

# Changing Traditions and Creation of Heritage: Festivals and Resilience in Panama

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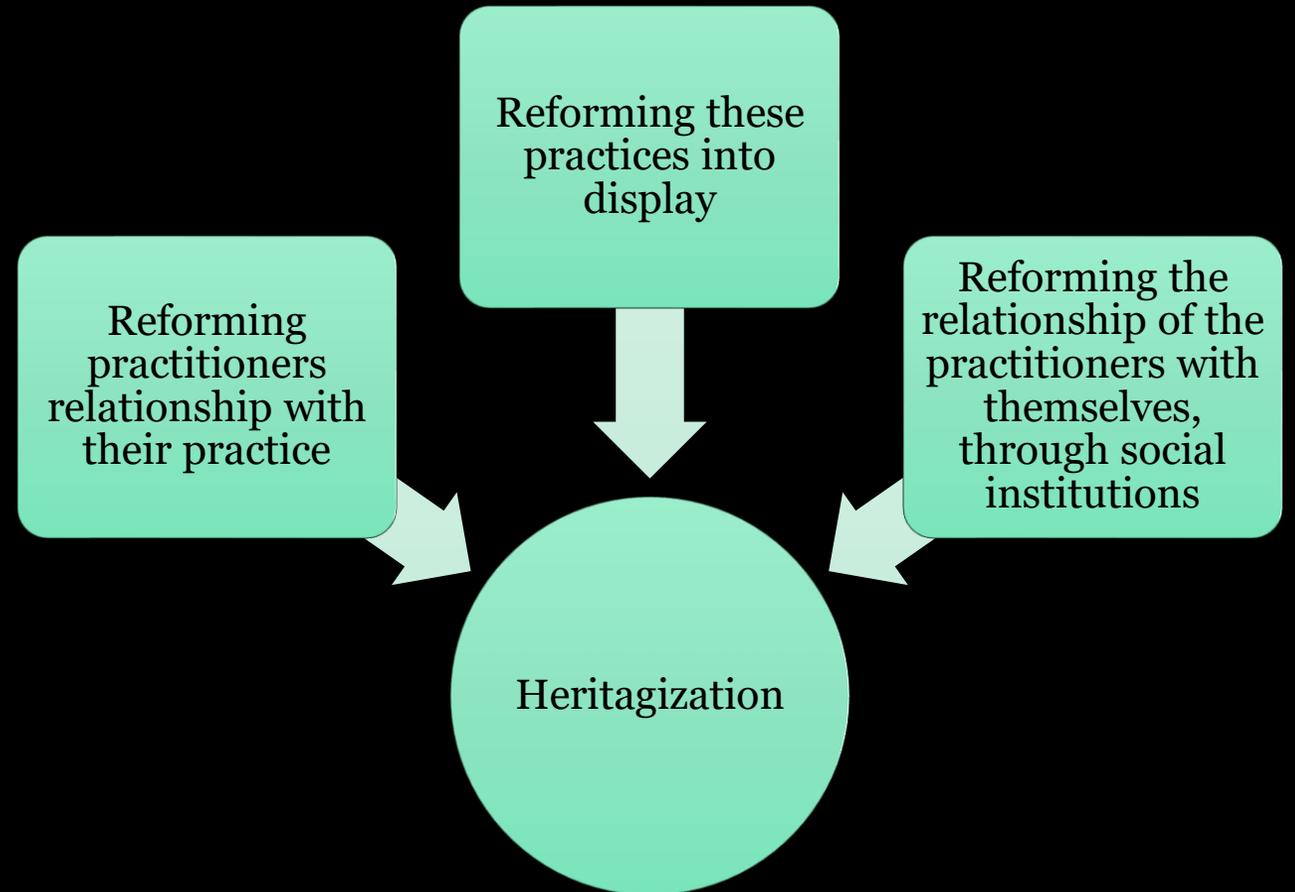
# Heritage and Tradition

- Identity construction in service of nation-state (Anderson, 1983)
- Capitalist individualization (Gonzales, 2015)
- Delimitated often to serve specific social and political purposes, behavioral and material aspects of culture –living tradition - become heritage by being given a special value and supported through societal institutions

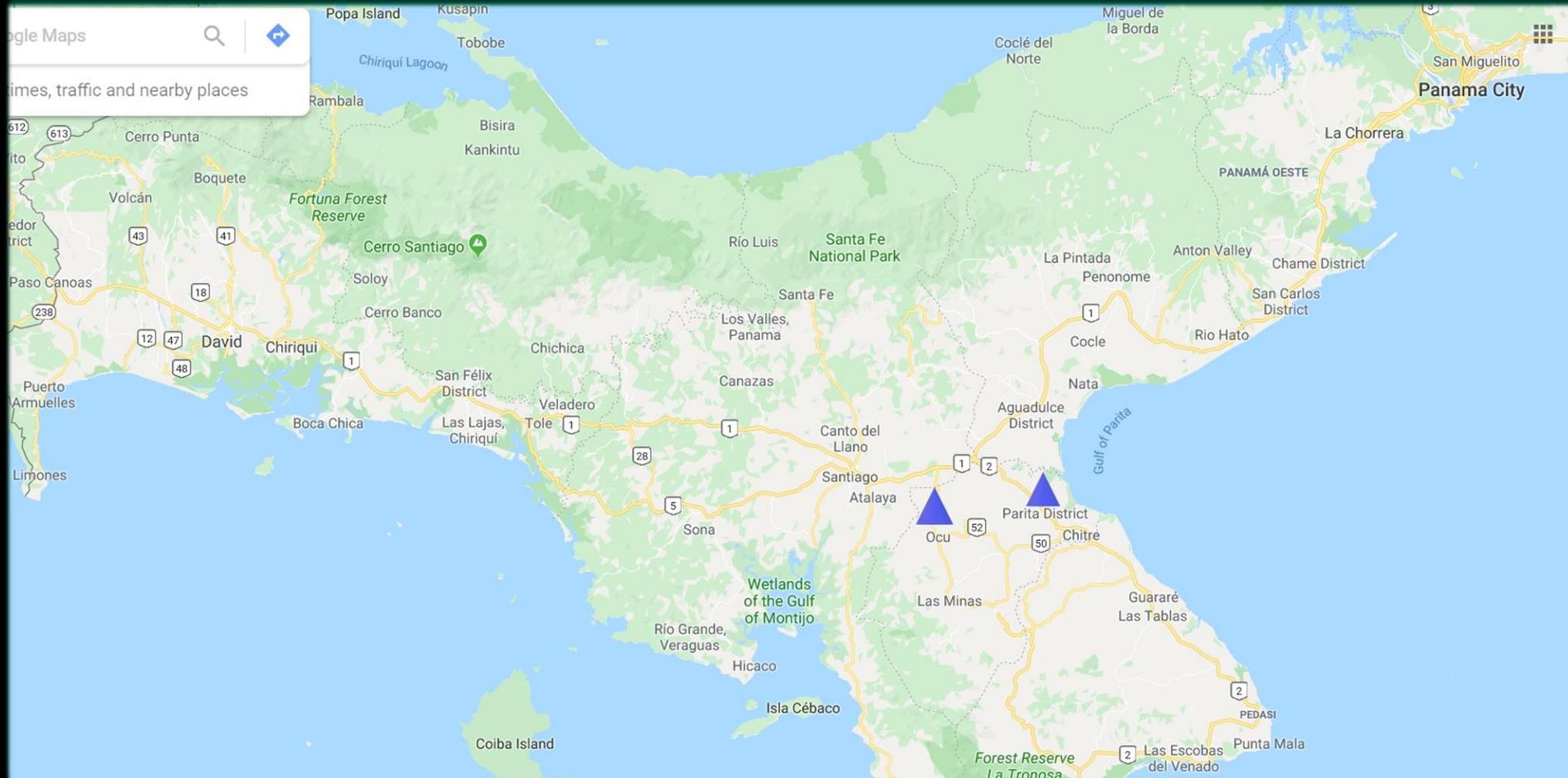


# Heritagization Process

- Hafstein (2018): the process of constructing heritage
  - Heritage as safe-guarding
  - Modernity
- Heritagization is not static
  - Can be continuously reintegrated as living tradition (Tauschek, 2011)



# Panama



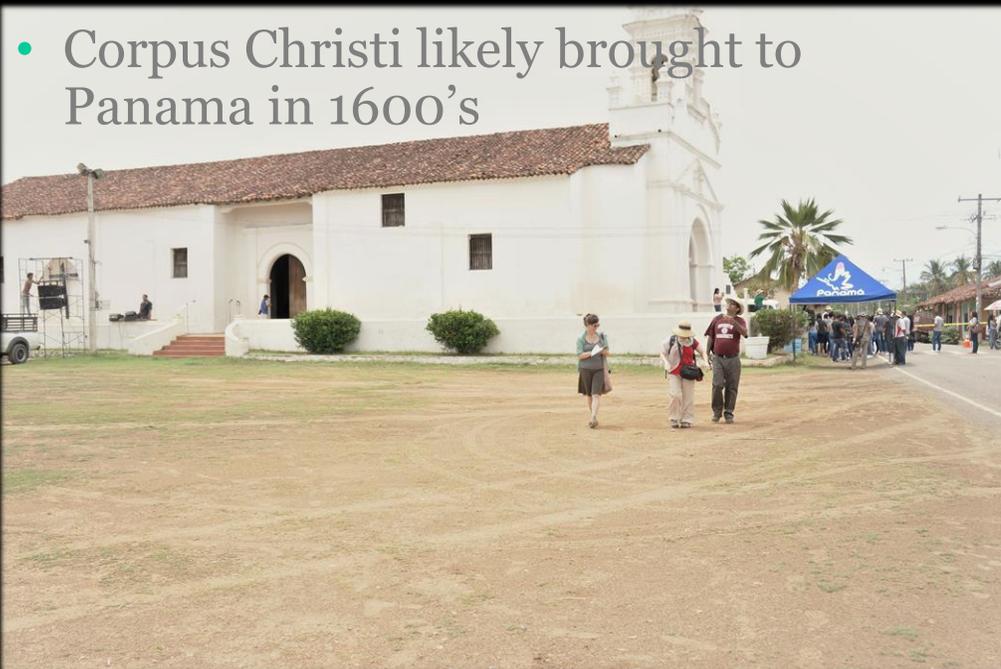
# METHODS

- Collaborative field-work summers 2016, 2017, 2018 during festivals
- Semi-structured interviews and observations
- Visitor surveys
- Rapid assessment
- Grounded theory



# Corpus Christi festival, Parita

- Town people engaged in public service, some agriculture and other business
- Colonial town, located by pre-colonial indigenous settlement
- Devil dances
- Montezuma narrative dance
- Kumbembe and Torito dances
- Social critique/satire





# Manito Festival, Ocu



- Town based around agriculture
- Manito festival founded 1967 by school teachers
- Initiated heritage law establishing *Patronado*
- Manito: the traditions and norms of rural agricultural areas
- Adult and Children Competitions
- Traditional attire and music
- Crowning of Queen
- Peasant wedding
- Duel at the Tamarind
- Parade



# Reforming practitioners relationship with their practice

## Corpus Christi

- “Honoring my ancestors” – family line of dancers
- From religious conversion and colonial resistance to local identity
- Loss of social satire



## Manito Festival

- “Defenders of tradition”, “pride” and “authentic”
- From way of life to celebration
- From reluctance to ownership

# Reforming these practices into display

## Corpus Christi Festival

- Formalized costume production
- Strong interest in attracting visitors
- Theme of “authentic” and “correct”
- Media presence



## Manito Festival

- Clothing and music performed on stage for visitors
- Wedding as a practice simultaneously functioning as a ritual display of traditions
- Sponsors
- Media presence



# Reforming the relationship of the practitioners with themselves, through social institutions

## Corpus Christi festival

- *Patronado* established as part of preservation
- Clans of dancers
- Insufficient school support
- Media presence



## Manito festival

- *Patronado* established for formalizing the festival both internally and externally
- Judges at the competitions enforce criteria of authentic Ocueños
- Extensive school support



## UNESCO and HERITAGE

- 2019: Panamanian devil dances submitted to UNESCO for intangible cultural heritage designation
- Tourism considerations
- Local ownership of tradition

# Conclusions

Heritagization process outlined by Hafstein (2018) helpful to understand the construction of heritage

Heritagization not a monolithic process

Heritage can be continuously reintegrated as living tradition

- Unclear how capitalism will impact further development of heritage for tourist purposes in smaller Panamanian towns
- Risk of alienation of locals from traditions or retainment of local agency and ownership

# Thank You!

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Our gracious research participants

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