this chapter contributes to the literature on industrial foodways by focusing on lobster pathways from the Miskito Coast and industrial purchasing-processing centers in La Ceiba or on the island of Roátan to corporations in the United States, such as Sysco Foods and Red Lobster Restaurants, Inc., a former brand of Darden Restaurants, Inc., now a private restaurant company.

The Lobster Industry

Honduras extracted 2.3 million pounds of lobster and generated 43.8 million dollars in 2010 as a result of the lobster industry, as reported in the Honduran newspaper, *La Prensa* (*La Prensa,* 3/2/2011). Lobster diving is the most prevalent form of work on the coast and is carried out by *buzos,* or lobster divers. *Buzos* are summoned and collected by the s*acabuzo*, an intermediary on the coast who pairs male divers in search of work with boat captains in search of divers. *Sacabuzos* also employs assistants known as *comanches.*[4] Boat captains radio or call the cellular phones of *sacabuzos* to notify them of an upcoming outing, where they will need divers to harvest lobsters. While the World Trade Organization (2003) reported that the fleet of lobster and shrimp boats based in the Bay Islands numbered around 325, I think a current estimate in 2011 is closer to thirty to fifty boats with six to fourteen main boats that operate in my fieldsite, the stretch of coast between Ibans and Río Plátano. They include the *Bocanel, la Providencia, Miss Keidi, Tiburon, Miss Yomali, Steiner, el Toro, Mister Marvin, Lady Nancy, Sou'west, Coral*, *Lady America*, *Buccaneer II*, and the *Yoely*. The 1992 Honduran Investment Law stipulates that foreign companies that wish to engage in commercial fishing must partner with Honduran nationals (U.S. Department of State 2002). The boats are owned by wealthy Honduran ladino businessmen based in the Bay Islands and in the port city of La Ceiba. Most captains are also ladino but I encountered one Miskito captain while conducting fieldwork. As with economics, power within the lobster industry is stratified, with *ladinos* in positions of power and indigenous Miskitos at the bottom of the rung, employed as divers.

[4] Comanche may be a borrowed English word with reference to Native North America.

Figure 2.3: Captain Toto in red shorts and queen conch in the background, which is sold for its shell alone for roughly 100 Lempiras, or $5.56 USD in *las islas* and La Ceiba. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo on the *Sou'west*, October 14-30, 2010.

Figure 2.4 : Captain Marvin on the *Sou'west*. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo, October 14-30, 2010.

Small motorboats collect the divers from the coast and transport them to the larger, steel-hulled boats, from which they will commence a twelve to fifteen day outing. The length of dive trips is dependent upon favorable weather and a fully functioning boat. In the rainy season, blustery storms pass through as tropical storms, which sometimes turn into hurricanes and sometimes do not, but either way the winds blow across the misty ocean, stirring up white-caps on the ocean's surface, creating a *mal tiempo* for the divers.

Figure: 2.5 Lobster dive boat, Cocobila, Honduras, 2010

Roughly thirty-five to fifty divers and thirty-five to fifty *cayuqueros*, canoemen, go out to sea at one time along with the captain, cooks, and *marinos*, crew, who weigh and clean the lobsters. This number has nearly doubled since the 1990s, increasing from thirty-five to fifty divers and *cayuqueros* each in an effort to maximize the number of lobsters harvested in one trip because they are paid per lobster pound (personal communication, Laura Herlihy). Most divers and *cayuqueros* are in their youth, in their teens to thirties while the oldest divers, many of whom are injured, are in their late forties and fifties.

Figure 2.6: *Buzos*, lobster divers, preparing to depart on a two-week lobster dive trip, Cocobila, 2010.

The divers and their *cayuqueros* disperse in fiberglass canoes from the main boat in search of the spiny rock lobster, *Panulirus argus*.

Figure 2.7: Cayuquero on the water. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on the *Bocanel*, October 4-12, 2010.

Divers employ *ganchos*, hooked tools, to prod lobsters from their rock outcroppings. The Caribbean lobster is spiny so it has to be grabbed by the antennae.

Figure 2.8: Lobster divers posing for the camera in a fiberglass canoe.
Photo taken by Elias Esteban on a dive trip on the *Bocanel* between September 6-20, 2010

The diver puts the lobsters into a netted bag whereby at the end of one oxygen dive tank, surfaces with the lobsters, which are beheaded by the *cayuquero* while the diver swaps tanks. In addition to lobster, they also catch conch, crab, fish, and the protected green sea turtle, *Chelonia mydas*. Divers descend with four tanks per trip and make three dive trips in a day, descending up to 120 feet. Over a twelve day trip, divers use 144 tanks to catch their lobster prey.

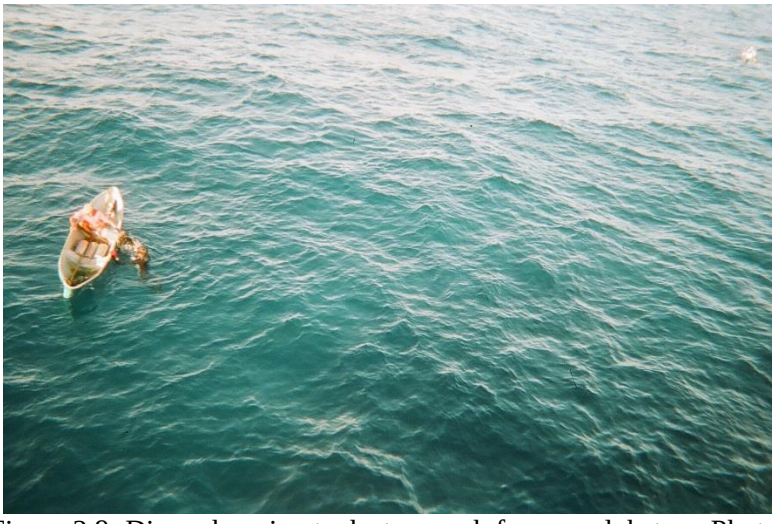


Figure 2.9: Diver changing tanks to search for more lobsters. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo on the *Steiner*, September 7-18, 2010.

Figure 2.10: Lobster in the *Steiner* freezer on ice. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo on the *Steiner*, September 7-18, 2010.

Figure 2.11: Conch in the *Steiner* freezer. Only four boats with biologists~~,~~ are authorized to harvest conch, al-though there is an underground market for conch. Divers earn 0.56/lb while conch nets $100 USD/lb. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo on the *Steiner*, September 7-18, 2010.

Figure 2.12: Sleeping quarters on the *Bocanel*. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on the *Bocanel*, October 4-12, 2010.

Honduran boats are supposed to fish in their national waters, in places such as Key Gorda and the Rosalind bank (between the 80th and 81st parallel), though they are known to pirate in international waters from Jamaica to Colombia, due to the number of fishing boats and diminished lobster populations. In 2008, a controversy ensued over the national territorial rights to banks along the 15th parallel. In this boundary dispute, Honduras lost some of its shallow banks to Nicaragua along this parallel, leaving one deep-water bank in Honduras' territory where divers report depths over 100 feet.

Figure 2.13: Cayo Bogas Key. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo on the *Steiner*, September 7-18, 2010.

Contracts and Situational Power

As for contracts, I've received differing responses as to their existence on the Miskito Coast. Most divers explain that they do not exist. While contracts may be theoretically required by law and claimed to exist by both a *sacabuzo* and a boat captain, I've never seen a contract on the Miskito Coast. While divers predominantly speak Miskitu, most divers are literate in Spanish though their spelling reflects a phonetic influence. The reality in this fluid and saturated industry is that boat owners and captains can trawl for divers further down the beach to find divers who will work without contracts. A plethora of divers coupled with a strategy among boats to not consistently use the same divers prevents divers from claiming a contractual alliance with one particular boat and boat captain. Diver names listed on a piece of paper held by the *sacabuzo* on the coast may serve uni-directionally as a formal contract among the companies and industries though these "contracts" certainly do not ensure diver indemnity, recompression, or protect their human rights. It's one poor person's word against that of someone in a position of power.

While successful divers are requested by particular boat captains and owners, some previously injured divers are blacklisted as liabilities. Further, *sacabuzos,* who on the coast are mostly Miskito women, serve as the local gatekeepers for lobster divers. *Sacabuzos* have the authority to decide who gets to go out on what boat and when.

Abelino learned that after he went to talk with Teresa, the sacabuzo, that he was too late in securing a diving spot on la Providencia. Abelino referred to the work of a sika (black magic) as a possible cause of his bad luck. He lamented that he has worked on la Providencia on the past two dive trips and all of last year and despite no formal contract, he's a good worker and her neighbor.

While *sacabuzos* have the power to decide who gets to depart and when, divers assert situational power against *sacabuzos*. Divers, such as Dexter, negotiate larger advances by threatening to jump ships at the last moment. While it appears that there is an army of ready and willing divers to fill that spot, in the height of the dive season, every able-bodied man is employed in diving by the fleet of dive boats. Some divers assert power by running and fleeing the scene, often after imbibing swigs of Plata vodka, with advanced diving funds in their pocket. *Sacabuzos* can't afford to advance money to divers who then disappear. *Sacabuzos* remember the divers who have fled and can blacklist them from future dive trips. Further, some successful divers strategize to work with a particular *sacabuzo* and boat owner to try and ensure indemnification, whether with a formal contract or not.

Dive Training and Equipment

Lacking formal contracts, divers have few, if any, collective power or rights. Local organizations exist such as the *Asociacion Protectora de Buzos de Gracias a Dios, Honduras*, APBGADH, an association of active divers in the district of Gracias a Dios, which roughly corresponds to the Moskitia region. Each season it is responsible for negotiating the diver's wage per pound of lobster with the industry. The *Asociacion Miskito Hondureño Buzos Lisiados*, AMHBLI, is the organization for injured lobster divers, which exists to defend the rights of incapacitated divers. While local organizations exist, they appear to be symbolic, in bureaucratic function, without any real power. In addition to negotiating the diver wage each season, APBGADH has been responsible for organizing dive training and certification classes in the past through other local organizations, including outfits of the Moravian Church and MOPAWI, *Moskitia Pawisa Aslika,* a Honduran, Christian-inspired non-governmental organization

dedicated to Miskito empowerment that has been active in the Moskitia for 25 years. The training is erratic, depending on funding and personnel, and really is more symbolic, since certification is not necessarily a requirement for work on lobster boats. Because formal training is sporadic, most Miskito boys begin in the lobster industry as *cayuqueros,* watching divers and listening to their oral tales until they are old enough to descend into the waters themselves.

Divers employ battered tanks, property of the boats, but most often work without depth, pressure gauges and watches. Divers cannot employ safety mechanisms when they do not have the adequate equipment to calculate their nitrogen absorption and oxygen reserve. While Honduran regulations require dive training, healthy equipment and labor contracts, in theory, the reality is that boat captains and owners do not consistently require certification or provide contracts and certified safety equipment for their indigenous laborers.

Figure 2.14: Tanks and compressors on the *Bocanel*. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on a dive trip on the *Bocanel* between September 6-20, 2010.

From Sea to Industrial Purchasing/Processing Plants

After the boats return from their fifteen-day lobster hunt, the captains oftentimes drop off the *buzos* and *cayuqueros*, canoemen, on the Miskito beach and then proceed to the processing-packaging companies in La Ceiba and on the Bay Islands. These companies include the *Atlantic Fishery* and *Perla Mar* in La Ceiba and *Mariscos Agua Azul*, *Mariscos Hybur*, *Caribeña*, and Duane McNab of *Apollo Sea Foods* on the Bay Islands.

Mariscos Agua Azul is the largest exporting company where 98% of its products are destined for U.S. markets. It is a subsidiary held by the Jackson Holding Company. Its spiny lobsters are shipped through Jackson Shipping to Tampa, Florida where they are sold to Red Lobster, Incorporated. The 1992 Honduran Investment Law stipulates that in certain industries, a majority Honduran ownership is required or companies must partner with Honduran nationals (U.S. Department of State 2002). Dick Monroe, former head of Red Lobster Public Relations, shared that in the early and mid-1970s, Red Lobster gave Albert Jackson, a Roatán businessman, "more help than was usual" in setting up the first lobster processing plant, and it remains the single largest buyer of Honduran lobster (Izdepski 1994).

Figure 2.15: Mariscos Agua Azul, Roatán, Honduras, 2008

Sean from *Mariscos Hybur* explained that the lobsters are tailed and frozen at sea. At the plant, the tails are sorted by size, color, and quality, are processed, where they are cleaned and packaged, and shipped to markets in the United States and Europe. The redder lobsters reflect deeper waters and deeper diving conditions, up to 130 feet, whereas the white lobsters are retrieved from shallower waters. The sale price is determined by the commodities price list, which is published every Tuesday and Thursday by Urner Barry, a commodity market news reporting service based in New York City that reports the market conditions for the food industries, including seafood. Red Lobster is the largest restaurant seafood purchaser in the world where they control 50% of the world market for seafood (personal communication, Peter Hibbard, August 7, 2015). Other purchasers include the dominant U.S. food products distributor, Sysco Foods. Sean explained, in 2008, that many in the export industry support the closure of the dive industry and prefer a shift to traps because of the damages to Miskito divers. Many in the industry and government are aware of the damages to the Miskito body but their calculations often fail to include consideration of an alternative economy, as the Miskito have largely become dependent on a resource-exploitative cash economy.

Figure 2.16: Mariscos Hybur, Roatán, Honduras, 2008

Conservation Measures

Miskito divers decry that the lobster resource is only *un poco* and that their trips are *malo* or *mas o menos*, especially throughout the season. In addition to the voices of the divers themselves, the FAO, the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the WTO, report that lobster populations are showing signs of depletion (Dodds 1998; WTO 2003). A four month fishing moratorium, or *veda*, implemented by all of the Central American governments exists across all of the Central American countries in an effort to limit over-exploitation and to conserve lobster populations by allowing immature lobsters to mature. The dive season opens at the beginning of July and extends for eight months until the end of February when the *veda* goes into effect.

In addition, other stipulations regulate tail size and weight and prohibit the capture of "berried," or egg-bearing, female lobsters. As part of continued political intervention, the Obama administration issued the 2009 U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service final rule pertaining to spiny lobster fisheries in the Caribbean, Gulf, and south Atlantic, which set a minimum tail size of 5 ounces and 5.5 inches in length on the importation of whole spiny lobster tails into the U.S. and prohibited the import of "berried," egg-bearing females, in an effort to enhance conservation. On the coast, the length of a legal lobster tail was shown to be roughly the length extending between one's wrist and the tip of one's middle finger. Though despite these conservation measures, local Miskito fishermen catch undersized and "berried" lobsters along with the endangered green sea turtle and conch (outside of its regulated season) to feed their own families and which they served as gifts to the anthropologist. This dearth of lobsters threatens Miskito lives and the current cash economy sustaining the Miskito on the north coast of Honduras.

Figure 2.17: "Berried" lobster with V-notch to mark reproducing female for conservation

Figure 2.18: Measuring the length of a lobster tail. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on *el Toro,* 2011.

Figure 2.19: Captured sea turtle on the *Bocanel* trip, October 4-12, 2010. Photo taken by Elias Esteban.

Figure 2.20: Local Miskito boy with endangered sea turtle caught on a lobster dive trip

Biopolitical Regulations, Governmentality and the Global FISH Alliance

Uncertain muffled talk, questions, and rumors circulated on the Honduran Miskito Coast that the lobster *dive* industry would be coming to a permanent halt in June 2011. Early on I wondered if this was just annual confusion about the *veda* and the closing of the season, not of the industry.

I first learned of the Global Fish Alliance (Alianza PESCA Global or G-FISH) from materials collected from Rigoberto Derek, a *buzo lisiado*, in an interview on July 8, 2010 from the June 19-20, 2010 conference in La Ceiba.

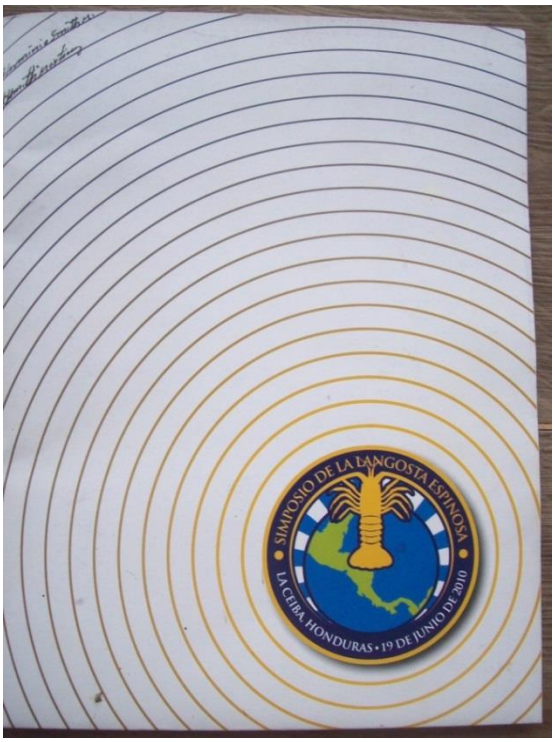
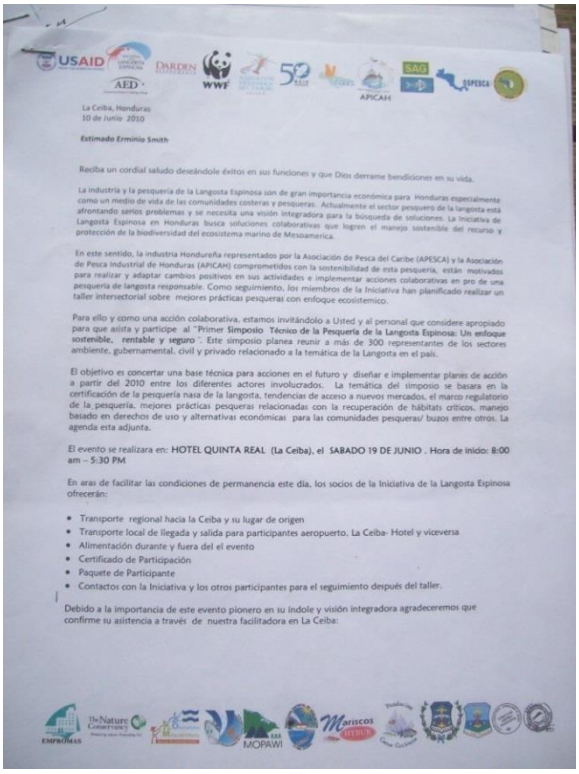


Figure 2.21: *Symposio de la Langosta Espinosa*,
La Ceiba, Honduras, 19 de Junio de 2010.
Materials collected from Herminio Smith.



La Ceiba, Honduras
10 de Junio 2010

Estimado Erminio Smith

Reciba un cordial saludo deseándole éxitos en sus funciones y que Dios derrame bendiciones en su vida.

La industria y la pesquería de la Langosta Espinosa son de gran importancia económica para Honduras especialmente como un medio de vida de las comunidades costeras y pesqueras. Actualmente el sector pesquero de la langosta está afrontando serios problemas y se necesita una visión integradora para la búsqueda de soluciones. La Iniciativa de Langosta Espinosa en Honduras busca soluciones colaborativas que logren el manejo sostenible del recurso y protección de la biodiversidad del ecosistema marino de Mesoamerica.

En este sentido, la industria Hondureña representados por la Asociación de Pesca del Caribe (APESCA) y la Asociación de Pesca Industrial de Honduras (APICAH) comprometidos con la sostenibilidad de esta pesquería, están motivados para realizar y adaptar cambios positivos en sus actividades e implementar acciones colaborativas en pro de una pesquería de langosta responsable. Como seguimiento, los miembros de la Iniciativa han planificado realizar un taller intersectorial sobre mejores prácticas pesqueras con enfoque ecosistemico.

Para ello y como una acción colaborativa, estamos invitándolo a Usted y al personal que considere apropiado para que asista y participe al "Primer **Simposio Técnico de la Pesquería de la Langosta Espinosa: Un enfoque sostenible, rentable y seguro**". Este simposio planea reunir a más de 300 representantes de los sectores ambiente, gubernamental, civil y privado relacionado a la temática de la Langosta en el país.

El objetivo es concertar una base técnica para acciones en el futuro y diseñar e implementar planes de acción a partir del 2010 entre los diferentes actores involucrados. La temática del simposio se basara en la certificación de la pesquería nasa de la langosta, tendencias de acceso a nuevos mercados, el marco regulatorio de la pesquería, mejores prácticas pesqueras relacionadas con la recuperación de hábitats críticos, manejo basado en derechos de uso y alternativas económicas para las comunidades pesqueras/ buzos entre otros. La agenda esta adjunta.

El evento se realizara en: **HOTEL QUINTA REAL (La Ceiba), el SABADO 19 DE JUNIO . Hora de inicio: 8:00 am – 5:30 PM**

En aras de facilitar las condiciones de permanencia este día, los socios de la Iniciativa de la Langosta Espinosa ofrecerán:

- Transporte regional hacia la Ceiba y su lugar de origen
- Transporte local de llegada y salida para participantes aeropuerto, La Ceiba- Hotel y viceversa
- Alimentación durante y fuera del el evento
- Certificado de Participación
- Paquete de Participante
- Contactos con la Iniciativa y los otros participantes para el seguimiento después del taller.

Debido a la importancia de este evento pionero en su índole y visión integradora agradeceremos que confirme su asistencia a través de nuestra facilitadora en La Ceiba:

Figure 2.22 *Symposio de la Langosta Espinosa*, La Ceiba, Honduras, 19 de Junio de 2010. Materials collected from Herminio Smith.

Through Internet research, interviews and Rigoberto's materials, I came to understand that the Global Fish Alliance is a five-year USAID-sponsored program that started in 2009 and that first and foremost encourages sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. The G-FISH Alliance, partnered with Darden Restaurants, Family Health International (FHI) 360, the Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to name a few, "promotes sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices through the application of a system-wide approach that balances economic, environmental, governmental, and social components essential to enhancing livelihoods and biodiversity."

As justification and as stated on their brochure, fisheries products are among the most traded food commodities in the world where fishing is the largest extractive industry for wildlife in the world (www.globalfishalliance.org). It is the mission of G-FISH to protect fish populations

through management as developing countries comprise nearly 80% of the total fish food production (www.globalfishalliance.org).

The Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras

As its very first initiative in 2009, the G-FISH Alliance is focusing on the Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras and Nicaragua. As justification for this specific initiative, the annual lobster production in the Caribbean (*P.argus*), where Honduras and Nicaragua comprise the most important region, is 40,000 metric tons where in 2006 USD was valued at $350 million (WWF 2006). In Honduras, more than 90% of the lobster extraction is destined for the US (WWF 2009). G-FISH documents that lobster stocks have been showing signs of decline by about 35% over the last several years (www.globalfishalliance.org). This decline threatens lobster populations and the male divers who subject themselves to this perilous work. Paralysis from decompression sickness is one of the risks. The G-FISH Alliance found a rate of 1,500 paralyzed divers of 80,000 inhabitants to be an alarming justification for their initiative (WWF 2009).

As further justification, the G-FISH points to a drop in price at which lobster has been bought from $19/lb in 2008 to $12/lb in 2009 (WWF 2009) along with reference to the economic crisis which has driven down the price of lobster to lower than the cost of production (www.globalfishalliance.org).

The stakeholders representing the interests of private industry, the Honduran government, Miskito dive organizations, and technocrats agreed upon a common vision for the Spiny Lobster Initiative, which includes economic viability of the lobster fishery, environmental sustainability, and social safety (personal communication, Jimmy Andino, February 1, 2011).

Figure 2.23: Jose Luis, captain of *el Toro*, wearing a polo with the emblem of the *Initiativa de la Langosta Espinosa*, as he prepares to take divers out to sea.

While diver health is addressed as one area of the G-FISH Alliance, I have come to understand that the driving force of the initiative is to address lobster conservation and sustainability. This conservation-first initiative employs a standardized systems approach to understand the interests of each sector focused on the spiny lobster and to facilitate communication and collaboration among these interests in order to make their interests visible.

It is unclear to me where the pressure and initiative came from for this project. It is doubtful that the plan was initiated by the Honduran government as it is plagued with internal

issues such as corruption. Likewise, while Darden Restaurants, Inc. is working with the USAID Global Fish Alliance on a Know Your Source campaign, which highlights the importance of knowing where and how your food is sourced, I doubt, based on research carried out at a Red Lobster restaurant, that the plan was initiated by the Darden Corporation, the former parent company of Red Lobster, or among Red Lobster restaurant consumers looking for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified well-managed fisheries. I speculate that this USAID-sponsored program was implemented in response to the 2009 U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service final rule pertaining to spiny lobster fisheries in the Caribbean, Gulf, and south Atlantic, which set a minimum tail size of 5 ounces and 5.5 inches in length on the importation of whole spiny lobster tails into the U.S. and prohibited the import of "berried," or egg-bearing females, in an effort to enhance conservation and to ease compliance with these conservation aims. External rules and regulations of the 2009 U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service final ruling may have prompted the USAID initiative, the Global Fish Alliance. The U.S. and NGO alliance may have tried to bypass the Honduran state.

But, in the course of setting priorities on a fishing moratorium, minimum tail sizes and weights, the fisheries managing body of the Honduran government (DIGIPESCA) made a bold move by signing a regional agreement, *Ordenamiento Regional de la Pesqueria de la Langosta del Caribe (Panuirus argus)*, [Reglamento OSP-02-09], with the Fisheries Ministers of Central America (OSPESCA[5]) in May 2009, in force July 1, 2009, to regulate and manage the spiny lobster resource. While Honduran Fish and Agriculture Law had not been updated since 1959, this agreement occurred outside of the purview of the Global Fish Alliance even though DIGIPESCA was one of the key stake-holders. The implications of the agreement are dramatic

[5] OSPESCA is an outgrowth of SICA, the Central American Integration System, a regional economic trade organization.

as it stipulated, among other things, a four month regional *veda*, extending from the first of March through the 30th of June, a minimum tail size of 5 ounces and 5.5 inches in length, the prohibition of egg- bearing females, confirming to U.S. regulations but the most dramatic, was the articulation of a permanent closure to the lobster dive industry in July 2011, replacing divers with traps.

This USAID-sponsored program, the Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras, a subset of the Global Fish Alliance, comprised a working group of diverse stakeholders dedicated to spiny lobster sustainability and conservation. They prioritized lobster sustainability over Miskito self-determination even though they cited diver health as part of their justification. They talked about the creation of artisanal markets for indigenous crafts, but I never saw any real evidence for this on the ground in Moskitia. While the Alliance cited diver health and economic alternatives as justification for a switch to a trap-based industry, the initiative never actually considered the local, lived experience of the Miskito diver, even though divers were considered a stakeholder group. Divers vocalized and validated their health concerns and reality of dangers, although some were hesitant to speak up in a forum with power differentials. These included government representatives, industry representatives, and their captains, who could control their future ability to get work. The Miskito are squeezed between work that threatens their lives and no work, which equally threatens their lives. All the rules in the world don't change the fact that they have to provide something, somehow and will neglect all of the rules in place just to survive.

While the Global Fish Alliance served as a working group of stakeholders, invested on lobster sustainability, the fisheries managing body of the Honduran government (DIGIPESCA) signed a regional Central American agreement overnight, outside of the purview of the Alliance, suddenly terminating the 40-year industry of lobster diving upon which the Miskito cash

economy has been based, replacing divers with traps. The original 2009 law was to go into effect in July 2011. The Honduran government applied for a two-year extension to more adequately prepare for a transition to a lobster economy based on traps from one that has relied on Miskito divers for the past forty years. Again in 2013, the Honduran government applied for a second two-year extension, through July 2015. From recent reports from informants on the coast, the lobster dive industry is slowly closing. The 24 March, 2015 photo below depicts a group of indigenous divers defending their dive economy. As one diver's placard reads "*al Señor President, que unico fuente de trabajo es el buzeo y por tal razon asenos esta peticion que nos habra EL BUZEO DE PEPINO, CARACOL, LANGOSTA por que con esto mantemos nuestros hijos en los colegio, etc.*," translated as to Mr. President, the only form of work is diving and for this reason, this petition is to open the diving of sea cucumber, conch, and lobster because this is how we maintain our children in school, etc.

Figure 2.24: The placard of an indigenous lobster diver reads el " unico fuente de trabajo es el buzeo" La Tribuna, 24 March, 2015

Correspondence from the coast in 2015 reports that a group of Miskito divers are returning to subsistence strategies by planting plantains, beans, and yucca (manioc), line fishing in the lagoons and sea, and collecting fruit. I hear that the Chinese have funded an initiative for the capture of jellyfish and have erected storage facilities in Nueva Jerusalem and Barra Patuca. The Honduran government is creating an alternative industry for the "artisanal fishing" of sea cucumber, intended for Chinese markets, although this shallow water extraction greatly reduces the number and need of divers. This artisanal fishing program comes from the Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería (SAG) under the Protocolo de Evaluación Biológica y Monitoreo Pesquero de Pepino de Mar en el Mar Caribe de Honduras. This biological monitoring protocol comes in response to the global over-fishing of sea cucumbers and like the Global Fish Alliance, protects ecological resources above Miskito cultural survival.

These biopolitical rules and regulations swirl above the indigenous Miskito, inattentive to their lived, local experience and socio-economic condition. These rules, designed to promote the sustainability of lobster populations over Miskito self-determination, reflect the expanding biopolitical power of the Honduran state and international regulations of the United States and the Central American fisheries ministries over the daily existence of the Miskito diver. These rules prioritize lobster conservation and the sustainability of lobster populations over the cultural survival of the indigenous Miskito. There is no other work to sustain a cash economy, one that the Miskito have become dependent upon with a history of external contact, commodity extraction, and political-economic intervention in the banana republic. This USAID-sponsored Alliance is situated within a longer history of neoliberal and neo-imperial dynamics.

The History of Development and the Rise of the NGO

Expanding upon the political-economic history as presented in the previous chapter, the post-World War II idea behind development was that all countries could be economically equal and prosperous (Rist 2002). Development is a Western concept and notion, with a colonial legacy, whereby the North Atlantic states assumed that under-developed economies could mimic their Western success by developing along the same lines as their predecessors by implementing capitalist economies (*cf* Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994). The rise of the NGO came after the 1970s debt crisis and the expansion of the neoliberal agenda, where governments/states were seen as impediments to this development model, whereby power was devolved to local NGOs who were perceived to be more locally-oriented with a grassroots understanding.

USAID holds a unique position in this new development equation as an agency of the U.S. government charged with dispensing foreign aid. It is informed by Western, neoliberal ideologies but often partners with local agencies to gain acceptance, credibility and buy-in.

The scalar discrepancies between theory and praxis often reflect the disconnect between global processes and local realities. In *Conservation is our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea*, Paige West (2006) examines the intersection of conservation-as-development in the hamlets that comprise Maimafu within the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area, or Bopoyana, in Papua New Guinea. She examines the imagined space of Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area and the differing notions of nature and conservation from the two divergent perspectives of the Gimi people and the three primary NGOs, including a Papua New Guinea NGO, Research and Conservation Foundation of Papua New Guinea (RCF); a NY-based NGO, Wildlife Conservation Society; and another US-based NGO subsidiary of USAID, Biodiversity Conservation Network. West exposes the NGO-imagined environmental

governmentality and biopolitical approach to conservation, which reflects Western notions of nature and culture, implicated in neoliberal, post-colonial, and neo-imperial power dynamics. In her more recent ethnography, *From Modern Production to Modern Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*, West (2012) also unravels the rules and regulations that confound fair trade and organic coffee certification among the Gimi. In the context of the Miskito Coast of Honduras, while these neoliberal processes have commodified and deregulated the extraction and sale of lobster populations, new assemblages of regulations at national and international scales have emerged that regulate the management of lobsters and dictate Miskito self-determination (Peck and Tickell 2002; Bourdieu 1998). This context warrants the lens of political ecology, which can provide a theoretical framework to ground a place-based, ethnographic study of the commodification of nature on the Miskito Coast of Honduras. It is able to addresses human-environment interactions across scales and examines the impacts of global processes in specific locales (Wolf 1972; Smith 2008; West 2006, 2012).

The uneven enforcement of these rules and regulations is evident in how some rules such as dive training and certification are clearly ignored yet the regional law governing fishing of the lobster can dismantle a forty year history of lobster diving, one which sustains the Miskito people. These rules and regulations, enacted in alliances, initiatives, and laws, are institutionally unjust and structurally oppressive. Boat owners and captains do not provide adequate equipment for divers to calculate their depth and oxygen reserve, nor are they legally bound to by the Honduran government, which offers no protection or guidelines for equipment. Those with power higher up in the industry knowingly exploit these indigenous men who have no other work. Furthermore, contracts do not protect the human rights and dignity of divers, if they even exist. Divers are treated as if their lives are disposable. While the harvesting of protected species

and lobsters under the minimum tail sizes are transgressions, the more glaring transgressions are those of human rights and basic human dignity. The Miskito are entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the lobster dive industry and by being forcibly displaced from their natal and patrimonial tracts by *ladinos/colonos* for the traffic of cocaine.

State development within the banana republic has long been tied to the capitalization of nature. Political intervention, interference and "diplomacy" have shrouded economic penetration for cheap commodities ranging from mahogany and bananas to lobsters and cocaine. A nexus of biopolitical rules and regulations complicate the daily lives of the Miskito. Their voices are muffled and their lives discounted, which is how consumers at Red Lobster restaurants find cheap lobsters fluffed on the shell.

Red Lobster: From the Miskito Coast to East Towne Mall

The spiny Caribbean lobsters, native to the Miskito Coast of Honduras, are commodified and exchanged on the global market. Along the global commodity chain, value is added as the lobsters are harvested, frozen, processed and packaged, transported across a global territory, and marketed until the lobster is "fluffed" on the shell on a Red Lobster consumer's plate. In the imagined space of a Bar Harbor, Maine fishing village, Caribbean lobster tails are substituted for their imagined elite cold-water New England relatives, plucked from live tanks adorning restaurant entryways.

Figure 2.25: Imagined Red Lobster restaurant even though there is only one restaurant in Maine and a few in New England, compared to their markets in Florida and Texas http://www.redlobster.com/our_quality_story/ <accessed May 2, 2015>

Red Lobster considers itself to be the "seafood experts" in casual dining, according to their website advertising. With approximately 700 stores, it is the largest seafood restaurant chain in the United States and has the stated goal of serving seafood at reasonable prices. Red Lobster began as the first restaurant of Darden Restaurants, Inc. in 1968 in Lakeland, Florida. It was recently sold off in 2014 for $2.1 billion, with business journalists' reports citing fiscal decline, as a private restaurant and independent company with investment from Golden Gate Capital, a private equity firm based in San Francisco. Spiny Caribbean lobsters are shipped frozen in shipping containers from the Caribbean to ports in the United States, such as the Tampa Port Authority, where they are stored in freezers and then distributed along trucking routes from

Florida to restaurants in New York and Texas. Darden, Inc. owns its own distribution processes and centers, which were equated to Walmart centers by Mark Redfearn (personal communication, Culinary Manager Mark Redfearn, May 22, 2007). Darden employs "Darden Direct," a food distribution and transport model that addresses supply chain sustainability. Their outsize corporate power has enabled them to dominate the means of production and corner the market from purchasing and processing to distribution. By controlling such a substantial portion of the supply chain, Red Lobster represents Gibbon's trader-driven commodity chain where transnational corporations such as Red Lobster act as intermediaries and drive the trade between suppliers and processors.

Maine has become associated (through advertising, marketing, and public relation campaigns) with live, fresh lobsters, whether or not the cold water lobsters actually hail from Maine. Red Lobster is a self-described chain restaurant serving American seafood standards amidst a New England-themed décor, complete with outdoor Adirondack chairs, even as they serve island-themed cocktails. A Google map locating Red Lobster restaurants in the Upper Midwest illustrates that Red Lobster restaurants are located off of U.S highways. The Red Lobster in Madison, Wisconsin at East Towne Mall is located of off Interstate 90/94 where I-90 connects Chicago with Minneapolis/St. Paul and Madison and the Wisconsin Dells in between and I-94 to Milwaukee. These highway locations also enable the distribution network of frozen seafood along these routes. By controlling such a substantial portion of the supply chain, Red Lobster is able to standardize its products and the experiences of its customers from Lakeland, Florida to Madison, Wisconsin, building on the elite fantasies of its consumers off highway exit ramps.

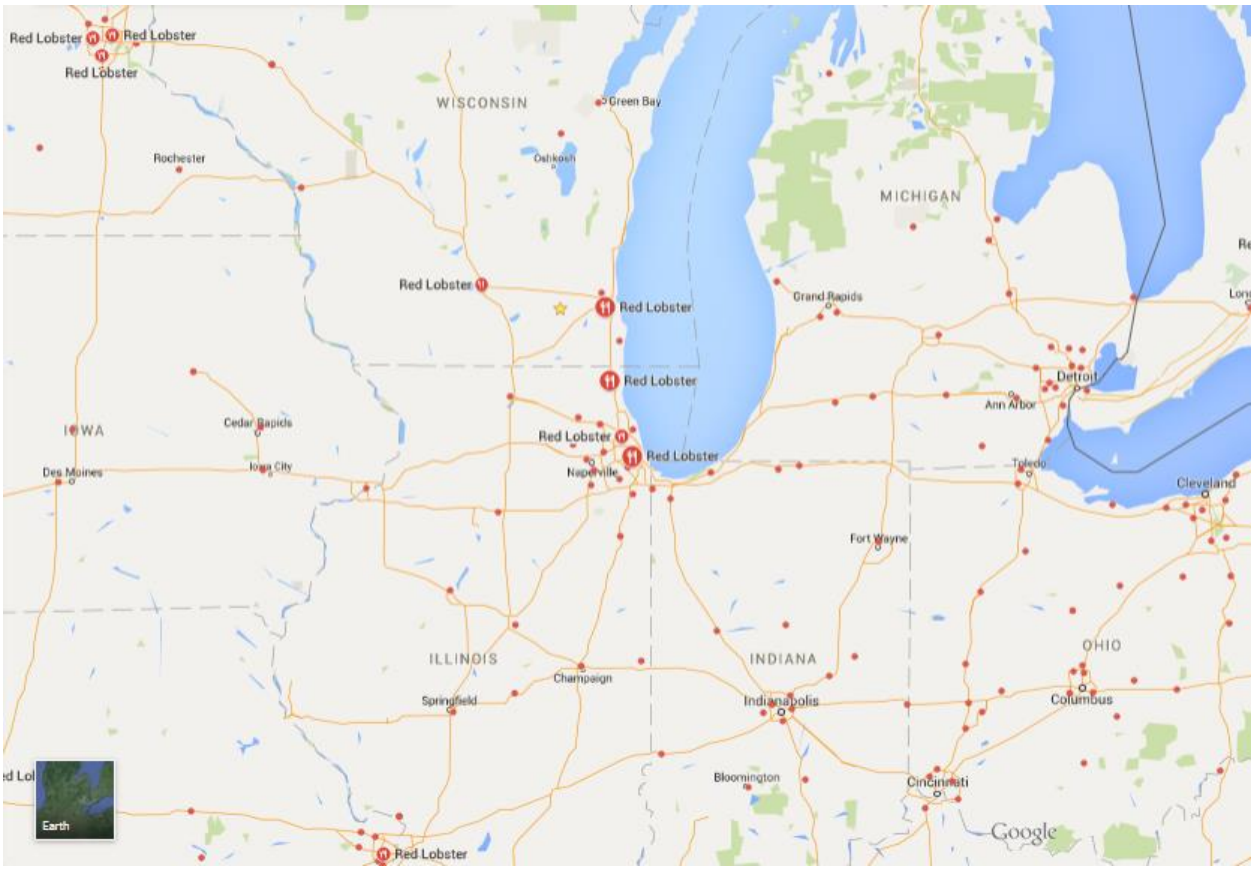


Figure 2.26: Google map locating Red Lobster restaurants (in red) off of U.S. highways (in yellow) in the upper Midwest

The Aesthetics of Taste

Taste is the capacity to differentiate and appreciate objectifiable judgements, according to Bourdieu ([1979] 2002). Taste is a judgement or distinction and is a marker of class and lifestyle. For Bourdieu, taste is class distinction naturalized. "Taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, helps to shape the class body" (190). Bourdieu differentiates between economic capital and the need for necessities and cultural or symbolic capital, where the class form dictates lifestyle and differentiates between necessity and luxury.

While Red Lobster's advertising campaigns do not explicitly target class aspects of food consumer's behavior and values, the frequency of advertisements for *Lobsterfest* and *Crabfest* airing during primetime network television with seafood promotional fests at reasonable prices targets a particular class cross-section whereas high-end restaurant chains such as Ruth's Chris Steakhouse, the Capital Grille and McCormick and Schmick's Seafood Restaurant do not employ promotional television advertising to attract their guests. To understand the clientele and the desires that drive their tastes, I tackled this ethnographic issue from two angles: interviews in a Red Lobster restaurant and restaurant reviews posted on TripAdvisor for the Red Lobster restaurant located in East Towne Mall in Madison, Wisconsin.

Figure 2.27: Madison' Red Lobster restaurant at East Towne Mall off of I-90/94

On Friday night, July 31, 2015—a night in Wisconsin known for its Friday Fish Fry, the East Towne Mall parking lot was full and the wait time was thirty five minutes for a table during Crabfest. Again, on a Monday night, August 10, 2015, the parking lot was nearly full and the wait was ten to fifteen minutes with an active carryout service. As a venue for celebrating "special occasions," as put by siltrpt from Sun Prairie, WI on July 29, 2013, these celebrations ranged from high school graduation, posted by Gen G. from Madison, WI on June 17, 2015; to a "more expensive franchised restaurant" for a Valentine's Day Tradition, posted by roxycakes from Janesville, Wisconsin on September 27, 2014; to a host family celebrating their exchange student from Iran when I was there on July 31, 2015; a 60th birthday celebration on Monday, August 10, 2015; and a birthday lunch by ResearchWI from southwest Wisconsin on January 25, 2013. Red Lobster is considered a "favorite place" for a couple who return every six to seven weeks and order the Admiral's Feast, posted by Bob J. from Portage, WI on May 16, 2015; or for Lobsterfest on a once a year basis for a family of five who otherwise consider it cost-prohibitive, posted by Joolah on April 29, 2015. Another couple from Middleton, Wisconsin underscored Red Lobster's expensive prices during Lobster- and Crabfests. While highlighting Red Lobster's prices, they spoke of their grandson who waits tables at L'Etoile, a fine dining French restaurant that specializes in local, sustainable ingredients located on Madison's Capital Square, (personal communication, August 10, 2015). The taste for Red Lobster is embodied on the class body where patrons desire high-class seafood from a chain restaurant conveniently located off of highway exits.

Lobsters from Nowhere

Reflecting the transnational movement of commodities and the disconnect between provider and place, many customers and employed managers do not know where their seafood comes from. When interviewing the culinary manager at Red Lobster in Madison, Wisconsin about where the spiny, or rock, lobsters come from, Mark Redfearn spoke about vague geographic places such as Australia and "southern America," specifically mentioning Brazil. This lack of place was reinforced in an industry-produced film that spoke of rock lobsters from the "Caribbean," without any attachment to a specific place. When I inquired as to who harvested these lobsters, Redfearn replied that he "had no idea" (personal communication, May 22, 2007). When I interviewed two Red Lobster guests, they had "no clue" about where their lobsters came from (personal communication, May 23, 2007). One of these guests supposed that lobsters hailed from the "East Coast somewhere." Another interviewee referenced Australia and then erroneously cited rock lobsters in Maine. Another guest on July 31, 2015 referred to Maine while the bartender cited the Gulf. On August 10, 2015, Sara identified the Caribbean. When I asked her how the spiny, rock lobsters were caught, she hesitated, then said that they were not aquaculture but "wild caught." I asked further if they were dive-caught or trap-caught and she was unsure, although she claimed that the process was the same as in the television show, the "Deadliest Catch."

Descriptions for Maine lobsters in the Red Lobster menu have corresponding photographs of what appears to be a Caribbean tail.

Figure 2.28: Red Lobster's Ultimate Feast featuring a Maine lobster tail

Figure 2.29: Red Lobster's Wood-Grilled Lobster, Shrimp, and Salmon featuring a Maine lobster tail.

Figure 2.30: Lobster tails www.sagamorelobster.com <accessed August 11, 2015>

An undiscerning novice or a non-marine biologist may not be able to distinguish between the species of lobster tails. By controlling such a large portion of the supply chain, Red Lobster is able to standardize its products and the experience of its customers and perhaps substituting spiny, Caribbean lobsters for their cold water New England relatives, historically associated with Yankees and the WASP class.

Within the Madison restaurant itself, both a manager, Susan, and a waiter could not adequately explain what a "*langostino*" was despite the fact that it is a menu item for purchase. Neither employee could explain what the item was let alone differentiate between it (a small, sweet Caribbean lobster) and its cold-water relative. The point here is to illustrate that consumers and employees alike are generally not aware of where their seafood comes from—far before it hits a Red Lobster menu or their plates in Madison. Equally revealing is that industry employees and consumers are disconnected from the very people who supply the chain, whose livelihoods depend upon it and, whose working conditions remain masked.

But a trader-driven commodity chain could not sustain itself if there was not buyer-driven demand. While Red Lobster is the corporate giant of seafood and employs an industry devoted to advertising, publicizing, and marketing its image, industrial supply satisfies consumer demand. The length of this global commodity chain masks the social relations and labor conditions between producers and consumers, evidenced by the lack of consumer and employee awareness about the origins of their lobster foodstuff. Likewise, the ecological degradation and over-exploitation of this lobster species is concealed. While the corporate industry may not be publicly disclosing or flaunting the economic and working conditions of the *buzos*, neither are consumers intent on connecting this global luxury to a specific locality. While industry may be a more obvious offender, consumers are implicated in this inequitable global exchange. While the ideal value of the lobster commodity reflects the labor invested, the value as expressed in economic currency is not justly returned to the point-source lobster extractors.

Darden Sustainability

As the former parent company of the Red Lobster brand for nearly 50 years, Darden proclaimed a corporate commitment to sustainability with a vested interest in seafood stewardship. Darden was one of the partners for the Global Fish Alliance's Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras. As part of their seafood stewardship, Darden claims to have worked to ensure that "seafood purchasing practices support and encourage sustainable fisheries" by "providing continuing support to organizations working with the Caribbean and North American fisheries to enhance lobster stocks and ensure a sustainable livelihood for fishermen" (http://www.darden.com/sustainability/downloads/2012-gri-plate-seafood-stewardship.pdf, accessed July 18, 2013).

As part of its environmental stewardship campaign as posted on its website in 2013, Red Lobster had agreed to be more attentive to legally certified and trap-operated producers. As part of the Global FISH Alliance, Darden Restaurants, Inc. was working on a Know Your Source campaign, which highlights the importance of knowing where and how your food is sourced. Darden claims to have had a policy of not purchasing dive-caught lobsters since 1993. Peter Hibbard, in Total Quality of Red Lobster corporate, mentioned that he had heard of the Global Fish Alliance (personal communication, August 7, 2015). He said that Red Lobster, which only split from Darden one year ago, adheres to sustainability practices and supports them to the best of their ability. He said that they don't deal with products that aren't sustainable. He said that they support the health and wellness of the people and try to "do the right thing." He underscored that Red Lobster does not purchase dive-caught lobsters, only "wild caught," "trap-caught" and even claimed that the spiny, rock lobsters are from the Bahamas and later included Jamaica and cited Honduras in an example of the commodity chain from the Caribbean. My point is how do they know?

In ports of entry, lobsters are not certified as either trap- or dive-caught. It is impossible to know if a lobster was trap or dive-caught. And given the proliferation and efficiency of the industry on the Miskito Coast of Honduras, lobsters from that region are bound to be dive-caught. Peter further mentioned that Red Lobster has the option to buy 2-3 ounce, 3-4 ounce, 4-5 ounce, and 5-6 ounce lobster tails from the distributer. A bartender clarified that spiny, rock lobsters are served in a 5 ounce, 6 ounce or 9 ounce size. Any spiny lobster tail under 5 ounces from the Caribbean, Gulf, or south Atlantic is prohibited from entry under the 2009 U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service final rule. But the lobster tails under the 5 ounce minimum probably make their way into Red Lobster's lobster bisque, the lobster-artichoke seafood dip, the

lobster pizza, lobster stuffed mushrooms, the lobster linguini, or the lobster baked or mashed potatoes.

From penal to gastronomica

In his essay entitled, "Consider the Lobster," David Foster Wallace historicizes the status of lobster. Up until the 1800s, lobster was considered a low-status food in part because of its over-abundance. The amount of lobster fed to prisoners was regulated for it was seen to be a form of punishment. Even on the Miskito Coast, the Miskito, historically, did not bother with lobster or "big sea insects" (Nietschmann 1979) unless they were marooned on a cay and ran out of *real* food (i.e. turtle meat). When Nietschmann was queried by his informant, Baldwin, about "why…your countrymen buy the shrimp and lobster?," Baldwin surmised that "maybe your people live so far from the sea that they have to have a bite of those salt water insects just to know they're still living" (Nietschmann 1979: 26). Nowadays, divers and their families eat lobsters, mostly undersized and berried (egg-bearing) lobsters, which earn them a lower price because they cannot be sold on the international market due to trade regulations.

In the United States, the status has certainly changed to one that equates lobster with "fine," "delicacy," and "elite." The Red Lobster corporate restaurant chain has been able to standardize the lobster experience in America's foodway by making an elite food accessible to customers off highway exit ramps.

Global Sushi and Lucky Lobsters

Theodore Bestor (2000, 2001) examines the Atlantic Bluefin tuna, the transnational tuna trade, and Tokyo's Tsukiji market. He reveals how the Japanese taste for Atlantic Bluefin tuna

and sushi became a North American craze in the 1970s when sushi appeared in the U.S. as a marker for the elite and a sign of class and educational standing. In the 1980s, Bluefin tuna could reap $33-34 USD wholesale per edible pound in Tsukiji while doubling again by the time it made its way to a sushi bar in the U.S. The global circuit also reveals the cultural capital embedded in the chain where a Bluefin tuna originating in North American waters is shipped by jet cargo and commercial refrigeration to Tsukiji where it is "certified" by the Japanese and then re-shipped back to the U.S for consumption. As a marker of distinction and taste, global sushi has become accessible across all sectors of U.S. society from grocery take-out and food carts to restaurant buffets featuring sushi and seafood. Sushi could be rivaling lobster as the elite and prestigious fantasy of sophisticated consumption. But in a recent news article on the North American species, 60,000 live Maine lobsters are shipped weekly to China where they are perceived as a status symbol and considered lucky for their red color. This elite commodity is filling global demand by traveling 18 hours by air from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Shanghai, China. The standardization of transnational commodity chains will certainly permit a spiny, Caribbean lobster tail to be substituted for its cold water relative in the U.S.

Conclusion: The Tail End

Lobster extraction fits within a broader political economic history of commodity extraction on the Miskito Coast, extending from gold, mahogany and bananas to lobsters. A series of biopolitical regulations, which promote lobster sustainability above Miskito cultural survival, swirl above the indigenous Miskito inattentive to their economic dependence on an extractive-based cash economy. By employing a commodity chain analysis, my hope is to expose the fetishization of commodities in this global exchange and to portray the humanity of

Miskito lives that feed the chains that supply lobster tails “fluffed” on the shell on a Red Lobster consumer’s plate. This next chapter will provide a lens into Miskito lives and a portrait of their humanity by detailing the risks and dangers of chronic, deep-water diving.

CHAPTER THREE
MISKITO LIVES

While a commodity chain traces *Panulirus argus* from the Caribbean waters off of the Miskito Coast of Honduras to a Red Lobster consumer's plate where it is served "fluffed" on the shell, strict commodity chain documentation often fails to account for the culture embedded within the chain. To enhance the portrait of lobster diving industry on coastal Miskito life and unmask the lives that feed the chain, I followed the lives of four lobster divers from four neighboring communities over the course of a year. All four divers have been affected to some degree by decompression sickness. Two divers were more seriously injured but continued to dive based on economic need. In the course of the year, one diver was treated medically for decompression sickness while another migrated to La Ceiba for alternative economic opportunities for himself and his family. To complement the narratives of men in an all-male industry, I also documented the life of a powerful Miskito woman who serves as a *sacabuzo* and local gatekeeper for lobster divers, reserving authority to decide which divers are assigned to what boat and when they depart. As a woman, daughter, and mother in Miskito matrifocal society, she also bears the responsibility of maintaining a female-headed household since her husband, reportedly, is imprisoned for drug trafficking.

Matrilocality and Matrifocality

Anthropologist Mary Helms (1971) documented systems of kinship and descent in the Nicaraguan Miskito village of Asang and emphasized the composition of the nuclear family household, which was tied to the larger *kiamp*, or upriver agricultural plot that was tied to the patrilineal descent group, and recognized by a male patronym. Helms further documented patrilocal residence patterns, which reinforced male relationships in the patriline. Despite her

evidence for patrilocality, she argued that the women and children formed the stable social core of traditional culture through kinship and reciprocity. "Close ties of co-operation and mutual support unite these women and, in spite of formal residential separation, create in effect a consanguineous female core which…serves as a symbolic form expressing a fundamental social cohesion or order" (Helms 1976: 139).

Matrifocality is defined by Nancie Gonzalez (1969, 1970, 1988), based on her research in the Caribbean, as mother-centered or a type of family or household grouping in which the woman is dominant and plays the leading role psychologically. The woman is the socio-economic head of the household where there is no regularly present male in the role of husband-father. This matrifocal unit is typically a senior woman, a single mother herself living together with her unmarried daughters and children and, at times, her unmarried sons. Nancy Tanner also underscores the mother-centeredness of "matrifocal units."

> Matrifocal units can exist in matrilineal or patrilineal societies, within nuclear families, and in bilateral systems. In any society with an emphasis on the mother-child dyad where this unit is culturally valued and where the mother plays an effective role in the economy and decision making of the unit, that unit can be defined as matrifocal (1974: 131-2).

Scott (1995) notes that matrifocality often occurs in societies where men are absent from their households for long periods of time. Brogger and Gilmore (1997) demonstrate this phenomenon in Mediterranean cultures, particular Portugal.

> Matrifocality often appears in association with heavy male emigration, seasonal unemployment, or (male) economic insecurity. It also occurs where there is high incidence of illegitimacy.

Brogger and Gilmore (1997) examine whether or not female political status actually increases under matrifocality by comparing Spanish and Portuguese culture. In Portugal, as men migrate

for the fishing industry, women are accorded more power outside of the household domain. In contrast in Spain, while men seasonally migrate to eastern Andalusia to work in the olive groves and women maintain the matrifocal core, Gilmore finds that women are not accorded higher political status because of the machismo attitudes in Andalusia.

To follow up on Helms's original study, García (1997) returned to Asang and found increasing matrilocal patterns compared to Helms. García described Asang as matrilocally organized patrilineal groups because the male patronym was still passed down inter-generationally. Herlihy (2002, 2012) continues that the basic kinship group in Kuri, Honduras is the female-headed household. She maintains that this female household is connected to the wider matrilocal resident group, which is the main socio-economic structure in coastal society. She attributes this coastal difference to that nature of coastal, seasonal work and male participation in the external economy. Male absenteeism is a reality along the Miskito Coast as Miskito men have worked as wage laborers in mining, lumber, banana, and most recently, lobster diving, and as they tend their *kiamps*, upriver agricultural camps, leaving women as the matrifocal centers of coastal Miskito life. Men who work seasonally or transiently leave their children to the mother's family, thereby extending the matrilineal system. While children continue to inherit their father's surname, Herlihy argues that matrilineal social organization ensues beneath a thin veil of patrimony. The individual, female-headed household is connected to other female-headed households, creating an integrated matrilocal community.

Herlihy (2002, 2012) argues that the matrilocal residence compound has become the most visible and viable socio-economic structure in coastal Mosquitia. This female structure provides a stable social framework as men participate in the external economy. The female-centered social

organization coupled with male absenteeism has contributed to what she terms "female autonomy" in contrast to the more public "male authority" of male wage earners.

Masculinity

The hegemonic, normative, and pan-Latin stereotype of *machismo* dominates the Latin American context (Guttman 1996, 2003). Despite a female-centered social organization, Miskito men are, and historically have been, the economic wage earners. In public displays of bravado and conspicuous consumption in *tiendas* and *pulperias* often before and after a dive trip, men, typically younger men, flaunt their status to affirm their power and male authority. As I discuss injury inscribed on the male Miskito body and problematize divers' use of alcohol and drugs later in this chapter, these public displays of swagger may be attempts to compensate psychologically for the risks and dangers of deep-water diving and/or may serve to boost the collective psyche as divers head to sea or celebrate successful and injury-free trips. As the section on Miskito identity illustrated, the hybridity and creolization of this cultural group reflects a diverse history of cultural influence. The Miskito are not only Latin American but also Caribbean as their external history and orientation reflects. While elements of machismo are evidenced in these public displays, multi-ethnic, regional, and class factors complicate this image of a unitary macho man (*cf* Guttman 1996). Edmund Gordon finds that the black Creoles in the Miskito village of Bluefields, Nicaragua have distinct "disparate diasporas," reflecting complex identity histories (as cited in Yelvington 2001). Not solely wage earners, but because they are wage earners, Miskito divers exhibit concern for their families for both their economic and emotional well-being as demonstrated below.

Miskito Lives

Teresa

Teresa is a *sacabuzo* in the community of Cocobila. She serves as a middle woman on the coast connecting boat captains in need of divers with divers from the coast. In this role, she has considerable power over male diver's lives and their economic livelihood. She can blacklist a diver as a liability, sideline a diver for one trip, or exhibit preferential treatment for one over another.

Figure 3.1: Teresa on the far left in white, surrounded by her female comanches, Cocobila

Teresa has been working as a *sacabuzo* in Cocobila for the past twelve to thirteen years. She is informed by radio three days before a boat is to arrive that she needs to ready the set number of divers and *cayuqueros* to head out to sea. She claims to earn L500, or $25 USD, for every diver that she sends out to sea. For a boat with fifty divers, she reportedly earns L25,000, or $1,250 USD. In addition, she is paid L12,000, or $60 USD, for the use of her *lancha* (boat) to shuttle divers and *cayuqueros* to the steel-hulled ship anchored a little further out at sea, totaling L37,000, or $1,310 USD. She pays a *motorista*, boat driver, and two assistants L2,000 each, or

$100 USD each and fifteen to twenty *comanche* helpers L500 apiece, or $25 USD, approximating $375 to $500 USD. Virginia verified that the total cost for all of the *comanches* is L7,500, or $375 USD. Thus, Teresa nets L24,000 to L25,000 per trip, or $1,200 to $1,250 USD. Based on the average number of nine dive trips per season calculated below, Teresa averages between $10,800 and $11,250 USD per dive season in contrast to the $1,684.90 seasonal income of divers.

While Teresa claimed that boats provide equipment including watches to calculate depth, no diver has ever verified this statement. Teresa doesn't care for her work but confesses that there is no other. She referred to divers as "*malcriadas*," just as adults refer to obstinate and uncooperative children. Teresa attributed the high incidence of sickness and death to the fact that divers don't take care of themselves and abuse alcohol and drugs, such as marijuana. Teresa claimed that divers have contracts with the boat owners. As is discussed in the previous chapter, I have never seen a contract on the coast. While some boat owners and captains pay for rehabilitation in the case of injury and sometimes a symbolic fee in the event of a death, most are legally alleviated from the responsibility of providing for divers.

Abelino Matute Castillo

In the shadow of the aqua blue two-story house just shy of the Cocobila beach, Mainerto pointed out *King aula* from amidst the green sprouts shooting through the sandy earth and explained the ways of *Liwa mairin*.

Figure 3.2: Mainerto. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo, September 2010.

Abelino, his son, is a *buzo activo*, an active diver, from the community of Cocobila. From a hammock slung from the second story balcony, Abelino, about 30, explained that he has worked as a diver for the past 13-14 years. He worked as a *marino* for 6 years and as a *cayuquero* for a short time until he became a diver. Abelino explained that he dives because there is no other work; there are no other options. Unlike his father, Abelino does not employ a *contra*, a counteractive, even though he has expressed fear about *Liwa mairin*, the mermaid goddess who inhabits the sea, who many Miskito interpret is responsible for casting spells of sickness that manifest as decompression sickness. Abelino explained:

I'm afraid of her. If she doesn't like you and she sees you or you see her, you will die. Liwa is half a beautiful woman, half fish. There are many liwas inhabiting the lagoon and sea. She is the owner of the lobsters.

Abelino took nine dive trips during the 2010-2011 dive season between various dive boats including *la Providencia, Steiner*, and *Sou'west*. He was paid the negotiated rate of 50 Lempiras per lobster pound, which contrasts with the 260 Lempiras per pound that the boat accrued from

the purchasing-processing plants on Roatán. As Figure 3.3 shows, the lobster resource was in decline across the diving season and Abelino faced odds in making a living with a declining resource. Abelino's experience is a lens into the broader lobster economy. While Abelino is considered a *buzo activo*, he experienced pressure in his lungs on the final dive trip of the 2010-2011 season.

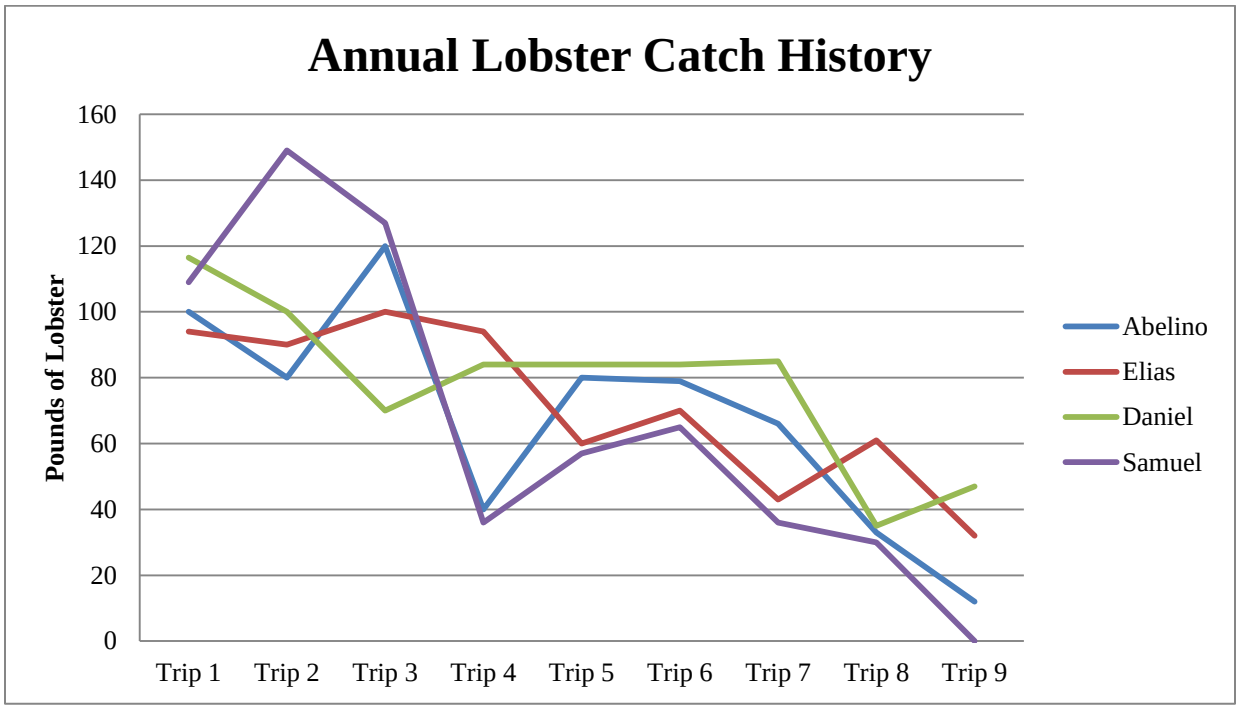


Figure 3.3: Annual Lobster Catch History from 2010-2011 for *buzos*, Abelino Matute Castillo, Elias Esteban, Daniel Derek and Mario Rito

Figure 3.4: Abelino Matute Castillo, Cocobila, Honduras, 2010

Abelino was one of my most trusted informants. He faithfully took disposable cameras to sea to capture and chronicle his dive experiences that I could not witness from afar. He relayed the story of those experiences as he talked me through the printed photographs from his lobster trip. Abelino kept faithful documentation of the number of lobster pounds that he accrued on each dive trip. He even kept a tally of the small Class B lobsters that he caught, which is how I learned that undersized lobsters are captured, despite conservation measures, and that an illicit market exists for them.

Also, through Abelino, I learned that a position on a dive boat is not secure because of the nonexistence of contracts. Despite having worked for a particular boat, *la Providencia*, and a particular *sacabuzo*, Abelino could not secure a position on the boat and had to find work on another boat. Over the course of the 2010-2011 dive season, Abelino worked on three different

dive boats—*La Providencia*, the *Steiner*, and the *Sou'west*. This lack of consistency insulates boat captains and owners from contractual claims for indemnity and reclamation.

Elias Esteban

In hammocks slung beneath the propped wooden-planked house a short distance from my home, Elias relayed stories of his dive experiences. Both native Miskito speakers, often, his wife, Suzy, would interject and answer on his behalf, serving as interpreter, a result of my Spanish or Elias'. Elias is considered a *buzo activo*, an active and healthy lobster diver from Belén. He is roughly 35 and has been diving for 15-20 years. In 2005 though, Elias suffered from pressure in his head and eyes. He was working on the *Mister Marvin* at the time and was compensated 5,000 Lempiras, roughly $250 USD, while he received two months of treatment in a decompression chamber on Roatán. Elias expressed fear of *Liwa mairin* but continues to dive. He decried that there is no other work. He is a father of four—to two daughters and two sons.

Figure 3.5 Elias Esteban preparing to depart on a two-week dive journey, Cocobila, Honduras, 2010

In the 2010-2011 dive season, Elias took nine trips between the *Bocanel* and *el Toro*. Elias was also a trusted informant and through him, I learned two important things. He, too, faithfully took disposable cameras to sea to capture and chronicle his dive experiences that I could not witness from afar. He relayed the story of those experiences as he talked me through the printed photographs from his lobster trip.

And while Figure 3.3 illustrates a declining trend in lobster populations harvested over the course of the 2010-2011 dive season, Elias consistently lamented lobster population decline. Nearly every trip he commented on the low product level, which affected his ability to capture sufficient resources to provide economically for his family.

Mario Samuel Rito (Etmor)

In hammocks slung beneath the propped house in Nueva Jerusalem, Mario relayed figures of his diving trips and of his past experiences, often translated and communicated from Miskito to Spanish through his wife. As we talked, a pot of beans and a pot of rice were consistently on the fire. His five children alternated between playing around the homestead and quietly sitting as Mario explained his tales.

Mario is a *buzo lisiado*, an injured lobster diver, from the community of Nueva Jerusalem. He began diving at the age of 14 and dove for 27 years, until 2003, when he experienced pain and then felt nothing, from diving in waters he approximates to be 150 feet deep. His injury took just one deep-water incident. Mario attributed his injuries to decompression sickness. He does not employ a "contra" against *Liwa mairin*, articulating that one does not exist against her. At the time of his injury, he was working under Paulino Hernandez of the *Mister Marvin*, just as Elias Esteban had. The owner paid, or "gave," little, just the cost of one month at

the “tourist” decompression chamber on Roatán. He was not paid reclamation. He received no justice and despite injury, continues to dive for lobsters. He is structurally dependent on this economy.

Figure 3.6: Mario Rito, Nueva Jerusalem, 2010

Over the course of the 2010-2011 diving season, Mario took nine diving trips on the *Miss Yomali*. Based upon Mario’s report on the *Miss Yomali* in the 2010-2011 diving season, one lobster diver died and two were injured. Further, the final trip of the season was compromised because the *Miss Yomali* broke down due to engine problems. All of these factors frame the diving experience of a Miskito lobster diver—emotionally and economically.

Daniel Derek

Daniel Derek is a partially injured *buzo lisiado* from the community of RaisTa.

Figure 3.7: Daniel Derek with his family, Raista, Honduas, 2010

Daniel began diving in 1996 at the age of 20. He got sick with the "bends," in 2000 while diving on the Rosalind bank, the biggest bank in Honduras, while working on Jaime Thompson's boat, the *Sou'west*. According to paperwork that Daniel shared with me, he received two sets of hyperbaric chamber treatment from the Cornerstone Chamber and Medical Service on Anthony's Key Resort under Dr. Fermin Lopez Arrazola for five days in September of 2000 and then again for fourteen days in November 2000. Dr. Lopez Arrazola recommended that Daniel seek work other than diving for if another decompression accident were to occur, it could accelerate larger consequences. The November treatment letter recommends no more diving because the risk of new illness is higher because he's been sick before and there are more complications, including death. He received follow up treatment from a hospital in Puerto Lempira in 2004. Daniel said that he was without work for 8 years and then began diving again last year. He continues to dive despite his injury because there is no alternative.

Daniel does not use *secretos* against *Liwa mairin* but relies upon his substantial diving experience as education and prevention against diving sickness, even though he has been sickened and injured. He conveyed to me that sickness from *Liwa mairin* is rare. He has never seen *Liwa mairin* and does not believe in her. As a Moravian Christian, he believes in God. He feels that there is no room for fear insinuating that he has to do what he has to do. Before a dive he says a prayer to God for "*la mano de Dios*." As a Christian, while Daniel does not personally believe in *liwa mairin*, he does not deny that other Miskito believe in her. In my early conversations along the coast, there was often some hesitation to admit belief in a traditional spirit to me, a white North American, and presumed Christian. Beliefs in *liwa mairin* were often denounced as "traditional," ideas associated with the ancestors.

Daniel claims to currently have a contract with Dimas Blanco and the *Miss Keidi,* extending for the season from July to the end of February even though he dove his sixth trip on the *Coral*. He also claims to have had a contract in 2000 with Jaime Thompson and the *Sou'west,* when he became injured. Daniel said that the owner, Jaime Thompson, paid for his hyperbaric chamber treatments in September for 3 hours per day at 500 Lempiras per hour over 5 days for a total of 7,500 Lempiras, which loosely approximates $375 USD, in addition to food and hotel during that time. Jaime, again, paid for 3 rounds a day of hyperbaric treatments at L1,500 over 14 days in November, totaling L21,000, or roughly $1,050 USD, but Daniel made it clear that Jaime did not pay for indemnification. As Daniel's story indicates, compensation, like work, is unpredictable. Injured divers are often not compensated for lost work days or for disability, forcing already injured divers, prone to more extensive and serious decompression sickness, to plunge to extreme depths to pluck spiny lobsters from their rock outcroppings. These divers risk their health and well-being to feed the transnational commodity chain just to make a basic living.

Daniel is structurally tied to this sea economy, even as a partially injured *buzo*. By the end of the 2010-2011 season, Daniel had emigrated to the city of La Ceiba for better economic opportunities and work that he had not yet secured.

Lobster Dive Earnings and Financial Compensation on the Transnational Market

Divers descend in the depths of the Caribbean for spiny lobsters that are eventually served on a Red Lobster patron's dinner plate in the United States for $29.99 (as of April 5, 2015). For the harvesting and extraction of these lobster populations, divers are paid in cash per pound of lobster caught. In 2010-2011, divers earned 50 Lempiras per pound of lobster, roughly $2.778 or $2.50 per pound at the exchange rate of 18 Lempiras per 1 U.S. Dollar[6]. Roughly three to four lobster tails comprise one pound of lobster. I heard that at the end of the season, divers are paid 5 Lempiras more per pound when the product becomes low.

Figure 3.8: *Buzo* weighing lobster catch. Photo taken by Abelino Matute Castillo on the *Sou'west*, October 14-30, 2010.

[6] In 2003, divers earned 56 Lempiras per pound of lobster and *cayuqueros* earned 11 Lempiras per pound (in U.S. equivalents, $3.13/lb and $0.63/lb, respectively). In 2008, divers earned 70 Lempiras per pound of lobster, roughly $3.89 or $3.50/lb. In 2009, divers earned 50 Lempiras per pound of lobster, roughly $2.778 per pound.

In contrast to divers, c*ayuqueros* earn a quarter of a diver's earnings, 25% or 12 Lempiras per pound. And despite conservation measures, small, undersized, class B lobsters are caught on the lobster boats and earn 20 Lempiras per pound. There is a fine of 1 million Lempiras to the owner of the boat if contraband small lobsters are discovered onboard. I had never heard of a fine being issued as the industry brings in far too much money into the Honduran economy to afford reprimand. In addition, divers catch conch at 10 Lempiras per pound.

Divers are paid an "*advans,"* an advance, of 1,000-1,500 Lempiras ($55 USD), in diving funds in advance of their trip to support their family while they are away. *Cayuqueros* are paid 500 Lempiras ($28 USD) in advance. This *advans* is deducted from their final payment, paid by the *sacabuzo*. On board the ship, a daily tally is kept of a divers' catch—in terms of lobsters *grande* and *pequeño, suave* and *roja,* along with other fishes and sea life captured underwater. The following figure is a photograph of Daniel Derek's catch history for his first trip of the July 210 dive season on the *Miss Keidi*. In addition to his legal catch, he has marked his *suave* lobsters, those still with a soft shell, and *pequeño,* under-sized lobsters.

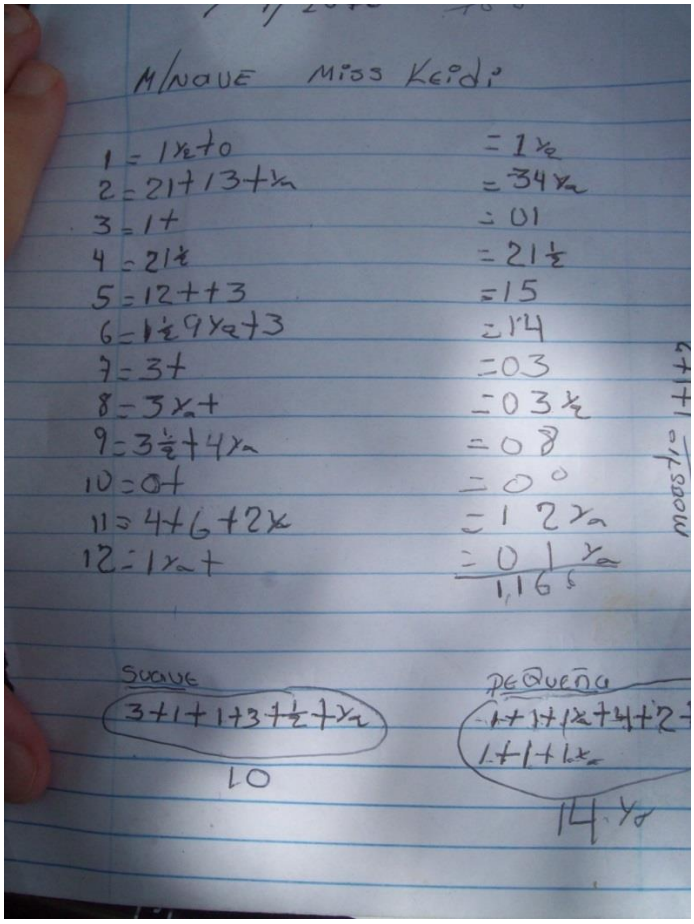


Figure 3.9: Daniel Derek's lobster catch history from his first trip of the July 2010 dive season on the *Miss Keidi*.

I have heard that divers are required to pay for food on the boat along with cigarettes and contribute to fuel costs. Samuel explained that for every 100 pounds that a diver catches, 95 pounds goes toward his tally while 5 pounds are perceived as *gratis*, free payment, to the boat for cigarettes, soda, and the rental and use of equipment, including mask, fins, wetsuit and tanks. For this fee, he is not provided a watch or depth meter.

The following tables 3.10-3.13 outline each of the four diver's catch history and earnings over the 2010-2011 season contrasted by the boat's total catch and earnings. Individual diver earnings range from a high of 149 pounds of lobster equaling 7,450L, or $414 USD, accrued by Mario on the *Miss Yomali* on his second trip of the season contrasted by Abelino's catch of 12 pounds (600L=$33 USD) when he experienced pressure in his lungs or, zero on Mario's final

trip when the *Miss Yomali* experienced engine troubles. The catch history and cash earnings fluctuated from these extremes, acknowledging gaps in the data, with an average accrual of 67.4 pounds of lobster, approximating $187.22 USD. In contrast, the boats accrued a high of 9,000 pounds of lobster totaling $130,000 USD on both the first and fourth trips of the *Bocanel* in contrast to a low yield by the *Steiner* of 1,000 pounds totaling $14,444 USD with an average accrual of 3,525 pounds, approximating $50,917 USD.

Table 3.10: Annual Lobster Catch History for Abelino Matute Castillo

	Trip #1	Trip #2	Trip #3	Trip #4	Trip #5	Trip #6	Trip #7	Trip #8	Trip #9
Dates (if known)		July 21-Aug 4, 2010		Sept. 9-18, 2010	Oct. 14- 30, 2010				Jan 25-Feb 8, 2011
Pounds of lobster caught					25 lbs. Class B (small) @ 20L/lb.	18 lbs. (small) @ 20L/lb.	24 lbs. (small) @ 20L/lb.	10 lbs. (small) @ 20L/lb.	2 lbs. (small) @ 20L/lb.
	100 lbs.	80 lbs.	120 lbs.	40 lbs.	80 lbs.	79 lbs.	66 lbs.	33 lbs.	12 lbs.
@ 50 L/lb. = $USD*	5,000L = $278 USD	4,000L = $222 USD	6,000L = $333 USD	2,000L = $111 USD	4,000L = $222 USD (+$28)	3,950L = $219 USD (+20)	3,300L = $183 USD (+27)	1,650 L = $92 USD (+11)	600 L = $33 USD (+2)
Notes:		*"tranquilo"*			*mal tiempo "no tan muy bien"*	*el viaje normal; todo bien*		*mal viaje*	*pressure in lungs; only 3 days of diving*
Boat	*la Providencia*	*la Providencia*	*la Providencia*	*Steiner*	*Sou 'west*	*Sou 'west Captain Marvin*	*Sou 'west Captain Marvin*	*Sou 'west Captain Marvin*	*Sou 'west Captain Marvin*
Boat catch of lobster	7,500 lbs.	6,000 lbs.	4,000 lbs.	1,000 lbs.	4,000 lbs.	4,500 lbs.	4,800 lbs.	2,800 lbs.	2,500 lbs.
@260 L/lb. = $USD	$108,333 USD	$86,667 USD	$57,778 USD	$14,444 USD	$57,778 USD	$65,000 USD	$69,333 USD	$40,444 USD	$36,111 USD

*2010-2011 exchange rate of 18 Lempiras = $1 USD

Table 3.11: Annual Lobster Catch History for Elias Esteban

	Trip #1	Trip #2	Trip #3	Trip #4	Trip #5	Trip #6	Trip #7	Trip #8	Trip #9
Dates (if known)					Oct 4-12, 2010			- Feb 9, 2011	
Pounds of lobster caught									
	94 lbs.	90 lbs.	100 lbs.	94 lbs.	60 lbs.	70 lbs.	43 lbs.	61 lbs.	32 lbs.
@ 50 L/lb. = $USD*	4,700 L = $261 USD	4,500 L = $250 USD	5,000 L = $278 USD	4,700 L = $261 USD	3,000 L = $167 USD	3,500 L = $194 USD	2,150 L = $119 USD	3,050 L = $169 USD	1,600 L = $89 USD
Notes:		*not many resources, lobsters*	*"not very much"*	*"mas o menos"*	*mal tiempo, hurricane Richard*			*Un poco malo; product low*	*poco mal/bajo; no hay producto*
Boat	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*Bocanel*	*el Toro*
Boat catch	9,000 lbs.	7,000 lbs.		9,000 lbs.	1,300 lbs.				
@260 L/lb. = $USD	$130,000 USD	$101,111 USD		$130,000 USD	$18,778 USD				

*2010-2011 exchange rate of 18 Lempiras = $1 USD

Table 3.12: Annual Lobster Catch History for Daniel Derek

	Trip #1	Trip #2	Trip #3	Trip #4	Trip #5	Trip #6	Trip #7	Trip #8	Trip #9
Dates (if known)				Sept. 16-20, 2010	Oct 4-19, 2010	Oct 28-			
Pounds of lobster caught									
	116.5 lbs.	100 lbs.	70 lbs.	84 lbs.			85 lbs.	35 lbs.	47 lbs.
@ 50 L/lb. = $USD*	5,825 L = $324 USD	5,000 L = $278 USD	3,500 L = $194 USD	4,200 L = $233 USD			4,250 L = $236 USD	1,750 L = $97 USD	2,350 L = $131 USD
Notes:	*Rosalind & Key Gorda Banks [see photo]*	*"mas o menos" Rosalind Bank*	*Broken freezer; another boat escorted*	*Pain/pressure in arm*	*mal tiempo; hurricane Richard*		*"mas o menos"*	*mal tiempo*	*mal tiempo; 12 day trip*
Boat	*Miss Keidi*	*Miss Keidi*	*Miss Keidi*	*Miss Keidi*	*Miss Keidi*	*Coral*			
Boat catch	5,500 lbs.	6,000 lbs.	2,000 lbs.	3,500 lbs.					
@260 L/lb. = $USD	$79,444 USD	$86,667 USD	$28,889 USD	$50,556 USD					

*2010-2011 exchange rate of 18 Lempiras = $1 USD

Table 3.13: Annual Lobster Catch History for Samuel Rito

	Trip #1	Trip #2	Trip #3	Trip #4	Trip #5	Trip #6	Trip #7	Trip #8	Trip #9
Dates (if known)					Oct 7-17, 2010		Dec 7-23, 2010	Jan 2-16, 2011	Jan 18-30
Pounds of lobster caught									
	109 lbs.	149 lbs.	127 lbs.	36 lbs.	57 lbs.	65 lbs.	36 lbs.	30 lbs.	0
@ 50 L/lb. = $USD*	5,450 L = $303 USD	7,450 L = $414 USD	6,350 L = $353 USD	1,800 L = $100 USD	2,850 L = $158 USD	3,250 L = $181 USD	1,800 L = $100 USD	1,500 L = $83 USD	0
Notes:				*Early return b/c diver died*	*2 divers paralyzed/sick and treated at decompression chamber*				*Broke down due to engine problems*
Boat	*Miss Yomali*	*Miss Yomali*	*Miss Yomali*	*Miss Yomali*	*Miss Yomali*				
Boat catch	~8,000 lbs.	~8,500 lbs.		1,500 lbs.	2,400 lbs.	5,500 lbs.	4,800 lbs.	3,700 lbs.	0
@260 L/lb. = $USD	$115,556 USD	$122,778 USD		$21,667 USD	$34,667 USD	$79,444 USD	$69,333 USD	$53,444 USD	0

*2010-2011 exchange rate of 18 Lempiras = $1 USD

Lobster tails are sold in outdoor markets on Ceiba streets for between 90 and 130 Lempiras, or between $5.00-7.22 USD per pound, sold amidst plastic goods and articles where even street vendors don't know the plight of their Miskito nationals whereas Hondurans could purchase lobster tails for L215.20, roughly $10.76 in February 2011 in the sparkling clean environment of Supermercados Paiz, a grocery store and local retail unit of Walmart located in La Ceiba.

While boat owners and captains sold their catch at 260 Lempiras per pound, or $14.44 USD per pound in the 2010-2011 season to the industrial purchasing/processors, they reap over $25 per pound in U.S. markets. Like a rock lobster tail fluffed in its shell on a Red Lobster menu, the cost of a "wild" Honduran lobster tail at Metcalfe's market in Madison in February 2013 was also $29.99/lb.

If we assume an average trip earning of $187.22 for a Miskito lobster diver even though the trips are highly unpredictable, over an average of nine dive trips in a dive season, then a diver, on average, earns $1,684.90, which is to sustain he and his family throughout the year. If the money that is paid at the end point in the United States for one single Honduran lobster tail were cycled back to the source point on the Miskito Coast, then a diver would earn an average of $18,192 USD over one season.

Divers are structurally tied to this economy at sea. With a long history of commodity extraction, the Miskito have become dependent on a cash economy. While the work is wrought with danger, it is the only form of a cash-based economy on the coast. As Elias and the other divers decried that the lobster resource was only *un poco* and that their trips were *malo* or *mas o menos*, their experiences point to a declining lobster population as progressed through the 2010-

2011 season, which correlates to deeper, longer and more dangerous dives to harvest this resource.

Injury Inscribed on the Male Miskito Body

Divers descend with four tanks per trip and make three dive trips in a day, descending up to 120 feet. Each tank holds a capacity of 2,050 pounds of air that lasts between 18 and 25 minutes, depending upon depth, for the deeper one is, the deeper and more strained the breathing, the faster the heartbeat, the more oxygen is used. Miskito divers dive on 12 tanks per day, 144 tanks in 12 days. This number of repeated dives far exceeds the SCUBA guidelines for deep-water diving. Most recreational and tourist divers may dive 3-4 times a day at a maximum depth of 100 feet. Miskito divers dive 12 times per day at depths greater than 100 feet, up to 120-130 feet.

When I took my last breath, the water's surface looked like an airplane, high in the sky from when one is standing on land. I surfaced with the last air in my lungs.

As a result from overly frequent, deep-water diving, many suffer from decompression sickness or the "bends." Decompression sickness results from the over-absorption of nitrogen in the blood, which blocks the flow of oxygenated blood and can result in physical and neurological damage, including death. Deep at sea, divers are days to a decompression chamber. Chambers exist in at the Moravian medical clinic in Ahuas and Puerto Lempira though when I visited Puerto Lempira, the chamber was inoperable.

Figure 3.14: Facilities in Puerto Lempira, Honduras, 2010

Other chambers exist in La Ceiba, or at a tourist resort on the island of Roatán, reflecting the value of tourist health over the indigenous Miskito divers. Of all of the cases that Dr. Rafael Diaz saw, of the Cornerstone Chamber and Medical Services served as part of Anthony's Key Resort on the island of Roatán, he treated far more Miskito lobster divers than recreational, tourist divers.

Figure 3.15: Dr. Rafael Diaz of the Cornerstone Chamber and Medical Services, Roatán, 2008. A Miskito diver had just received hyperbaric treatment for deep-water diving. Of all of his patients, Dr. Diaz sees predominantly more Miskito divers that recreational, tourist divers.

Just outside of the Cornerstone Chamber and Medical Services building housing the hyperbaric chamber:

He was held afloat in the shallow shore by his cayuquero as the therapist massaged and moved his brown, limp body. Apparently, he couldn't even talk when he first surfaced from the water. He was two days from the decompression chamber. After five days of treatment, he has regained his ability to speak. He was searching for lobsters in 140 feet of water when he ran out of sufficient oxygen and quickly had to ascend. It was his first dive trip of the season.

The damage perpetrated by this industry is inscribed on the male body.

The diver wobbled down the handicap accessible ramp of the AMHBLI office in Puerto Lempira, dragging his pigeon-turned feet while grabbing the metal rails. His colleague sat confined to a wheelchair with a pee bucket dangling from the side of his chair. The kinds of injuries vary from physical to cerebral—some with the ability to walk while others use wheelchairs, PADs (Personal Ambulatory Devices), and crutches. Others are even bedridden.

Figure 3.16: Injured lobster divers, Puerto Lempira, Honduras, 2010

Figure 3.17: Injured lobster divers, Puerto Lempira, Honduras, 2010

These stories are not uncommon. Nearly every household is touched by the stories of lobster divers who dive too often, too deeply and suffer decompression sickness, paralysis, or death. Divers are structurally tied to an economy at sea where they are paid per pound of lobster. As the resource is over-harvested and populations diminish, divers are forced into increasingly deeper and more dangerous waters.

The Politics of Representation: Plata vodka and recreational drugs

The allegation associating lobster divers with alcohol and drugs has long circulated along the coast ever since I first began fieldwork in the summer of 2003. *Sacabuzos* lament the irresponsibility of divers. Even an inland, ladino (mestizo), Spanish-speaking Honduran, representative of the G-Fish Alliance associated divers as “lazy”, “drug-using,” and “promiscuous.”

In my early approaches regarding research with lobster divers in 2008 and 2009 amongst coastal Miskitos, responses to my research were mixed—lobster divers were denigrated by local Miskito *maestros*, teachers, as "irresponsible" for their work and associated with alcohol and drugs, giving me the impression that I had chosen to study the underbelly of Miskito society, even though this is the most popular form of economic work for men on the coast.

Buzos, though mostly young *buzos*, can be found outside of *pulperias*, stores, either before or after a dive trip, imbibing too much Plata vodka and temporarily flush with "quick" money; money that is quickly earned and sporadically spent. This scene generally includes young men who are flush with cash and power in hand. The smell of marijuana also often intermingles with the sea air in those pre-departure gatherings, sending divers off to sea for a two-week journey.

Figure 3:18 Inebriated *buzo* in the middle with sideways cap. Cocobila, 2010

I want to accurately depict the everyday lives of lobster divers but, sensitive to the politics of representation, I want to be careful about this framing of alcohol and drug use/abuse. Laura Nader (1972) warned anthropologists not to "study the poor and powerless because everything you say about them will be used against them." Bourgois (1996) encountered this dilemma when studying the crack/cocaine economy among Puerto Ricans in East Harlem. As he was documenting their authentic lives and situating this new immigrant economy in historical perspective, he feared that his portrait would be used as an easy excuse to some to castigate the Puerto Ricans for their own existence. Like Bourgois, I am trying to fashion a tale of the Miskito to reveal the lives that supply the lobster commodity chain in a structurally oppressive exchange between the United States and Central America.

Because of the perception of alcohol and drug (ab)use by lobster divers, they are perceived by outsiders to be culpable and responsible for their own injuries. This association makes it easy to dismiss the injuries of lobster divers as self-induced. Quips associating divers with alcohol and drugs can be extrapolated to their use when diving, and minimize the severity of the dangers or make them complicit in their own injuries. It displaces the blame.

I problematize the causal direction by asking why they use drugs and alcohol. Rather than assuming that drunks cause and hence, are responsible for their own injuries, I ask why they use drugs and alcohol in the first place. Is it possible that stoical, macho men drown their fears, sorrows, and worries in alcohol in response to their plight of possible injury and accident?

While I never escorted 100 men on a two-week journey to sea to document their behaviors, I was told that divers use drugs such as marijuana and *piedras*, rock/crack for recreation. In my experience on the coast, I witnessed casual smoking and periodic binge drinking but nothing to suggest addiction or sustained alcohol abuse.

Compensation due to Injury

Boat owners are technically responsible for paying for the decompression treatment of injured divers. Some divers are compensated by the companies with a token sum but if there is no legal contract, there often is no legal documentation or requirement that compensation be offered. The letter to the *Casa Presidencial* for Javier Granwell Tinglas in Appendix I illustrates the difficulty in claiming compensation and indemnization due to a diving accident. Compensation ranges from 5,000 to 10,000 Lempiras, roughly $250-$500 USD, and is more of a good-faith effort. Divers and their wives compare the value of their lives to that of dogs. I have heard the boat owners have intentionally changed the name of their boat to avoid having to pay indemnity, while sometimes previously injured divers are blacklisted as liabilities.

In the case of a death, boat owners are supposed to pay 30,000-33,000 Lempiras ($1,500 USD) to the *sacabuzo* to cover the expense of a tomb, burial, and compensation for the family, but oftentimes, the money is not passed in full from the *sacabuzo* to the diver's family. Furthermore, a financially-strapped Honduran government considers Miskito lobster divers to be self-employed. They are therefore not entitled to formal workers' compensation, disability or social security (Izdepski 1994), and they do not qualify to draw from a communal pension. As men are the primary earners of liquid cash, when they suffer from sickness, not only do they suffer economically but so do their wives, children and extended families.

The costs of deep-water diving are inscribed on the male Miskito body in the form of decompression sickness, or the "bends," which include neurological damage and paralysis. A parallel explanation circulates on the coast where *buzos* explain decompression sickness as *liwa mairin siknis*, a curse from the mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of her lobster resources.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIWA MAIRIN AND THE SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE OF THE MISKITO

The Miskito landscape is animated by spirit-beings who inhabit the environment. Nature spirits, or *liwa*, dwell in waterways and the forest. There are multiple *liwas* who inhabit the sea and lobster banks, rivers and lagoons, canals and creeks. Male *liwas* may molest women when they bathe or wash clothes in the lagoon, especially menstruating and pregnant women.

As Angelita recounted the story in Miskito, Rollins explained in Spanish that there was a sighting of Liwa mairin in the lagoon just behind Kuri. Women and children were washing clothes in the lagoon when they saw a figure waving her arm. In fear, everyone fled but claim with certainty that Liwa mairin was waving at them.

Women are prohibited from washing the cloth diapers of children in rivers, since they are vulnerable to a spirit that molests children. *Liwa* are to be approached with fear and *liwa* of the opposite sex are said to be dangerous (Dodds 2001). Herlihy suggests the sexualized nature of these relationships. Men are especially vulnerable to the attacks of *liwa mairin* after sexual intercourse.

Liwa mairin exists in multiple forms and can take the form of the masculine, as *Liwa waina*, or the feminine, *Liwa mairin*. Most commonly, she is referred in the singular feminine form as *Liwa mairin*. *Liwa mairin* is said to be a mermaid, sometimes a *gringa* with flowing long, blonde hair who once existed in human form, and sometimes a dark-skinned black woman with a fish tail. *Liwa mairin* in the black form is the strongest and most powerful and potent in causing harm, sickness and death (*cf* Barrett 1992).

The origin of *Liwa mairin* is unknown. Barrett (1992) speculates that she dates to colonial times, fitting in with the seafaring narratives of pirates and buccaneers, who had pictures or mermaids painted on the exterior of ship's bows. Reflecting the Miskito hybrid African, Amerindian, and European history, *Liwa mairin* fits within a wider Afro-Caribbean discourse on

Mami wata, mermaids, and serpents, which represents the feminine mythical sea and liminal qualities of mermaids. Water maids and water spirits in the Afro-Caribbean trace the African slave trade, extending from Jamaica (Drewal 2008) to Haitian vodou (Houlberg 2008; Galembo 2008) and Amazonian and Northeast Brazil (Robben 1998; Landes 1947; Wafer 1991).

Despite her origin, *liwa mairin*, is the mermaid goddess and spirit, *la sirena*, who protects and guards the water's natural resources. As Abelino described,

> *Liwa is half a beautiful woman, half fish. There are many liwas inhabiting the lagoon and sea. She is the owner of the lobsters.*

Liwa mairin is the owner (*dueño*, in Spanish; *dawanka*, in Miskito) of lobsters. She protects and guards the water's natural resources. *Dawanka*, or 'spirit owners,' control the supply of fish, game and access to other resources (Jamieson 2002). *Liwa mairin* is the *dawanka* of fish and water animals. As a mediating spirit, she is referenced as the devil, *la diabla*, and as a witch, *la brujera*. Indigenous spiritualities have often been characterized by a dialectical relationship based on reciprocity between the extractors and providers. As documented by Reichel-Dolmatoff (1971) among the Tukano, extraction if often accompanied by ritual and respect to ensure future provisions and health as a mutually beneficial cosmic loop. But relations between the Miskito and *dawanka*, 'spirit owners,' are not based on benign reciprocity but are dangerous and asymmetrical negotiations (Nash 1979, Taussig 1980, Jamieson 2002, 2009). This makes sense as *buzos* descend into *Liwa mairin's* waters and extract her resources. The price of their over-extraction is *liwa mairin siknis* or decompression sickness.

Figure 4.1: Local drawing of *liwa mairin*. Drawing inspired by a Disney backpack.

Figure 4.2: Local rendition of liwa mairin by Rollins George.

Stories of *Liwa mairin* circulate among lobster divers. *Liwa Mairin* is referenced as a temptress who shows a preferential liking for some men over others. She appears in dreams foreshadowing abundant lobsters for the taking and then in reality, tempts and tricks divers with her plenty. *Liwa mairin* casts spells of sickness on male lobster divers for the over-extraction of her resources, as Nash 1979 and Taussig 1980 found among miners and plantation workers in Bolivia and Colombia for the over-extraction of resources. *Liwa mairin's* powers generally cause sickness, which can present as dermatological problems but can include headache, fever, vomiting, paralysis, and death. She is most active and dangerous at night between 6pm and 6am. She lives in the rock banks under the sea and houses chicken, a horse and a dog so when a diver sees one of these animals, they know that she is near so they run and flee for the surface. Lore holds that if *Liwa mairin* sees you or you see her, you die.

I'm afraid of her. If she doesn't like you and she sees you or you see her, you will die.

Figure 4.3: Rigoberto Derek, *buzo lisiado*, 2008

I am paralyzed because she looked at me. If I had seen her, I would have died. Those killed by Liwa mairin bear her hand imprint. Eating fish will worsen my condition so I cannot eat it.

Figure 4.4: Fermin Thomas, *buzo lisiado*, 2008

Fermin, a parapalegic unable to use his legs, recounted that "the sea is large and there is a chance encounter with Liwa mairin. I encountered Liwa—she approached me from behind and frightened me by grabbing my sides from behind."

While divers that I have spoken with understand a neurological explanation for decompression sickness, a complementary and parallel explanation circulates on the coast. Male divers frame "decompression sickness" as a curse from this mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of lobsters.

This indigenous understanding of "decompression sickness" as a curse from the mermaid goddess fits within a corpus of works that critique the over-extraction of natural resources in the Americas, including Nash (1979) and Taussig (1980). The political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation. Nor is *Liwa mairin* siphoned from the cash economy or transnational market transactions. Nash (1979) explores the dialectic of reciprocity between Bolivian tin miners and *Supay*, the spirit of the hills, in ensuring

the reproduction of wealth and of miner safety. She chronicles *cholo*, Bolivian tin miners' ritual homage and *k'araku* sacrifice to *Supay*, or *Tío*, the hill spirit who controls the wealth of the mine, for safety and protection from silicosis and collapse and to repay her, so that she will reproduce the wealth in the tin mine, ensuring a cosmic loop. Taussig (1980) shows among Colombian and Bolivian workers, how capitalism is interpreted through the cultural tradition of devil symbolism and is used to frame proletarian alienation as a pact with the devil. Individual accumulation accrues from extraction from a communal commons (*cf* Kindblad 2001). The occult economy is one way of addressing the stratification and inequalities associated with modernity. The internalization of blame for the transnational processes of the lobster industry outside of divers' control may be a form of false consciousness where the state has infiltrated diver's mentalities, one dimension of Foucault's governmentality. *Liwa mairin siknis* is the curse for the over-extraction of her lobster populations, creating imbalance and discord because divers are paid per lobster pound and this is the only cash economy on the coast. The prevalence of sickness, injury, and death on the Miskito Coast makes comprehensible the indigenous frame of mermaid magic.

Some divers employ protective measures (*secreto*, in Spanish; *contra* in Miskito) against *Liwa mairin's* powers such as a parcel of garlic, herbs, such as *frijolio*, *agua de florida*, a cologne, or *tukta kwaiya*, an amulet of human umbilical cord, bundled into their t-shirt. *Agua de Florida*, a cologne popular in Latin America, is doused on divers to protect them from the threat of *Liwa mairin*. *Tukta kwaiya* is an amulet, when employed, *Liwa mairin* can't see the diver. It makes the diver invisible to *Liwa Mairin*[7]. But as many men confess, protective mechanisms, such as *tukta kwaiya* are expensive and rare.

[7] Tukta kwaiya was also used for protection in the Nicaraguan revolution (Perez Chiriboga 2000)

Figure 4.5: *Buzo*, lobster diver, with *Agua de Florida*

While Miskito tradition holds that an individual's spiritual bodyguard, or *kangbaiya*, offers powerful protection when maintained by taboos and restrictions, *kangbaiya* cannot be used or is ineffective in counteracting *Liwa Mairin's* spell. Most divers explain that *kangbaiya* is ineffective in counteracting *Liwa mairin's* spell. One explanation holds that divers cannot 'see' their lobster catch if employing their spiritual bodyguard; only when they release their spiritual protectorate are they able to 'see.' Therefore, in order to 'see,' divers must make themselves vulnerable to the vagaries and curse of *Liwa Mairin*.

While *Liwa mairin siknis* is often used interchangeably to describe the Western understanding of decompression sickness, some Miskito referenced the illnesses as two distinct entities—where *Liwa mairin siknis* is treated with herbs and decompression sickness requires

medical attention. If one is sick with *Liwa mairin siknis*, one is treated by rubbing garlic all over the body and employing *Agua de Florida*. Seen as distinct illnesses, the treatment for one is ineffective for the other. If seen as two distinct illnesses, precautions for one such as herbal remedies against *Liwa mairin* may not protect against decompression sickness. The lasting effects of decompression sickness after recompression are perceived to be the work of *Liwa mairin* and must be treated herbally. This helps to explain the lasting consequences even after medical treatment in a hyperbaric chamber.

Accessing the Miskito Spiritual World and the Ethnography of Secrets

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, I was introduced to the Honduran Miskito Coast through Peter and Laura Herlihy. I was familiar with the animistic landscape and tales of *Liwa mairin* through Laura's work and discussions with her. As I became more acquainted and accustomed to the Miskito language and Miskito spiritual notions and felt that I had demonstrated an investment in the community where I was not seeking to extract secretive knowledge or evaluate them people on the basis of their beliefs, traditional, Christian, or both, I began to drop in words of Miskito, as I mostly communicated in Spanish. These utterances were nearly always met with giggles as the *midiki mairin*, white woman/gringa, was trying to speak in Miskito. It was through the sprinkling of Miskito words such as *kangbaiya* and *tukta kwaya*, that my Miskito friends began to open up to me about the spiritual landscape. Some of my informants would frame their explanations as traditional beliefs of the elders. But depending upon different individuals, many of the traditional spiritual beliefs are alive on the coast, which provide local idioms to express unknowable circumstances, such as the injury of a diver or the sickness of a child. In some ways, this spiritual knowledge is an ethnography of secrets as my friends imparted their herbal wisdom

and ideological understandings with me. The nature/culture dichotomy is transcended on the Miskito Coast of Honduras as the spiritual landscape illustrates the interplay between culture and nature (Escobar 1996, 1999; Ferguson 1990; Latour 2004; Nadasdy 2007).

As the Miskito landscape is animated by spirit-beings, certain plants, such as *frijolina*, offer healing qualities so they and their spirits, are to be approached with respect (*cf* Dodds 2001). These herbal plants and baths, *sikas*, serve as herbal cures.

As I walked home to Raista, Avis was bathing Yudamni, sick with fever, in an herbal bath and spit water on her. When I queried as to why she did this, she explained so the evil spirits and devil leave her body.

But *sikas* can also be used for witchcraft to manipulate, control and bring harm to other people (Barrett 1992; García 1996). As I illustrated in the lobster chapter,

Abelino was unable to secure a diving spot on la Providencia. When he went to talk with the sacabuzo, Teresa, she said that he was too late. Abelino referred to the work of a sika as a possible cause of his bad luck.

Further,

when I visited Maria, she shared that she had gone on an errand on Sunday to visit Teresa, the sacabuzo. When she returned, a friend commented that Maria did not look well and she began to feel ill. She showed me a burn at the nape of her neck that is peeling and has been very sore. It looks like an intense burn, perhaps from the sun. Maria attributed it to brujeria (witchcraft) and called it magica negra (black magic). She said that an herbal bath has helped to soften and calm the pain. She said she may go to Ahuas or Lempira when Elias returns so she would be willing to see a Western doctor as well. Maria understood this illness to be a hex sent upon her as a form of witchcraft and black magic.

In addition to witchcraft, *sikas* can be used as love potions for sexual magic as *praidi saihka* and *yamni kaikan* (Herlihy 2002, 2012).

> *It was a Friday and Dona Betullah collected herbs from around her home. First, she collected a root, which she referred to as kangbaiya, for my kangbaiya, my spiritual bodyguard—to reinforce protection against the malicious thoughts and witchcraft of others. She boiled this in a small pot on the clay stove from which*

I drank two cups of tea. Avis saved the kangbaiya root saying one cannot throw it away. Her mother will guard it for about two weeks to preserve its potency and power. She also pointed out beneath the mango tree where Betullah planted my 100 Lempiras for my kangbaiya to work. Betuallah was not secretive about kangbaiya. It is a fairly common thing. She drinks it as does Avis and gives it to her grandchildren.

Dona Betullah collected a green, leafy plant and gave it to Avis to crush with lagoon water. Avis was a bit secretive about this herbal bath, not wanting Elma or Mariebelle to know, keeping this ritual between Betullah, Avis, Sam and me. Because of the secrecy, I was a little delayed in taking a mid-day shower at twelve noon. I went to the balcony outside of my room where Sam hoisted the bucket up to my room. I took it into the shower. Avis directed me to pour the bath across myself in the form of a cross and then shower the remaining liquid from head to toe as in a regular shower. I allowed the dampness to air-dry. I have to follow up with one to two more baths on Fridays to increase the potency of the spell.
This formed the basis of yamni kaikan, an herbal bath for love that will make Mark only think of me. Ladina explained that this herbal bath casts a spell on a boyfriend so that he is enamored and only thinks of me above all other women. She said that there is another class that can be used for luck in attaining work. After bathing, people are drawn to the bather as a magnet where Mark will only have eyes for me. It, too, can be used on his family, in the case that they don't like me; it will win them over. Won't they be surprised when I tell them that the yamni kaikan worked and Mark proposed to me a few weeks later!

This ethnographic vignette elucidates the magical and spiritual landscape of the Miskito. The *kangbaiya* herbal tea was used to fortify my spiritual bodyguard and to protect me from the malicious thoughts and witchcraft of others. The *yamni kakan* herbal bath was devised as a love potion. Both of these treatments comprised *praidi saihka*, or "Friday's medicine," since they were given at mid-day on Friday. A monetary payment is made to the spirit owner in exchange for spiritual protection illuminating the balanced, reciprocal relationship with the environment where a monetary payment is made for an ecological extraction. Secrecy is also important, making a spell more efficacious. Avis' direction to shower the bath over myself in the form of a cross also illustrates the syncretism of Miskito beliefs and Christianity, proselytized by Moravian missionaries.

Herlihy (2002, 2006, 2012) demonstrates how Kuri Miskito women employ *yamni kaikan*, sexual magic, a private and subversive act, to coerce monetary funds from lobster divers. Other forms of *praidi saihka* and love potions treat jealousy and cause forgetfulness. *Kupia ikaia*, "to kill the heart," is an herbal concoction for jealousy while a *sika* of *amia tikaia* forces the recipient to lose his memory of former amorous relationships. *Waowisa* can summon a person from a far off place.

> *As I was tending the topado soup on the clay stove, the smoke continued to follow me even as I tried to escape it. Roberto teased that because the smoke was following me, I must be jealous. He added that Betullah had a sika for this jealousy in the form of an herbal cure that I could rub on my body, bathe with it or drink it to cure me of this jealousy.*
>
> *This sika for jealousy is found in an herb form from a curandero. There is also an herbal sika for protection from the black magic of others. An herbal sika for an upset stomach is sipped with lemon.*
>
> *Roberto explained through example that if he wanted me to fall in love with him and to become heartsick for him, he could visit Dona Betullah and write my name on a piece of paper. She would douse him with a special perfume. When he casually visited me, that perfume would cast a spell on me so that I would fall in love with him.*

The invisible spiritual landscape along the Miskito Coast is alive with spirits, *sikas*, and witchcraft creating a benevolent and dangerous space. The *sukia*, or healer shaman, has a direct connection with the spirit world and invokes spirits with her powers (Dodds 2001; Herlihy 2002, 2012). The contemporary shaman dynamically incorporates elements of Moravian Christianity into the traditional cosmology. These *sukias* are liminal characters, to be respected and feared for they have the power to cast goodness and evil. They are the ones in charge of concocting *sikas* for illness sickness, love and witchcraft.

The medical and the mythical landscapes along the Miskito Coast blur into one another. Sickness and illness are broadly understood to be part of the spiritual and magical domain within traditional Miskito cosmology. The human body and physical constitution are susceptible to magical forces. Barrett (1992), García (1996) and Perez Chiriboga (2000) classify illness as spirit possession and witchcraft. The *isingni*, or spirit of the dead, can leave one of its two souls behind on earth where it molests and "vexes" people, causing illness (García 1996).

Deceased spirits roam the Miskito landscape. It is a Miskito belief that one who has recently been sick or one with a more feeble disposition should not be around dead people or those who have visited the dead. Their composition is weakened and compromised and they are more susceptible to the vapor and spirit of the deceased, which in turn causes further sickness.

Bricia was bringing a sika to Candida, who had visited a velorio and saw the face of a deceased person yesterday, which could be the cause of her sickness.

Other Invisible Forces—Rumor and Gossip

While spirits and *sikas* mingle on the Miskito Coast, other invisible forces circulate to maintain social equity and balance. Gossip serves as a social control, leveling excess in a kind of calibrated balance similar to the delicate ecological balance of extraction and repayment or extraction and curse. The overlapping of the social and magical appear in the following story, illustrating how social control and ecological equilibrium intersect.

> *Abelino discussed the story of Antonio Wilson. His "official" death was a result of a diving accident though rumor and suspicion circulated that he died as a result of brujo magic, wizardry, and witchcraft. As a former local president of the active divers association, he was perceived to be corrupt because of his position of power as the mediator in negotiating wages between the diving companies and divers. The envy of community members, he was susceptible to the work of black magic*
> .

Envy can be a reason for sorcery to be cast from one person to another. Witchcraft, like *liwa mairin siknis*, can signal that an institution is out of whack. Gossip is circulated as a way of leveling the playing field if others are perceived (or really do) have more. In another example,

> *Ladina referred to Rigo as a bad man. He works with Steven Foster, a white man, of Corazon a Corazon, and is supposed to represent buzos lisiados in Tegucigalpa. But she criticized him because he takes all of the money that should be allotted for buzos lisiados for himself.*

This critique was leveled by Ladina at Rigo though Jorge, Willington and Maria have all expressed suspicion about unfairness with Rigo's dealings. This snippet is a slice of rumor and gossip that circulate on the coast. Suspicions circulate about what others are perceived to be getting in relation to what they are not. It is the *perception* of gain—whether real or factual that is at the center of rumor and gossip. Accusations of hoarding and stinginess circulate though the Miskito are non-confrontational. I get the sense that one would hardly accuse another to their face but rather circulate rumors.

Gluckman points out that gossip and scandal serve to "maintain the unity, morals and values of social groups…they enable these groups to control the competing cliques and aspiring individuals of which all groups are composed" (1963: 308). In contrast, transactionalists maintained that gossip served to further individuals' agendas and to undermine others (Paine 1967). Subsequent works argued that the above two positions are not mutually exclusive (Abrahams 1970). Niko Besnier (2009) embeds the microscopic elements of gossip as language within a broader, macro socio-political context to illustrate gossip as a kind of everyday politics from below.

These rumors are aired about specific individuals, typically in leadership positions, who have external relations and contacts and are perceived to be gaining more than their compatriots.

They are more often levelled at professionals in relatively more powerful positions with perceived, though perhaps, real, capital. The most obvious targets are community groups, organizations and the Honduran government who are perceived to have more economic resources and don't share, such as MOPAWI, *Moskitia Pawisa Aslika,* a Honduran, Christian-inspired non-governmental organization dedicated to Miskito empowerment that has been active in the Moskitia for 25 years

Daniel Derek castigated MOPAWI for offering no help to the community. MOPAWI is targeted for their lack of help because they are a community organization.

Maria and Elias Esteban griped about Donaldo and the perception of his association as a leader with contact with foreign outsiders and that he is siphoning off monies intended for community development.

Equality is one of the guiding principles in Miskito social organization. The syncretic incorporation of the devil terminology and the sign of the cross reflect the influence of Christianity in the form of Moravian missionaries. The overarching notion and term of "Sitan," or Satan, was readily incorporated into a broader understanding of evil *lasas* (Conzemius 1932). While the missionaries' goals were spiritual conversion, the secular institutions of medical clinics and schools made conversion more palatable. As indigenous beliefs animate the coast, conversion may in fact be situational or reflect the syncretic incorporation of two religious systems.

The Influence of the Moravian Church

The most conspicuous form of religious influence on the Miskito Coast of Honduras is the Moravian Church.

Figure 4.6: *Iglesia Evangelica Morava*, Belén, Honduras

Moravian doctrine emphasizes the love of God manifested in the redemptive life and death of Jesus Christ, the inner testimony of the Spirit, and Christian conduct in everyday activity (Mead 1990).

The Moravian Church, or *Unitas Fratrum*, (Unity of the Brethren), originated in 1457 among Slavic practitioners seeking political and religious freedom in Bohemia and Moravia. Count Nicholas Louis Zinzendorf of Herrnhut, Saxony provided refuge to the persecuted Moravians from the Hapsburg dynasty in 1722 (Mead 1990). Count Nicholas referred to these refugees as Moravians and rather than converting them to his Protestant beliefs of the German

Pietists Spener and Francke, he became bishop and leader of the Protestant Moravian Church (Gollin 1967).

The religious creed of the Moravian Church states, "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, love."[8] The mission of the Moravian Church is to

> …communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and deed. Jesus Christ calls people everywhere as disciples and remakes them as God's new creation. Christians, individually and together, are responsible for witness, nurture, and service in faith. Together, as citizens of God's nation on earth, we seek the transformation of all aspects of life and society. The Holy Spirit motivates and enables us to respond to human yearnings and needs with a wide range of ministries (according to Dr. Samuel Marx, email to author, February 28, 2004).

The Moravian Church is a missionary church. At the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York in 1900, John R. Mott said, "the most striking example of achievement on the home field in the interest of foreign missions is that of the Moravians. They have done more in proportion to their ability than any other body of Christians."[9] Nicaragua and Honduras are one of thirteen missionary provinces of the Moravian Church (Sessler 1933). In 1970, the Moravian Church estimated its membership in Nicaragua to be 30,000—just under half of the regional population of 75,000.[10] As of 1994, the Moravian Church reported a total Nicaraguan membership of 73,140 and a total Honduran membership of 8,896 as of 1995 (Iglesia Morava, Nicaragua 1997, 24 in Tillman 1999: 50). According to Moravian Mission statistics, they estimate close to 100 congregations in Honduras.[11] Benjamin Tillman attributes Moravian growth to planned

[8] Moravian Church in America: What We Believe URL: http://www.moravian.org/believe/ (February 15, 2004)
[9] Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900. Vol I, p. 97.
[10] Viewpoint from Distant Lands, no. 178 (1970), p. 106. Viewpoint was the Moravian missionary journal, earlier known as the Periodical Accounts in Hawley, Susan.
[11] Moravian Church in Honduras URL: http://www.moravianmission.org/honduraschurch.htm (February 15, 2004)

hierarchical diffusion. Honduran missionaries selected five strategic centers to reach the greatest number of Miskito people (Tillman 1999).

The Sacred and the Secular

The primary motivator among Moravian missionaries was to establish a moral framework of Protestantism, inspire a Protestant ethic in everyday life, and establish a strict code of morality in forming "true Christians" among the Miskito (García 1996: 51). The primary effort was aimed at converting the sacred and spiritual element of the Miskito. Secular efforts in education and health were important—secondary activities in terms of improving the moral condition of the Miskito. Moravian missionaries were dedicated to bringing education, relief, and moral uplift to the Miskito of Central America, along with the Word of God (Dozier 1985).

> It was to set the Indians free of their many fears [of evil spirits] that the missionaries came with the Christian gospel. Gradually the people came to learn that there is a God who loves them and who can free them from the power of the evil spirits. The missionaries came to evangelize the Indians, to win them to Jesus Christ and also to help improve their way of life (Reverend Lorenz Adam, letter to author, March 18, 2004).

Missionary work, health, and education have been a foremost effort among the Moravian practitioners in Central America. As a former British colony, the British presence easily paved the way for the Moravian Protestants rather than Spanish-speaking Catholic missionaries. The arrival of the Moravian Mission on March 14, 1849 (Reverend Iobst, letter to author, March 12, 2004) had a great impact on the Miskito of Nicaragua that persists. Three Moravian missionaries from Europe, likely Saxony, first established the Moravian Church in Bluefields, Nicaragua. Systematic work began in 1860 when missionaries were sent along the entire east coast and along the many rivers of Nicaragua to Christianize the Miskito Indians (Reverend Lorenz Adam,

letter to author, March 18, 2004). The missionaries expanded along the north coast and by the turn of the century had reached the Río Coco and were beginning to work upriver (Helms 1971). Nietschmann (1973) notes that by 1900, almost all of the Nicaraguan coastal villages had a resident lay pastor, thus signaling a rapid transformation. The church introduced a new worldview, emphasizing one, all and good, powerful and redemptive God in contrast to the plurality of evil spirits. Many other Christian denominations, including the Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, and Seventh-day Adventists, have attempted to reach the Miskito (Helms 1971). The Church of God, the Moravian mission, and the Baptist Church are the three dominant religious factions among the Miskito of Honduras. The Church of God is headquartered in Puerto Lempira with 18 congregations as of 1998 (Tillman 1999:56). The Baptist Church is also headquartered in Puerto Lempira with a congregation estimated at about 3,000 among 44 villages (Tillman 1999: 54). A small number of Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Assemblies of God and a few Jehovah's Witness influence the Honduran Mosquitia (Tillman 1999: 54).

Moravian missionaries, George and Margaret Heath, brought the "Good News of Jesus Christ" to Cauquira, Honduras in November 1930. Werner and Martha Marx replaced the Heaths in 1943, established the foundation for education, and began a schooling system that won the approval of the Honduran government. Education was one of the important spheres of missionary work. The missionary goal was to promote literacy to enable Christian converts to read the Bible (García 1996). Moravian missionaries also realized they needed to learn the native Miskitu language in order to propagate their message. In 1945, the Honduran government published a primer, "*Por Mi Patria*," prepared by Werner Marx for a Miskito adult literacy campaign (Reverend Lorenz Adam, letter to author, March 18, 2004). In 1953, the Ministry of Education published a Spanish-Miskito dictionary by Werner Marx. Missionary education was

aimed at literacy so that converts could read the Bible in their own tongue. The New Testament and Old Testament of the Bible have been translated into Miskito. Missionaries have furthered their efforts through schools and educational materials where both Miskito and Spanish are taught (and sometimes English) (García 1996).

> Wherever mission work was started schools were also introduced. Even though they had very little knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic the lay pastors were encouraged to try to teach the children. Back in the early 1960s the government of Honduras did very little in the area of education in La Mosquitia. I remember visiting one of the remote villages where a young man hired by the government as a teacher had not received any supplies. The children had no paper or pencils. The teacher gave them a stick or small twig and then had them practice writing on the ground in front of the rustic thatch roofed school building… For the national church to develop it was necessary to stress the education of its leaders. A workers' institute was held in 1944 to give training and to develop the gifts of men and women who had become Christians. From the beginning of the mission elementary education was carried on with special emphasis made to familiarize children and adults with the Spanish language. At Brus Laguna a provincial primary school was established. In 1951, a hostel for boys from other villages was opened. Of the 8 students who came the first year only 4 survived the course of studies. By 1954 the number of boarding students grew to 35. By 1956 this school had an enrollment of 184, including 21 boarding students. After students completed the 5th grade they had to go to a government school in La Ceiba or Tegucigalpa to complete their education. Before long the first of those boys who had trained in the Brus school returned to La Mosquitia as teachers of their people (Reverend Lorenz Adam, March 18, 2004, letter to author).

Dr. Samuel Marx, brother of Werner Marx, shared that "the Moravian workers from the very start were concerned with education and health as well as giving the gospel message of salvation in Christ. That is one of the big reasons for the acceptance and success of the mission" (email to author, February 27, 2004).

Moravian missionaries attend the spiritual, medical, and educational needs of the Miskito to convert the person as a whole. The Protestant Moravian missionaries primary concern is that

of the spiritual realm. Secular efforts, such as education and health, help improve the conditions for spiritual conversion. Mary Helms conducted her work in Asang, along the Río Coco of the Mosquitia Coast of northeastern Nicaragua, between 1964 and 1965. Her work demonstrates the assimilation of the sacred and secular Moravian institution in a Miskito community.

At the time of Helms's study, Christianity was relatively new in Asang and in some Honduran areas. Helms assumed that Asang was about "midway in terms of Christian influence" since the first missionaries visited the village 50 years before (186). I interpret "midway" to mean that the Asang Miskito still maintained some traditional beliefs and had not completely converted to Christianity.

The Moravian Mission was amicably accepted because of the history of external contact on the Miskito Coast, principally with the British. British colonization paved the way for Moravian Protestantism. A distanced relationship exists between the Miskito of the coast and the Spanish of the interior. Though the Miskito are recognized as official residents, they are separated from Honduran and Nicaraguan national, political, and economic identity. Trade relations and economic exchange existed between Europeans and North Americans rather than from the national interior. As a result, the Miskito felt abandoned by the state, dissociated themselves, and turned outward. Acceptance of the Moravian Church by the Miskito is a result of several factors. The traditional social organization based on a subsistence economy permitted the democratic, non-hierarchical Moravians to integrate into Miskito society (García 1996). The Moravian Mission was accepted because of its non-Spanish, non-Nicaraguan/Honduran otherness. Claudia García (1996) postulates that the Moravian history of persecution led to cohesion, autonomy, and self-sufficiency. The Moravian Church found a welcoming audience

among the Miskito as the Church advocated communalism and egalitarianism under the guise of *Unitas Fratrum*.

> …the missionaries' approach was not only to convert individuals, but also to create a unity of Christian kinsmen, of "brothers" and "sisters" who would show "respect" for each other by mutual abidance by the rules of Christian behavior. The extension of the Miskito kinship terms *moini* and *lakra* to include Christian (i.e., Moravian) "brothers" and "sisters"…can be seen…as symbolic of the number of similarities between Miskito and Moravians in their mutual emphasis on "kinship" organized society (Helms 1971: 215).

The brethren, Christian brotherhood, advocated by the Moravians found its counterpart in Miskito kinship ties. The Moravian Church, though a religious institution, also operated as a secular social and political institution (Helms 1971). The Moravian missionaries believed if Christianity was to permeate the whole of life, secular interests were necessary concerns as were the sacred (ibid), where church life was indiscernible from village life. The physical presence of the Church within the Asang community has led to the establishment of a proud, self-righteous identity among the Asang against their non-Christian neighbors, precisely because of the church, which is the identifying feature of the community (Helms 1971). The church is the focal point for community affairs whether it is for announcements or for the enactment of new laws. Evidence of the assimilation of sacred and secular, can be found in the organization of the church which has been added to village political organization and reflected in village solidarity. Prestigious positions of influence include the lay pastor, helper, church committeeman, and door marshall (Helms 1971).

Benjamin Tillman (1999) documents the impact of the Moravian Church on the Miskito settlement landscape in 64 villages in eastern Honduras. Tillman specifically examines settlement morphology, housing design, and agriculture. As pertains to settlement morphology,

the missionaries' introduced a settlement pattern that reflected their European heritage, where church buildings are located on a central square plaza, bisected by the main village road.

Tillman notes that the Moravian influence on church architecture involves a progression between three stages. First-stage constructions utilize local materials built upon a dirt floor that is sometimes covered with palm leaves (Tillman 1999). The second-stage is characterized by raised board floors and board walls utilizing local and imported materials, with a holding capacity for approximately 200 people. The final stage utilizes strictly imported concrete for the floor and walls. The missionaries believe the concrete construction will be cost-effective since they withstand rain and termite destruction (Tillman 1999). The principal centers have the characteristic plaza design (ibid).

Tillman documents changes in Miskito home dwelling design as a result of the missionary teaching activity. Dwelling construction was adapted to the tropical climate to allow for ventilation and prevent rainfall. The current constructions emulate this original design though incorporate more imported wood materials for flooring and walls. The Moravians have influenced agriculture through the introduction of new rice and bean seed crops, increased food production through more expansive house gardens and fruit trees. Tillman suggests that the Moravian agricultural alterations reflect elements of the modern sustainable agricultural development movement (Tillman 1999). Tillman argues that the Moravians made a significant contribution to the Miskito settlement landscape of eastern Honduras. The Moravian influence is distinct from the Ladino-Catholic interior of Honduras and Central American region. The distinction is important for the indigenous Miskito to document claim and hence, title, to their traditional, ancestral lands (Tillman 1999).

The similarities and lack of discrepancies between the Miskito and Moravian structure has been noted by Helms (1971) and García (1996). The democratic and non-hierarchical social organization of the secular Moravian institution and values of equality and community found their counterparts in Miskito kinship ties. Helms (1971) noted that the church had not succeeded as well in changing Miskito ideology. García (1996) argues that despite the importance of the Moravian Church as an institution, it has not taken anything away from the traditional religious field. The Moravian Church has contributed to the long-term stability of the Miskito because it operates as a secular social institution as well as a religious one.

The Sacred and the Indigenization of Moravian Christianity

The Moravian Church serves as a secular and sacred institution. The secular components of communalism, fraternity, equality and the non-hierarchical and democratic organization found their corresponding counterparts in Miskito social organization and kinship ties. The Miskito indigenized sacred Christian ideals introduced by the Moravian missions, adapting them to their traditional cosmological belief system. Helms noted, "some of the traditional beliefs still exist" in spite of the missionary presence of fifty years (1971: 185).

While the Moravian church is the most conspicuous presence of religious life on the Miskito Coast, traditional spiritual beliefs run parallel to Christian beliefs. The two are not incongruent. Many Miskitos attend Christian services on Sunday mornings but this weekly ritual does not inhibit or interfere with traditional Miskito cosmological beliefs. As the first portion of this chapter depicts, the Miskito landscape is animated by spirits. The spiritual landscape is very much alive. *Sukia* healers prepare herbal remedies and cures. What has sometimes occurred is the indigenization of Christian elements into traditional ceremonial forms. Missionaries

strategically employed the Miskito word, "*Dawan*" without the –ka suffix, meaning owner, to refer to the Christian God. As an earlier vignette depicts, I was instructed to pour the herbal bath across my body in the form of a cross. And Miskito divers hold *cultos*, worship services on lobster dive boats, as they simultaneously try to ward off *liwa mairin siknis* with amulets of *tukta kwayai* and *Agua de Florida*. Christian notions coexist with spiritual beliefs. Ritual in one domain in no way precludes, interferes, or dilutes the sincerity or efficacy of the other. The Miskito embrace a spiritual tradition—Christian, traditional, or both. The Moravian structure provided a familiar institution for the coexistence of the sacred and the secular. The Miskito have embraced the Moravian presence arguably for more secular than sacred purposes. The Miskito have embraced a familiar structure for matters of convenience. The degree to which conversion has occurred may in fact be situational, for the coast is alive with spirits.

Figure 4.7: *Culto* on the *Bocanel*. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on the *Bocanel*, October 4-12, 2010.

Figure 4.8: *Culto* on the *Bocanel*. Photo taken by Elias Esteban on the *Bocanel*, October 4-12, 2010.

Conclusion: The Syncretism of Miskito Spirits and a Protestant God

The Miskito landscape is animated by invisible spirits who inhabit the environment, creating a benevolent and dangerous space. *Liwa mairin siknis* is a curse from the mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of her lobster resources. The prevalence of neurological damage, paralysis and death make comprehensible this indigenous frame of mermaid magic. The mythical and medical landscapes blur into one another. Biopolitical regulations designed to conserve lobster populations coupled with *liwa mairin's* wrath, may encourage divers into the underground transit economy of illicit cocaine traffic.

Chapter Five

Cocaine Lines: Accidental Ethnography and the Ethnography of Silence

Young men in their twenties parade around with pistols in their pants—shoved between their bare skin and belted jeans. They look like kids—except the guns aren't plastic. They're the noise-makers—they shoot their guns off into the air, they rev the engines on their motos or ATVs, and they listen to their music at its highest volume outside of the pulperia as they imbibe beer. These are the young men with money. These are the local narco-traficantes.

Rumors swirl along the Miskito Coast about narco-traficantes and the movement of cocaine from Venezuela and Colombia through the remote and unsurveilled strip of La Mosquitia. These stories circulate and this fact is well known. This exchange has moved into my village and residence as one of the local drug lords has taken up with my "sister."

The localization of this economy became quite pronounced when a group of nine men arrived on Saturday night (2/12/11) at 10 pm. I lay quietly and as anonymously as possible in the dark. I knew they were not from around there as they spoke in Spanish, not Miskito, and queried the name of my village. They were Hondurans but not Miskito—from Olancho and Limon. I wrongly assumed that they were there to rest for a few hours before departing again early in the morning to continue their "business." They didn't depart until 3pm the next day when they donned life-jackets and carried a white rice sack with what looked like weaponry. I could hear the clicking of guns—from their cleaning or loading, on the other side of the wooden plank walls that separated my room from the others. I stayed in my room until 12 noon, skipping my traditional Moravian Sunday church routine. I thought it would become increasingly odd and peculiar to hide away. When I emerged, I described a feigned stomach ache but otherwise, acted cheerful and uninquisitive. One of the traffickers, Alejandro, was friendly and suggested that he

recognized me from sometime before that I cannot recall. I explained my stomach ache so the drug dealer ironically passed a drug to me—Tums. I profusely explained my research interest in lobster divers and the lobster economy. Alejandro offered that he has a farm in Brus Lagoon with some cattle and his comrades are students of veterinary medicine. I expressed how wonderful that work was. Privately I was thinking that a colonos farm in Moskitia, in general, and Brus Laguna, in particular, spelled destruction and clearing of the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve for the clearing of land for air strips or supposedly for the grazing of cattle, which was the public discourse disguising the real purpose of laundering of drug monies. I assume that their presence and business is the trafficking of cocaine. While this does not surprise me, it scared me for the dispersed drug trade has encroached into my space.

From Lobsters to Cocaine

The commodity landscape is shifting from lobsters, locally referred to as 'red gold' to cocaine, 'white gold'. As I detailed in the opening chapter, setting the geographic and historic stage, the Miskito coastal region has always had an external orientation, away from the Spanish interior in the circum-Caribbean, largely with the United States and Britain. As the geographic portrait depicts, Mosquitia, in the Atlantida, is insular. In a globally connected world, Mosquitia is a node in a sea of islands. The Miskito region is one, insular, and two, a waypoint in the flow of persons, commodities, and things. The local economy has survived on commodity export from mahogany and bananas to spiny Caribbean lobsters. The commodity landscape is shifting again from lobsters to cocaine.

As I presented and discussed in an earlier chapter on the lobster commodity, the fisheries managing body of the Honduran government (DIGIPESCA) signed a regional agreement with

the Fisheries Minister of Central America (OSPESCA), *Ordenamiento Regional de la Pesqueria de la Langosta del Caribe (Panuirus argus)*, [Reglamento OSP-02-09], in 2009 to permanently close the lobster dive industry, replacing divers with traps. The 2009 agreement stipulated a closure by 2011. The Honduran government was granted a two-year extension and again, in 2013, expiring in 2015. This regional agreement with other Central American countries will radically transform a 40-year economic history largely dependent upon lobster dive fishing.

The merit in following the thing, to borrow from George Marcus (1995), is to visually illustrate the traffic and flow along the commodity chain in the movement of lobsters and cocaine. By following the thing, I am able to study the material relations between divers on the Miskito Coast of Honduras and Red Lobster patrons in the U.S. and Central American drug traffickers with U.S. consumers, literally, by tracing the movement and flow of lobsters and cocaine from Honduras to the United States, exposing the fetishization of commodities and the social relations between things.

Accidental Ethnography and the Ethnography of Silence

Early on while pointing to the night sky referring to the sound of the passing airplane, Juan uttered, "*drogas*." The fact that this coastal area is a corridor for drug trafficking came as no surprise. When I began fieldwork in 2003, I heard rumors that bales of cocaine would end up beached on the coastal sand, evidence tossed aboard from smuggling ships before the authorities could intercept them, so I was not moved by conversations of cocaine traffic.

As ethnographers, we enter the field with some orientation—of previous experience, having read the works of others, with anthropological theory swimming in our heads, and of

course, our own subjectivity. While I was interested in lobster diving and the tales of *Liwa Mairin*, I certainly did not hone in on those topics at the exclusion of others.

Most people freely spoke of the drug trade. Because I was familiar with this history, I didn't think the stories were relatively new even though I never dared ask a single question about it. Through observation and listening—the ethnography of silence, I incrementally uncovered daily rhythms, without probing, leading questions.

Almost daily, I walked the dirt pathways connecting my stretch of villages from Cocobila to Kuri. I noticed the houses with young men lingering about, with higher levels of noise from humming generators, revving vehicles, and music or TV emanating from their satellite dishes. I don't know when the balance shifted and I began to more fully understand that an active drug economy was at work rather than a passive beach where a few bales of cocaine would wash ashore. There was no one clear moment. What had changed in the intervening seven years were the change in scale and the dramatic rise in intensity.

This realization helped me to contextualize a couple of early incidents for which I really had no register to evaluate them. I was surprised when in 2010 a little girl came to Doña Ana to recharge her family's cellular minutes and paid in United States dollars. I had never seen U.S. currency on this rural coast before. My suspicions were aroused as I suspected that these dirty dollars were part of the drug scheme. This also contextualized an informant connection during fieldwork in 2008 with Pastor Crispin. I had envisioned that he would be a strategic alliance since he was a pastor of the Moravian church in the community of Belén. When I returned to ally with him in 2010, I heard that he was imprisoned for drug smuggling, apparently hidden inside his bible.

Knowledge accumulates in little bits. I had inclinations and partial understandings. While most people freely spoke of the drug trade, my work became an ethnography of silence and secrets. This was not because people wouldn't talk but because initially I didn't have the register to pursue that thread, nor would I dare utter the language. I did not want anyone, especially outsiders, to assume that I could possibly be affiliated with the U.S. Government and Drug Enforcement Agency (D.E.A.). While I had trust in the members of my community, I was not certain that outsiders would assume or believe that I was just an anthropologist interested in lobsters.

The balance tipped and the vague chatter of drug trafficking moved from the background to center stage. Context became subject. It was unavoidable if I was truly to pay attention to and document what was occurring on the coast. This sentiment parallels the ethnographic subjectivity that Shaylih Muehlmann (2014) experienced when she found herself on the edges and fringes of the "war on drugs" in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. As depicted in Where the River Ends, Muehlmann (2013) set off to study the transnational water conflict and the drying up of the Colorado River among the Cucapá, a Native American group in Baja California. In turn, she became a student of the narco-culture of crystal methamphetamine because the disposed Cucapá were looped into the drug trade as a form of everyday existence (2014). Like her, I found myself in the middle of something, with a particular, first-hand knowledge of something that I neither wanted nor chose. I stumbled upon this discovery of a shifting commodity landscape in a form of accidental ethnography.

The intrusion of those outside *narco-traficantes* into the sanctuary of my fieldsite, where I literally laid my head, powerfully signaled to me that I was in the midst of something serious. While they had trespassed into my physical space, they had also territorialized my psyche,

making it more challenging to remain calm and focused and sleep uninterrupted through the night. That moment, chronicled in the opening vignette of this chapter, became a pivotal turning point in my research and ultimately led to my early departure in March as opposed to June 2011, when I had planned on documenting the waxes and wanes of the lobster economy during both the active months and the moratorium on lobster fishing. No longer was this drug trade a rumored background with passive cocaine bales washing upon the shore: it literally became a very real (and scary) part of my world. In this remote corridor with no police or military presence, I felt very alone and very far away. I was terribly conflicted in my decision to leave, questioning and wondering if it was premature or over-reactive. It is only in retrospect that I have been able to contextualize those early allusions to cocaine and situate them in a broader movement of transnational cocaine traffic.

Anthropology of Drugs

The anthropology of drugs ranges from ethnographies of coca chewers in the Andes for ritual and religious purposes (Taussig 2004) to the social history of stimulants and colonialism, ranging from coffee, tea, and sugar (Mintz 1985; Schivelbusch 1993); coca in the production of *Coca-Cola* (Gootenberg 2006), alcohol and prohibition, and studies of psychoactive substances and prescription drugs. Goodman et al (1995) provide a culture history, which serves as a starting ground to situate an anthropology of drugs, Klein (1993) provides a culture history of tobacco, and Gootenberg (2006) historicizes the Latin American export of the coca plant, principally for the production of *Coca-Cola*. McCoy (1991), a historian, examine the politics of heroin and the complicity of the CIA in the drug trade in Southeast Asia, and Zhou (1999), an anthropologist, documents the anti-drug crusades in China, specifically the Opium Wars and

Chinese nationalism. There is a corpus of ethnographic work on users, with examples ranging from Page and Singer's 2010 account of drug users and their worlds and an account by Agar dating back to 1973 on urban heroin addicts. While a literature critically examining the culture history of drugs has existed over the last century, the work on the ethnography of drugs (Marshall 1979), specifically the ethnography of cocaine, includes a political economy of the "white gold rush" in Peru (Morales 1989) and crack and powder cocaine traffic and use (Bourgois 1996; Taussig 2004), but there is relatively little ethnographic study of the transnational cocaine trade. This accidental cocaine ethnography is a contribution to that literature.

The Cocaine Commodity Chain

"…with the premium in price guaranteed by its prohibition, cocaine has taken its place among the most valuable single commodity chains in world history" (Gootenberg 2006: 345-346). 95% of the cocaine, which is smuggled into the U.S. is sourced in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru (Morales 1989) to first feed the elite tastes of the affluent and middle classes as the "champagne" of drugs, and secondly, inner-city users who use it in its adulterated form of crack cocaine (Wilson and Zambrano 1994). The cocaine commodity chain begins in the Andean region of Bolivia and Peru where it is cultivated, as it has been for thousands of years, by *campesinos* and processed into its alkaloid form (with the addition of kerosene and sulfuric acid), a coca paste, *pasta basica de cocaína* (PBC*).* It is moved to laboratories dispersed across Colombia where it is refined with ether, acetone, and methanol into powder cocaine hydrochloride. This stage of commodity production is capital-intensive with the cost of chemicals and laboratory equipment (Morales 1989). While ether and acetone are controlled

substances, the DEA reports that 70% of acetone used in cocaine processing hails from U.S. companies and 98% of the ether entering Colombia is used for cocaine processing (Wilson and Zambrano 1994). Beginning in the 1980s, Colombia dominated the transport and export of processed cocaine into the United States with a capital-intensive fleet of airplanes and navigation equipment. The National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee (NNICC) reported in 1991 that Colombian organizations dominated the production and transportation of 75-80% of the cocaine entering the United States (Wilson and Zambrano 1994). The Medellín faction of the Colombian cartels, represented by Pablo Escobar, dominated 80% of the U.S. cocaine drugscape trafficking through the Caribbean into Florida's Dade County where it is distributed along internal networks and consumed (Gootenberg 2012). Morales (1989:93) estimates that the total cost of production for one kilogram of pure cocaine is $5,000 USD where New York wholesale estimates price a 50% pure kilo at $35,000 and a retail value of $200,000. While consumption and profits remain in the United States, the U.S. government's tactic of increasing militarization to fight this 'war on drugs' as reflected in the Plan Colombia, discussed more fully later is this chapter, militarized an external and violent anti-drug war thus fueling the economy deeper underground where it nimbly shifted, first to the Cali cartel/region of Colombia and then overland through Central America, reportedly facilitated by the Honduran drug lord, Juan Matta Ballesteros, into northern Mexico (Gootenberg 2008).

In 1989, one-third of cocaine entered the U.S. market through Mexico; by 1992, half of the trade passed through Mexico and by the late 1990s, 75-85% came through Mexico. As of 2012, the UN estimates that 90% of U.S. cocaine passes through Mexico (Gootenber 2012). The Sinaloa cartel dominated Mexican cocaine traffic early on until mounting pressures forced the dissemination to the Juárez cartel, represented by the infamous "El Chapo" Guzman who has

since escaped Mexican prison twice. With increased pressure on the Juárez cartel, the Gulf cartel ironically recruited the 'Zetas,' a paramilitary, anti-drug outfit originally trained by the U.S. School of the Americas (Gootenberg 2008, 2012). Historian Paul Gootenberg chronicles the repetitive "blowback" of U.S. interdiction and eradication efforts such as the Plan Colombia only fuel the perpetuation and intensification of the illicit cocaine trade. Given the repetitive history of blowbacks, Gootenberg, writing in 2012, anticipated the geographic shift towards weak states such as Honduras.

Cocaine in Honduras

Forty-two percent of all cocaine headed to the U.S. and 90 percent of all cocaine flights pass through Honduras according to the State Department (NPR, Honduras Claims Unwanted Title of World's Murder Capital, June 12, 2013) whereas the New York Times (7/13/14) claims that 79% of cocaine smuggling flights pass through Honduras. 84% of all U.S.-bound cocaine passes through Central America, according to the Joint Task Force Bravo, a US military installation in Comayagua, Honduras as of July 2012. More than half of all cocaine seizures in Central America occur in El Salvador or Honduras while the numbers for Honduras have more than tripled between 2010 and 2011 (UNODC). In terms of sheer amounts, best calculations estimate that several hundred tons of cocaine passed through Honduras in 2010, of which less than 10% was seized by the authorities (Bosworth 2011). While Mosquitia is rural and remote, it is globally connected in the commodity movement of cocaine. The "ungoverned spaces" of Moskitia provide the ideal stop-over and way-station in the movement of cocaine from Venezuela and Colombia. From an informant in 2010, I learned that there are apparently 150 landing strips, or "*narcopistas*," in the jungle of the Honduran Moskitia. The imprint of the

Honduran state is hardly felt in terms of infrastructure, let alone surveillance. While the cocaine literature focuses on Colombia, largely ignoring Venezuela, informants spoke of Venezuelan planes that land where the cargo transitions to an overland trade through Mexico or sometimes by sea to Guatemala and Mexico. The evidence, such as a plane, is burned, and any residue is buried in the sea to eliminate any trace of the trade.

Figure 5.1 Cocaine routes from Colombia and Venezuela through Honduras, Central America and Mexico
Source: NPR, STRATFOR, Credit: Stephanie d'Otreppe/NPR

More specific cocaine trafficking routes within Honduras

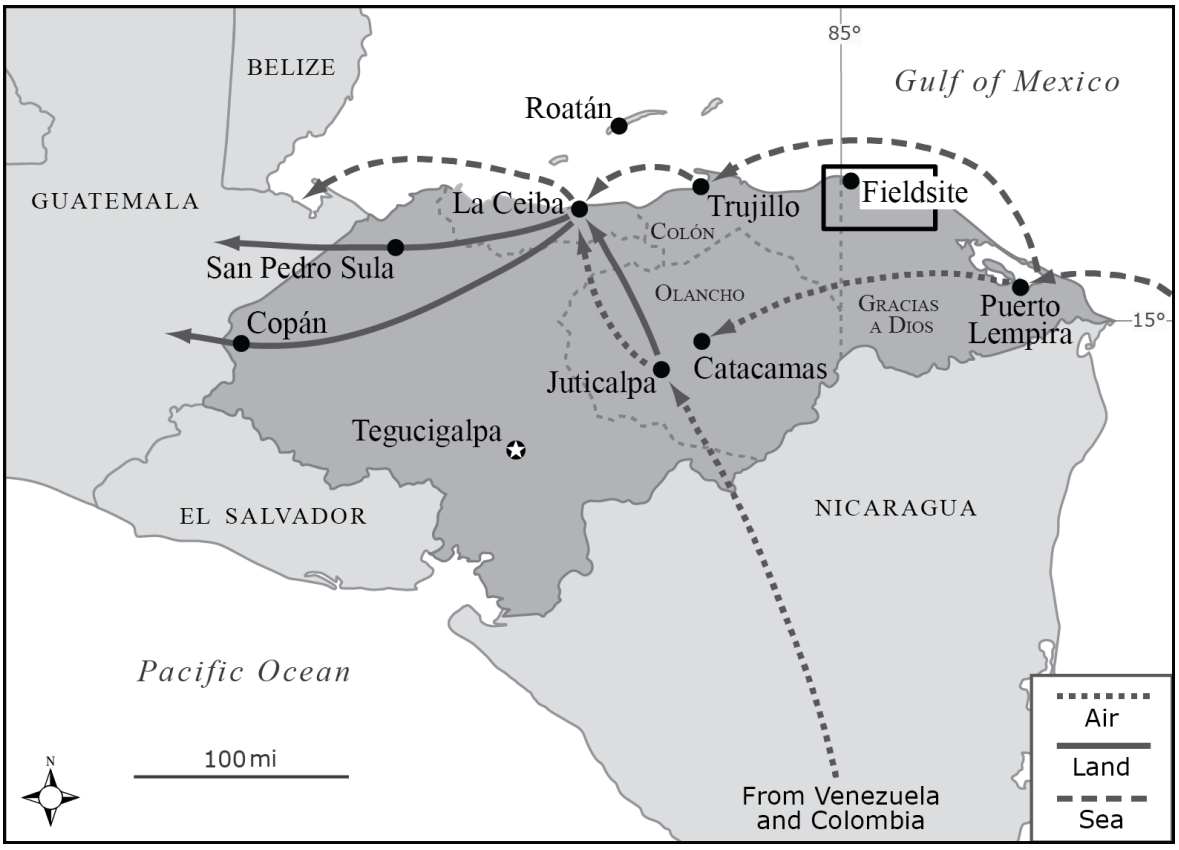


Figure 5.2: Cocaine trafficking routes in Honduras. Map by Mark Livengood. Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Figure 5.3: Flow of Cocaine through Honduras
Source: Insight Crime, 2011

To illustrate this reality, I provide a transcription of a conversation with an informant about unloading a Colombian plane in the middle of the night and transferring the goods to sea.

While I was eating, Jimmy came in to wash the dishes. He lamented that he missed a (big) trip last night. He could have made 13,000 Lemps. He explained that planes come from Columbia carrying drugs. Local workers are paid to light a landing strip as the planes fly in the night. Then, they are paid to unload the plane and load speedboats with 2 motors, up to 600 horsepower. Apparently, a plane came in the night, where I don't know exactly and he missed it. He said that local families are each paid $150-200 USD to keep their mouths shut on the Belén airstrip.

Yesterday afternoon, Jery was gone, busy running errands. When I asked where he was last night, Nanci said that he was in Brus. Jimmy had said that the plane landed in Brus but I can't be sure. Jery came back in the middle of the night. Jimmy referred to Jery as a "big man,"

referencing his size but also his gold chain and pistol. Yesterday, while I was sitting with Estella, I saw Jimmy meeting and conversing with Eduardo's son, in the open space near the airport terminal. It appeared as if some business was going down and now that Jimmy has told me all of this, I suspect what they were talking about and who is involved. This is part of the ethnography of secrets that I put together through observation and the corroboration of other informants' testimony.

Ricardo explained that the drug traffic in Belén is a recent development since around 2008. He said that it has existed on the coast for longer (sometime between 2000-2005) though the proximity to Belén is new. He also explained that there is a new airstrip on the other side of Laguna Ibans where the forest was downed for drug cartels. He clarified that the other side of the lagoon in uninhabited so authorities were able to shoot down a supposed drug plane. He furthered that this could not happen on this side, in Belén, as it is populated. He explained that there are four different narco-planes that land on the Belén airstrip. Rosa said that they usually fly at night though it is rare, like this past plane, that they fly during the day.

Figure 5.4: This is the plane that Rosa was referring to. Locals talked of a downed plane or burning of drug trafficking evidence.

Violence and the Everyday Economy of Survival

Much of the Mosquitia region is encapsulated in a UNESCO World Heritage Biosphere Reserve. This designation was established in 1982 and covers over eight thousand kilometers of a continuous tract of tropical rainforest in order to preserve intact resources against foreign extraction and to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area. While the Miskito are permitted to use and work the land as part of the cultural zone designation, they do not have legal land title (Herlihy 1996). Under the UNESCO World Heritage designation, the state reserves this holding, in theory, but in reality, is quite ineffective, without a presence to surveil and monitor the activities within the biosphere. Geographer David Dodds demonstrated in *Lobster in the Rainforest* (1998), that the lobster industry has extracted diminishing resources from the sea, the industry has alleviated pressure on land resources, minimizing destruction by local use, providing local sustenance and helping to preserve the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve. While the extractive lobster industry has helped to preserve the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve by minimizing destruction by local use, the Miskito are squeezed, entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the lobster dive industry, by being recruited into the local drug economy or by being forcibly displaced from their natal and patrimonial tracts by *ladinos/colonos* for the traffic of cocaine.

These non-indigenous Hondurans and foreign others are illegally buying up or using force to displace the indigenous Miskito from their natal tracts in order to traffic cocaine through this corridor, which is an incursion onto traditional Miskito land tenure. These outsiders are speculated to be from Olancho and Colon (*colonos*) and possibly part of the oligarchic network of the 13 elite families that basically run Honduras. While many of the Miskito are littoral, many maintain agricultural plots upriver along the Río Plátano. The land speculated for cocaine traffic

exists on the other side of Brus Lagoon, as Ricardo described, where the rainforest can be cleared for the landing of plans or the guise of cattle ranching. The language of displacement is often non-verbal, as the intimidating presence of an armed trafficker is enough to convey the message. The guise for cocaine traffickers is that they buy up and/or use force to displace the indigenous Miskito from their natal tracts to clear rainforest and raise cattle. The language of cattle ranching was often used as a code and cover for the illicit trade of cocaine. Dirty money is laundered through the business of cattle ranching where it is cleaned and re-circulated.

Deep-water lobster diving certainly cast its toll on the male Miskito body through repetitive, deep water dives and the grave impacts of decompression sickness, neurological damage, and death. The costs of a permanently closed dive industry equal economic destitution, in terms of a cash economy. In the vacuum of economic opportunity, cocaine traffic emerges as one viable economic alternative. Severely incapacitated divers are prohibited from diving and trafficking because of the limitations to their bodies. Many injured divers continue to dive, threatening further injury, but can also participate in the drug economy. Further, the influx of this new drug economy allows for the opening up of a historically gendered economy and the division of labor and the casualization of the labor force. The economy is no longer tied to the specialization of male divers (and the destruction to their bodies) but can be realized across gendered and age-lines. Women and children can participate by lighting the airstrip, unloading the cargo, and providing food and sanctuary to traffickers on a northward journey.

Anthropologist Mary Helms noted the boom and bust cycles of what she termed a "purchase society," or external dependence as a result of market exchange, among the Miskito of Asang, Nicaragua during her fieldwork in the 1960s. While the local economy was largely

sustained through subsistence activities, the external economy included chicle, lumbering and mining. She witnessed these boom and bust cycles as a result of a purchasing proclivity and the ebbs and flows in the economy as a result of cash and cash dependence. In my initial visit to the Miskito Coast in 2003, I remarked in my fieldnotes that the conspicuous disposal of 2-Liter Coke bottles and plastic wrappers appeared as a conspicuous display of *lala*, or wealth. These contemporary boom and bust cycles are apparent during the 8-month open lobster dive season amongst households with able-bodied male laborers. Even though divers are the principal earners of cash, they were often denigrated for their work and I heard quips often associating them with drug abuse. I did not witness abuse or addiction but experienced how divers would sometimes imbibe part of their *advans* before they left the following day for their two-week journey at sea or would loudly celebrate in an inebriated state outside of a makeshift bodega or local shop upon successful return of a dive trip. This kind of stratification was evident between certain families who had access to lobster diving earnings but social and economic stratification has more clearly emerged in the auditory landscape of generators, motos, and music as a result of the drug trade, often a result of sheer geography such as houses lining the airstrip. Diving households accrued money because of the work of able-bodied men; drug households turn a profit by helping unload cargo from the airstrip in front of their homes or simply, by being paid to keep their mouths shut. Pastor Crispin's house was one that lined the Belén airstrip.

While the regulatory significance of lobster as licit on the global market contrasts with the illicit commodity of cocaine, both continue to feed the elite fantasies of the global North. And while the politics of the "war on drugs" is played out in the North, either commodity provides economic sustenance and nourishment to the Miskito in the form of economic livelihood.

The distinction between the licit and illicit is a matter of law. But the boundary between the two is often fuzzy and blurred. The arbitrary division between the two is a matter of degree, not of kind. The same neoliberal economic principles that drive a legal operation are the same as those that sustain the illegal. The tenuous boundary between these two spheres is evidenced in the work of Carolyn Nordstrom (2007) and her conflation of the two with the use of the singular term il/legal. She presents the spectrum of transgressions from a war orphan peddling smuggled Marlboros on the streets of Angola, to the interchange of il/legal goods (including human smuggling) in global ports where the volume of merchandise far exceeds the ability to inventory, monitor and oversee, and the proliferation of counterfeit pharmaceuticals that are easily sold, exchanged, and consumed on the global market.

Participation in one economy over the other, or both, is not merely a matter of individual choice but often reflects the structural forces of broader, transnational socio-economic trends and tastes. Miskito divers conflate the illegal and legal economies by plucking undersized and berried (pregnant) lobsters from rock outcroppings along with spearing the legally designated "endangered" sea turtle. In terms of cocaine traffic, it may be easier to pinpoint a local *narcotraficante* caught in the exchange of cocaine in the war on drugs than unravel the political economic history of commodity extraction and U.S. interventionism in Central American politics. The moralizing discourse associated with an illicit substance, such as cocaine, casts its producers and handlers in terms of evil others and the underside of society as Philippe Bourgois (1996) found among Primo and his Puerto Ricans *compadres* in El Barrio who peddled crack. Primo found more ease and comfort by selling crack than in going legit. The everyday interchange between the legal and illegal is fluid. As Shaylih Muehlmann (2014) found among *narcotraficantes* in the fictional town of Santa Ana, somewhere in the borderlands between the

U.S. and Mexico, trafficking is just another everyday form of economic livelihood, where a poor, Miskito mother is looking for a way to feed her hungry child. There is little to a moral evaluation; it is principally one of economics. And as regulations squeeze the 40-year industry of lobster diving, cocaine traffic provides one alternative to fill the vacuum as a shadow economy and a way to make a living.

This historical phenomenon echoes Michael Taussig's (2004) exhibit of the world of cocaine production among gold miners in the rainforest of Colombia's Pacific Coast and the state's complicity in it—now and in its mimesis of the 400 year history of exploitation of Afro-Colombians mining and cooking the country's wealth. With Honduras' history of commodity export, cocaine is the most recent incarnation of economic survival among an indigenous group that has largely been forgotten by the state.

The War on Drugs

Honduras has the infamous title of murder capital of the world—with an average of 90 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. This statistic refers to places that are easily countable—urban centers such as Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula and are attributed to increased drug traffic, organized crime and corruption. The country is plagued by extrajudicial killings, human rights abuses and police corruption. In addition to police corruption, there is a lack of investigation, prosecution, and justice. In response to police corruption, there is increased militarization of the streets as the military has been granted increased power and presence in civilian policing under Operation Lightning.

Figure 5.5: The militarization of the "War on Drugs." Source: Sterbenz, Business Insider, 2014

The increased militarization of the 'war on drugs' has exacerbated the rise in violent crime. The "war on drugs" is externalized outside of the US on the suppliers while the economic largesse accrued in the illicit trade stays within US borders.

The U.S. War on Drugs officially dates back to 1971 when President Nixon referred to drug abuse as "public enemy number one." I remember the moralizing plea of the "Say No to Drugs" campaign among children in the 1980s. While the Drug Policy Alliance estimates that the United States spends $51 billion dollars annually on the war on drugs, the self-appointed Global Commission on Drug Policy announced in 2011 that the "war on drugs has failed." As part of U.S. foreign policy to stave and interdict the drug trade, the U.S. has increasingly engaged in military operations. Plan Colombia, an initiative that dates back to 1999, provided military aid, training, and equipment to Colombia to combat left-wing guerilla groups, such as FARC, for their involvement in drug trafficking. Colombian military received counter-insurgency training from U.S. military outfits, including the infamous School of the Americas. Plan Colombia set the precedent for President Bush's Merida Initiative, a three-year "security cooperation" between the U.S., Mexico and countries of Central America from 2008-2010 for military training to combat drug trafficking and transnational crime.

I took a photograph of the front page of the Honduran newspaper, *La Prensa*, on the 19th of October, 2010. I'm not sure what about the headline or article that captured me at the time for I was not focused on *narcotráfico* and I was not familiar with the U.S. interdiction strategy of Plan Colombia. This early research helped me to contextualize a problem that I didn't even understand was occurring at the scale at which it was occurring.

Figure 5.6 Honduras calls for a "Plan Colombia." *La Prensa*, Honduran newspaper out of San Pedro Sula, 19 October 2010

Figure 5.7: *La Prensa*, Honduran newspaper out of San Pedro Sula, 19 October 2010

While on a flight back to my field site, through Puerto Lempira, I read a story in the paper that day about narcotraficking in Moskitia where the DEA, together with Honduran military and police, confiscated 500 kilos of cocaine on October 7, 2010. In the field/runway in Puerto Lempira, we were greeted by military and police to check our identity. My Honduran-

issued visa had expired and I was nowhere close to an immigration office. At the time I wondered if this was a "stepping up" of enforcement in light of this news story. At the time I didn't think much of it. It was only in retrospect when I was stringing together these tidbits of occurrences and information that I began to understand the composite whole.

Again, in 2010, as I was interviewing Abelino about his most recent lobster trip, two helicopters flew overhead and one eventually landed on the beach in Cocobila.

Figure 5.8: United States Army helicopter on Cocobilia beach, La Moskitia, 2010.

The crew, dressed in fatigues and combat boots, disembarked from the craft and scoured a short stretch of the sand as if they were looking for something in particular. A bale of cocaine, perhaps? The helicopter was there for only a few minutes. As it flew away, I read "United States Army" inscribed on its side and all of the observers flooded the spot where the helicopter had landed under the suggestion that the personnel had left a message inscribed in the sand. They had

not. I'm unsure if the personnel were American or Honduran. As I continued to follow these developments as reported by news sources in the papers, and as I recount below, the interchange of American and/or Honduran agents—under Plan Colombia or Afghanistan-inspired FAST (Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Team) are inserted as 'responsible' or 'advisory,' not as soldiers, to meet the public outcry generated from these policy activities. These fuzzy distinctions make some sectors of the American public leery about the precise role of the DEA in military operations in unofficial and undeclared war zones and echoes of the 1980s and U.S. support of covert military operations and aid to the Contras. Gary Webb's Dark Alliance (1998) exposed how the CIA funneled crack cocaine into major U.S. cities in the 1990s to fund the Nicaraguan Contras, creating a crack epidemic in the U.S. as documented in the 2014 film, *Kill the Messenger*. The legacy of AK-47s from the U.S.-funded Contras dot the Honduran and Nicaraguan portions of the Miskito Coast. Trevor Paglen (2009) discloses the "dark geography of the Pentagon's secret world," in the "blank spots on the map" in Honduras that were used as a training and staging ground by the Pentagon and CIA for the counter-insurgency efforts against Nicaragua in an undeclared, secret war. Many Miskitos from Nicaragua and Honduras were conscripted into that war and the vast, rural Miskito territory spanning Honduras and Nicaragua was used as a staging ground for intervention. It is those arms that are now fueling the drug trade.

Many human rights defenders argue that the increasing militarization of the 'war on drugs' is correlated with the dramatic rise in violent crime. President Obama renewed the Merida Initiative and, in 2011, created the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), which has provided police institutions with surveillance technology and wire-tapping capabilities. In 2011-2012, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sent in its Foreign-

deployed Advisory Support Team (FAST), an outfit modeled after a military style used in Afghanistan, to Honduras to train local counter-narcotic police units and plan drug interdictions in Moskitia. From news sources accessed in the U.S. including the New York Times and Honduran newspaper, *La Tribuna*, on May 11, 2012 a drug interdiction by the Honduran police and DEA FAST mistakenly fired onto four local, indigenous people fishing from a canoe in the little town of Ahuas, in the rural part of Moskitia. The authorities claimed to have mistakenly fired onto a canoe with four indigenous Miskito fishing from it. They claim that they had been pursuing a boat with contraband and mistakenly fired upon the one with indigenous fishermen in it. This account raises further speculation as DEA agents were associated with military firing and gives credence for the increasing militarization of the war on drugs.

In August of 2013, the Honduran government created the Military Police for Public Order to counteract gang activity. Also, in 2013, Honduras created an elite police unit, the Intelligence Troop and Special Security Group, TIGRES in Spanish. TIGRES along with the military police unit have been trained in military combat tactics from the United States. Military involvement in policing duties had been prohibited under the Honduran Constitution but amended in January 2014 to allow for this military police force.

While there are no indicators that capture the statistical experience in La Mosquitia, there is a growing sense of insecurity. The area is a corridor, a way-station in the movement of outside people and things. To give a sense of how close the violence encroached upon my space, I heard that Jery's father was murdered along the routine route that I and others traveled between the coast and La Ceiba over a drug dispute. While the statistics and figures capture the experience of Honduras as a whole, the drug economy on the Miskito Coast became localized.

The Localization of the Drug Economy

The revving of motorcycle/4x4 engines and the pops from pistols fired into the air have become more frequent noises in the soundscape of croaking frogs and buzzing insects. For the longest time I thought that those "pops" and "cracks" that went off in the evenings were firecrackers. I came to learn that they are the pops of pistols shot off into the air. I wondered: "Do they know of the law of gravity—for what goes up must come down?"

The auditory landscape has changed in the intervening years of fieldwork, from 2003 to 2010. As I walked through Buenos Aires and bumped into Orlinda, a good source of information, I asked her what was new and she said that while I was gone, cocaine was dropped on the beach and her neighbors in Buenos Aires are getting rich. She pointed to the increase in *plantas* and *pulperias* (shops) as evidence of the influx of drug monies.

The hum of generators pierces the Miskito landscape, powering freezers in the *pulperias,* cell phone chargers, and satellite dishes. These, coupled with the revving of motorcycle and 4x4 engines, are the sounds and evidence of a cocaine economy. It's quite obvious when on treks from village to village where the power and money lies. Social stratification is evident in the proliferation of things.

The locals keep tabs on what's going on and who has what. Envy, entitlement, and equity were all communicated to me as the perceived wealthy outsider with the hopes that I would hear the inequity in their plea and help them out. Some literally nodded or gestured in the direction of the Belén landing strip as evidence of the inequitable distribution of funds while others more publicly chastised a local outfit of a national NGO based upon the appearance of inequities unrelated to drug trafficking. These jealous perceptions comprise much of the gossip that is circulated on the coast and animates much of the spiritual landscape.

At first, I didn't recognize the meaning behind these social and spatial pockets. It is rather upon reflection and the literal moving in of a local drug lord with my "sister," who became became my cuñado, brother-in-law, when I began to notice his power.

In previous fieldwork visits, Nanci had had a boyfriend, Jorge. When I asked Doña Ana about Jorge, she denigrated him, explaining the he and Nanci had broken up because he was involved in the drug trade.

I vaguely knew of Jery. He lived in Buenos Aires and I would see him and his young, male friends as I passed through on my way to Kuri. His mother was a *sacabuzo*, organizing divers for trips out to sea. Jery was married with a couple of children. Increasingly, he began to hang out at our house, coming around with gifts of soda and cookies, until one day when Doña Ana referred to him as my cuñado and shortly thereafter, he moved in. It was when his social space began to more frequently overlap with mine that I began to deduce who he was and what he did. He packed a gun into his jeans waist, wore a gold chain, and drove a motorcycle or ATV. His comrades came around and the audible noise level increased with music, engines, and gunshots. He moved in and assumed Doña Ana's bedroom. This transgression is a shocking violation of the respect for elders, for a son-in-law to take over his mother-in-law's bedroom, especially in a matrilocal society. The negotiations surrounding the move were kept secret from me as I never asked Doña Ana about this transgression. I wonder if his presence was enough to intimidate, and thereby communicate, to Doña Ana, just as the traffickers displace the Miskito from their natal patrimony for the movement of cocaine. Jery kept his distance from me and I appeared amicable and asked few questions.

The opening vignette captures the moment when his trafficking network literally infringed upon my sense of space and safety. The drug traffickers had moved in and it was at that

moment when my relationship to my fieldwork subject changed. It was not just some rumored thing that cast an existence on the coast; rather it became a very real (and scary) part of my world. I had felt that the local Miskitos who knew me would keep me safe. I did not have that assurance among outsiders who questioned my identity and could easily eradicate me. As there is little police presence, I felt very alone and very far away. I was self-conscious about talking on my cell phone at the house and sharing the evening's events with my fiancé back in the United States, lest someone could understand English. I wandered off towards the beach for some privacy but worried, too, when the traffickers passed by on their motos for provisions in Cocobilia, that they might find my phone talking suspicious, as if perhaps I could be reporting their activity to DEA agents in the US. I continued to hang around my fieldsite for a few days as I quietly and internally struggled to make sense of that incident and to how I was going to proceed. In line with the ethnography of silence, I continued to carry on with my daily life with no mention of or inquiry into my overnight guests as I wracked my brain, strategizing about what I should do. Immediately, I thought I could move to a different home, with a couple of options in mind, and then doubted that a move might draw attention to the fact that I was uncomfortable and hence, aware of their activities. Fortunately, I was soon to be meeting a friend, traveling from the United States, so I retreated to the cities to get some perspective as to how I should proceed. Her visit was a welcome distraction as we travelled a bit around the country and evaluated this juncture in my fieldwork. With access to the internet in these more urban hubs, I also used the time to update and seek counsel from my committee. The responses were mixed: the majority understood and sympathized with my plight and the very real danger apparent in my fieldsite; one even suggested that I return and write up what I have with the possible understanding that I could return to fill in the gaps. Yet, my principal advisor at the time

discounted the incident and undertones, suggesting that I forge on for more rich detail to add to the corpus of the anthropology of drugs and violence. I had planned on documenting a full cycle of the lobster economy. While I had nine months of research and ethnographic data from intermittent experiences over the past eight years, I was terribly conflicted and agonized over my decision to leave. Ultimately, the impact on my psyche, that I could not shake this very real threat, overshadowed my perspective and experience, leading me to prematurely end my fieldwork and work from what I had collected.

Even though unpredictability and flexibility are supposed to be a part of the ethnographic protocol, this incident was not a part of my "plan." I was angry that these drug traffickers had infringed onto "my" space. I was not done. I was not ready to leave. And I had not tied up all of the loose ends with a pretty bow. My departure felt like a betrayal—to myself in terms of what I had outlined and to my friends, neighbors and informants. My absence would be noticeable just as much as I stood out in that first service at the Moravian church where the little kids were giggling from the wooden row behind me and daringly touching the texture of my hair and white skin. I think that most people assumed that my departure was a temporary one and I thought that, too. That was four years ago. The words of my former advisor who counseled about the non-threats of my fieldsite from his armchair, loomed large for quite some time, casting doubt on my dedication to my project and decision to leave. I was haunted, and remain haunted, that my geographic mobility enabled me to flee a drug corridor. The same cannot be said of my friends who I left behind, whose social and economic lives are entangled in a warzone—in the politics of lobster diving regulations and the economics of cocaine trafficking.

I have continued to follow the developments of the drug trade and cocaine commodity chain from the United States. In some ways, I feel that the stories that make their way into the

news, which only represents a small sliver of occurrences in Honduras, on the coast, and in Central America, have vindicated and validated my experience and warranted that early intuition in my fieldsite with Jery and the intrusion of his *narcotraficantes*.

In April 2015, I learned that my sister, Nanci, and her husband, Jery, were murdered in a massacre in Moskitia in August 2013, part of a dispute between two armed, rival, criminal gangs over 700 kilos of cocaine. Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world and the mothers and children who were seeking asylum at the Texas border last summer were escaping something, a very real threat. These stories have made their way into the U.S. along with lobster tails and bales of cocaine, carried on the backs of local *transportistas* across neoliberal, transnational gangscapes.

Neoliberal Securityscapes and Transnational Violence

The global movement of the transnational commodity of cocaine, from Colombia and Venezuela to its end point in the United States, requires that it transit through the rural waypoint of Moskitia, a node in a sea of islands, on its trajectory northward. To usher the movement of this illicit commodity, transnational criminal organizations intersect with local Honduran gangs. In the 1980s and 1990s, Colombian organizations such as Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel or the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC) exerted influence in Honduras even if the ultimate power resided with Honduran *transportistas*. With a shifting geographic configuration due to mounting pressures, the Mexican influence on Honduran trafficking routes has superseded the Colombian organizations through the Sinaloa Cartel and the Zetas (Bosworth 2011). While local Hondurans remain in control of trafficking within Honduras, the overarching management, coordination and reach of the

exchange is believed to be Mexican. This is not to underestimate the power of local Honduran *transportistas* in the internal movement of the commodity from the south to the north of Honduras.

The network of Honduran gangs, or *maras*, includes about 36,000 gang members according to a 2005 estimate by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Up to 100 *maras* are said to exist within Honduras, although the two predominant groups are rivals and the transnational extensions of the La Mara Salvatrucha, also known as MS-13, and the 18th Street Gang, known as Mara-18 in Central America. Elana Zilberg (2011) chronicles another emergence in the political-economic history between the United States and Latin America in the "transnational gang crisis" and the violence that is reproduced, rather than repressed, in U.S. security and immigration law and the hardening of "neoliberal securityscapes." Zilberg traces gang members from La Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) back to Central America. The gang, MS-13, developed among young Salvadorans whose parents brought them to the U.S. as children to escape civil war during the Reagan years yet became incarcerated in the 1980s in the impoverished Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles. The gang became transnationalized when the inmates were forcibly repatriated back to their home countries of Honduras and El Salvador. Deported immigrants who are "fast-tracked," in the words of Zilberg, and zero-tolerance strategies are informed by U.S. security and immigration policies. But what Zilberg uncovers is that the very policies that are purportedly designed to deport gang violence are the very ones that reproduce transnational violence.

Figure 5.9: La Mara Salvatrucha, MS-13, gang member. Early on MS-13, gang members often cover their bodies and faces with tattoos to signal barrio affiliation but this trend has reversed, with the removal of tattoos and the blending in with invisibility. Source: Sterbenz, Business Insider, 2014

While Zilberg focuses on the movement of MS-13, the transnational repatriation of criminals also occurred among gang members of Mara-18. It began as a Mexican gang in the district of 18th and Union in L.A. but expanded its membership to become multiracial and multiethnic. It is the largest criminal gang in L.A. with tens of thousands of members. As inmates were deported back to their home countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, Mara-18 has become the most violent transnational criminal organization in Central America. These security and immigration policies reflect the uneven political-economic flows between Central America and the United States, what Zilberg refers to as “neoliberal securityscapes” and the combustion that fuels transnational violence.

Jery and his local Miskito comrades served as coastal contacts and *transportistas* for the outside and trans-local drug traffickers—from neighboring Honduran states or outside of Honduras all together. There is a certain autonomy and localization of the trafficking network. The precise configuration is unclear to me, whether Jery was involved in a local subsidiary of a transnational gang network or criminal organization. But it is clear that Jery and his comrades were local contacts and agents in the transnational exchange of cocaine. What will be interesting to unravel is the network and extension of the Honduran gang network and the incorporation of indigenous Miskito or the indigenization of gangs, especially with the impending permanent closure of the lobster diving industry. Droves of women and children refugees have been fleeing the violence in Honduras. Most of these are assumed in news stories to be mestizo, but they may include indigenous Miskito. Nobody's counting. This is another blank spot on the ethnographic map.

Goods, Not People

The policy regulations that dictate a permanent closure of a 40-year lobster dive industry may in fact be fueling the proliferation of an illicit drug economy in the traffic of cocaine as one economic alternative. I outline the political economic history of commodity extraction and U.S. interventionism in Central American politics in Chapter Two on setting the historic and geographic stage. The uneven disjunctures between the two locales allows for the free movement of Central American goods but not people.

The very real, contemporary violence of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador rarely make entry into our national news sources. But the gravity of the issue of drug trafficking and gang violence slipped into American consciousnesses when the deluge of migrant Honduran,

Guatemalan, and El Salvadoran children and mothers swelled at our borders in the summer of 2014, seeking refuge from the drug trade that has penetrated their daily lives. These mothers and children are not immigrants but rather refugees seeking asylum from the violence that ravages their very existence.

Figure 5.10: Central American women and children refugees in a U.S. holding Center Source: New York Times, 2014

Roughly 60,000 refugees were estimated to have crossed into the United States in the summer of 2014—which is more than double the 24,668 that entered in 2013, triple the 13,625 who entered in 2012, and under half of next year's predictions of more than 140,000, according to the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies and Kids in Need of Defense, an advocacy group that represents unaccompanied immigrant children.

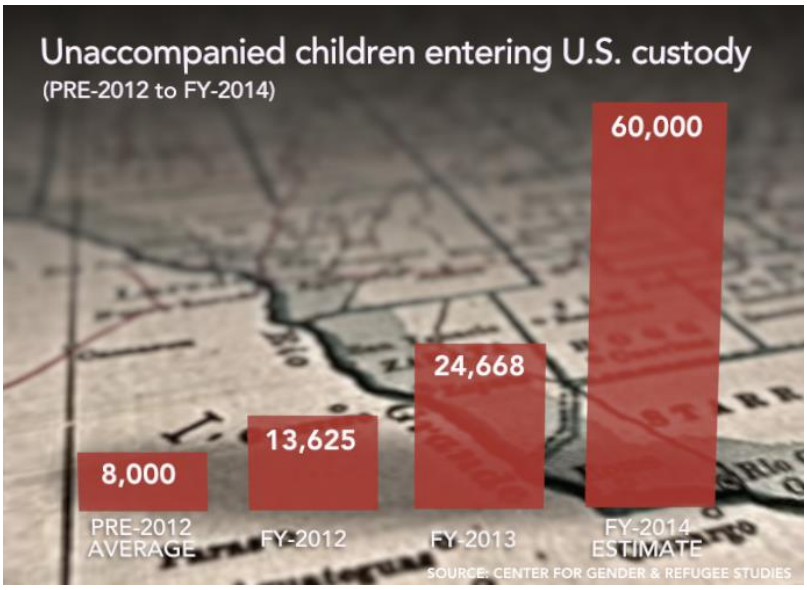


Figure 5.11: Unaccompanied children entering U.S. custody. Source: Center for Gender & Refugee Studies in No Country for Lost Kids, P.J. Tobia, PBS, June 20, 2014

The sheer drove of 60,000 refugees at our borders signaled that they are fleeing something very real in their home countries[12]. The push factors referred to the violence associated with recruitment for service as a mule or assassin, rape, and death, which are all part of the strategies utilized among these transnational criminal gang organizations for recruitment and cooption into gang membership. There are no statistics of where within these Central American countries these women and children were fleeing from. These refuges are not flocking from the Miskito Coast, at least in my experience there. People would casually migrate between the city of La Ceiba and the coast for goods, medical services, and increasingly for employment, but people were not yet emigrating in droves.

These migrants, or refugees, are being held in detention centers in Texas as they await a hearing to claim asylum or to be sent back to Central America. This "mass migration" is interpreted to be a threat to national security by governmental officials because if this drove is granted permission, another one will likely follow. Susan Terrio's (2015) Whose Child Am I?,

[12] Anthropologist Charles Thompson's (2015) travel memoir entitled, "Border Odyssey: Travels Along the US/Mexico Divide" humanizes the debate of migrants at the border.

not yet released at the time of this writing, examines the labyrinth of the U.S. detention system and the experience of criminalization among child immigrants. What is ironic in the inequitable flow of goods from Honduras and Central America is that we willingly accept commodities and goods, in the form of mahogany, bananas, lobsters, and cocaine, but the costs—of diver health, economic marginalization, displacement, environmental destruction, and drug violence—are externalized. Furthermore, while we willingly accept goods in the form of commodities, we are loathe to accept children and mothers as refugees, fleeing the violence associated with the perpetuation of "the insatiable North American nose" (Aguilar Camín in Keefe 2012).

Conclusion: Cocaine Lines

The external orientation of the Miskito Coast has made it an ideal waypoint and node in "a sea of islands" in the commodity extraction from mahogany and bananas to lobsters and cocaine. The Miskito are entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the lobster dive industry and by being forcibly displaced from their natal, patrimonial tracts by *ladinos/colonos* for the traffic of cocaine. In a form of accidental ethnography that required navigating secrets and silences, I was able to preview the shifting commodity landscape from lobsters to cocaine. In the vacuum of economic opportunity, an economic option emerged in the participation of the drug economy and traffic of cocaine in this rural corridor as one viable alternative. The relation to goods over people exposes the fetishization of commodities where social relations appear as relations with lobsters and cocaine but by unraveling these commodity landscapes, I work to unmask the lives that feed these chains.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

FROM LOBSTERS TO COCAINE

The Miskito Coast has had an external orientation in the circum-Caribbean toward the United States and Britain. While its geography is remote and insular, it is globally interconnected as a node in a sea of islands. It is a way-point in the traffic of things from mahogany and bananas to lobsters and cocaine.

The spiny Caribbean lobster is harvested from the sea floor by Miskito *buzos*, who dive at great depths for this commodity for which they are paid per lobster pound. This commodity-based, extractive economy has a long history, extending back to the colonial period. State formation within the banana republic has long been tied to the "capitalization of nature" (Faber 1992: 27)—from gold, mahogany, and bananas to lobsters and cocaine. United States political intervention, interference, and "diplomacy" have shrouded economic penetration for cheap commodities. The neoliberalization of the global economy has eliminated tariffs on exports and completely eradicated them in Industrial Export Processing Zones and Free Trade Zones. These uneven trade regulations have led to economic exploitation, social inequality, and ecological devastation, as *buzos* report declining lobster populations, forcing them to dive in deeper and more dangerous waters, with multiple dives up to and exceeding 100 feet. The costs of deep-water diving are inscribed on the Miskito body in the form of decompression sickness, or the bends. Because of this history of external contact and economic dependence, the Miskito are structurally tied to an economy at sea as the primary form of cash flow into their communities. Injury is linked to the cost of a lobster tail "fluffed" in its shell on a Red Lobster customer's plate.

While most *buzos* understand a neurological explanation for decompression sickness, a complementary and parallel explanation circulates on the coast. Locally understood as *liwa mairin siknis*, divers explain decompression sickness as a curse from the mermaid goddess for the over-extraction of her lobster resources. The spiritual landscape is animated by invisible spirits and witchcraft, which creates a benevolent and dangerous space. The prevalence of neurological damage, paralysis, and death make comprehensible the indigenous frame of mermaid magic. The mythical and medical landscapes blur into one another. The political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation. Nor is *liwa mairin* siphoned from the cash economy or transnational market transactions. Culture seeps into the political economy as politics seeps into the cultural domain.

The relationship between the spiritual world and the ecological domain is one based on reciprocity. *Sukia* healers, such as Doña Betullah, offer cash payments to certain plants in return for the lasting powers of the *sika* herbs. *Buzos*, on the other hand, extract resources from *liwa mairin's* domain creating imbalance and discord where their punishment is *liwa mairin siknis*. Other invisible forces in the social world parallel the balance and stability of the spiritual. Rumor and gossip serve as mediating forces that attempt to limit egos and excess, trying to maintain Miskito social rules of equality. Accusations of stinginess and hoarding are usually aimed at those who are perceived to have more. With cash from lobster diving and more recently, from the traffic of cocaine, social stratification and inequality are rising, both perceived and real.

In terms of U.S intervention and the neoliberalization of the global economy, 'development' ensued from within this neoliberal framework and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and organizations such as USAID emerged to usher in "development" and expand economies, filling the space of a lacking state. It is under this guise that the USAID-

sponsored Global Fish Alliance and Spiny Lobster Initiative in Honduras emerged. The initiative prioritized lobster sustainability over Miskito self-determination. Somewhat independent from the Spiny Lobster Initiative, the fisheries managing body of the Honduran government (DIGIPESCA) signed a regional Central American agreement terminated the 40-year lobster industry that has provided the economic basis for Miskito livelihood, replacing divers with traps.

These biopolitical rules and regulations swirl above the indigenous Miskito, without any real attention to their local, lived experience. These rules, designed to promote lobster conservation over the cultural survival of the Miskito, serve as a form of Foucauldian governmentality and biopolitical control. These rules are an extension of the Honduran state's biopower over the everyday aspects of the Miskito. The Miskito have become dependent upon a cash economy because of a history of external contact, commodity extraction, and political economic intervention.

The Miskito are squeezed and entangled by regulations that threaten to close the 40-year lobster dive industry, by recruitment into the local drug economy, and by the threat of displacement from their natal and patrimonial tracts by *ladinos/colons* for the traffic of cocaine. The guise for cocaine traffic is the language of cattle ranching. These outsiders employ the language of cattle ranching as a cover for the illicit trade in cocaine. Furthermore, the political economy history of commodity extraction, the politics of U.S. interventionism, and the neoliberalization of the global economy are structurally uneven and oppressive. They have long favored and continue to favor the developed economies of the global North at the expense of the global South, in this context, Honduras and Central America. Furthermore, the U.S. "war on drugs" perpetuates this narrative of structural inequality, militarizing a transit commodity and economy that is trafficked through the Moskitia to feed "the insatiable North American nose"

(Aguilar Camín in Keefe 2012). The biopolitical and structural regulations that are terminating the 40-year legal industry of lobster dive fishing are ironically encouraging indigenous laborers into the underground economy of illicit cocaine traffic as one viable economic alternative, fueling their own militarized and violent anti-drug war.

Honduras is infamously the murder capital of the world as documented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. This increased militarization employed to mete out drug trafficking is linked to this increase in violent crime. As Elana Zilberg (2011) traces the transnational deportation of criminals in the United States to their home countries in Central America, she exposes the explosion in transnational violence and the reproduction of the "transnational gang crisis" in the hardening of the "neoliberal securityscapes" and of immigration law that willingly accepts goods over people. We witnessed in the summer of 2014 when the drove of 60,000 Central American women and children flooded U.S. borders, seeking refuge from the war zones terrorizing their countries, largely reproduced by U.S. foreign policy.

By tracing the commodities of lobsters and cocaine from the Miskito Coast of Honduras to consumers in the United States, this ethnography examines the class and regional aspects of food consumer's behavior and values and how a U.S. chain restaurant helps to construct the elite fantasy of its consumers. It contributes in particular to the literatures on food commodity studies, the transnational movement of commodities, and to the study of industrial foodways. In addition, this accidental cocaine ethnography joins the conversation on the anthropology of drugs, specifically on cocaine and its transnational movement, as well as the study of transnational gangscapes, the indigenization of gangs, and migration studies. Further, this study situates the Miskito *liwa mairin* within other tales of Afro-Caribbean water maids and spirits,

contributing to a corpus of Latin American work examining the dangerous negotiations with the natural and spiritual worlds for the extraction of natural resources.

The commodity landscape on the Miskito Coast of Honduras is shifting from lobsters to cocaine. The indigenous Miskito are entangled by regulations that threaten to permanently close the spiny lobster dive industry revealing an economic vacuum of opportunity on this desolate coast in the transnational traffic of cocaine. There is a long history of external contact, the commodification of nature, and neoliberal political economic intervention in the banana republic. The Miskito have become dependent on a cash economy where they risk their health as they plunge into *liwa mairin's* waters. This ethnography emphasizes that the political economy of lobster extraction is not isolated from that of Miskito cultural interpretation. *Liwa mairin*, the mermaid goddess responsible for spiny lobster and natural resource conservation, is not siphoned off from the cash economy or transnational market transactions. Culture seeps into the political economy as politics seeps into the cultural domain. Participation in the cash economy is not one strictly of economics. Diving in the depths of the Caribbean, Miskito divers make themselves vulnerable to the vagaries of *liwa mairin* where she threatens *liwa mairin siknis* for the over-extraction of her lobster resources. Secondly, biopolitical regulations, designed to promote lobster conservation over the cultural survival of the Miskito, serve as a form of Foucauldian governmentality and biopolitical control, encouraging indigenous laborers into the underground economy of illicit cocaine traffic and fueling a militarized and violent anti-drug war. These regulations, embodied in the USAID Global Fish Alliance and Spiny Lobster Initiative, follow a long political economic history of U.S. interventionism. As a result, an updated Honduran fishing law collapses a 40-year history of Miskito lobster dive fishing, exposing divers into the

underground and illicit economy of cocaine traffic. The commodity landscape in the banana republic is transitioning from lobsters to cocaine.

List of Terms and Acronyms

AMHBLI, *Asociacion Miskito Hondureño Buzos Lisiados*: the organization for injured lobster divers, which defends the rights of incapacitated divers

APBGADH, *Asociacion Protectora de Buzos de Gracias a Dios*, Honduras: an association of active divers in the district of Gracias a Dios, which roughly corresponds to the Moskitia region.

buzo: lobster diver

cayuco: canoe

cayuquero: canoeman, assistant to buzo, lobster diver

comanche: assistant to sacabuzo

kangbaiya: protection, spiritual bodyguard

kiamp: upriver agricultural plot tied to the patrilineal descent group and recognized by patronym

lisiado: crippled, a term used for injured/paralyzed lobster divers such as *buzo lisiado*

maestro: teacher

praidey saihka, Friday's medicine.

pulperia: store, originally referred to a company store

sacabuzo: intermediary on the coast who pairs an eligible diver with a boat captain

APPENDIX I

Casa Presidencial
Honduras, C. A.

Tegucigalpa M.D.C. 26 de octubre del 2007

Sr.
FRANK JEMS GOOF
Alcalde de Municipio de Brus Laguna
Su Oficina

Estimado Señor Alcalde:

Con mucho respeto me dirijo a usted para comunicarle que el Sr. Javier Granwell Tinglas de la comunicad de Cocovila se presento a mi despacho y me explico su accidente sufrido en barcos de su propiedad, efectuando labores de buceo, quedando lisiado imposibilitándolo para seguir trabajando y hasta la fecha no se le ha dado ayuda medica ni indemnización por su accidente.

Señor FRANK HEMS GOOF solicito llegar a un arreglo legal entre ambas partes, como representante de nuestro gobierno y del señor Presidente Sr. JOSE MANUEL ZELAYA ROSALES, velare por este acuerdo entre ambas partes.

Quiero hacer de su conocimiento que el Congreso Nacional aprobó bajo el decreto 160-2005 la Ley de Equidad y Desarrollo de las Personas con Discapacidad en donde se estipulan reglamentos que ayudan, benefician y sancionan con su incumplimiento.

Adjunto la evaluación medica, del afectado.

De usted con toda consideración y respeto

Atentamente.

Ing. Ángel Antonio Lainez
Asesor Presidencial en asuntos de Discapacidad
Director de la Oficina De Atención a Personas con Discapacidad

Casa Presidencial

Cc Despacho Sr. Presidente
CC Despacho Primera Dama

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