

Ethnicity, Empire, and Exclusion: The Incorporation of a
Caribbean Borderland, 1893-1909

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“Divested of every means of support, we cannot exist. The country is famishing daily. Not only is there an exorbitant import duty imposed, but the most necessary articles of self support have been made contraband.”¹

“We the undersigned natives of Bluefields of the Mosquito Reserve as also British subjects of the island of Jamaica, West Indies residing at Bluefields for many years...ask the crown and Queen Victoria for protection as the Nicaraguan government has issued a decree forbidding the opening of schools for an English education for our children, instead forcing them to send their children to Spanish schools and imposing a fine of \$5 and imprisonment for each child not attending.”²

In the spring of 1900, two petitions arrived in Jamaica. The first, from a group of Miskitu Indians to their exiled Hereditary Chief, detailed the privation that the indigenous population had suffered in the years following the annexation of their territory by the government of Nicaragua. Their old hunting, gathering, and fishing grounds had been made off limit to them as Liberal government tried to force them into a new commodity-based economy. The second petition, from urban West Indian residents of the same territory to the colonial Governor of Jamaica, detailed another set of grievances. Nicaragua’s government, they claimed, was trying to force on them a new and foreign culture. These two groups, a largely rural indigenous population and a primarily urban West Indian one, experienced profound changes as the territory in which they lived came under the control of the Nicaraguan government at the close of the nineteenth century. These different experiences reflect both a history of imperial rivalry in Caribbean Central America and an emerging Nicaraguan national identity.

¹ Government of Great Britain. Foreign Office, *Mosquitia: Consular Reports, 1844-1895*. (London: Public Record Office, [n.d.]) (hereinafter FO) 56/56 114, Ernest Lever, Charles Patterson, William Archibald and George Britton to Robert Henry Clarence, March 15. 1900.

² FO 56/56 156, Residents of Bluefields to Marquis of Salisbury June 20, 1900.

Jeremy Adleman and Stephen Aron argue in “From Borderlands to Borders” that indigenous people in the North American borderlands were able to play imperial rivals off of one another to negotiate some form of advantage in the intercultural landscape of the borderlands. They argue however that

“with states claiming exclusive dominion over all territories within their borders, Indians lost the ability to play off imperial rivalries; they could no longer take advantage of occupying the lands ‘in between.’ Thus, as colonial borderlands gave way to national borders, fluid and ‘inclusive’ intercultural frontiers yielded to hardened and more ‘exclusive’ hierarchies.”³ (816)

This may have been true in the Western United States where white settlers moved into lands occupied by Indian others, but in the borderlands of Caribbean Central America things evolved differently. There Hispanic western Nicaraguans had to deal not only with an indigenous other in the bordered territory, but also with a Black West Indian and Creole population. Aron and Adelman urge the student of the borderlands not to “overlook the essentially competitive nature of European imperialism and the ways in which these rivalries shaped transitions from colonies to nation-states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Absent the inter-imperial dimensions of borderlands,” they argue, “the cross cultural relations that defined frontiers take on too simple a face.”⁴ In this paper I take Adelman and Aron’s suggestion and look at the ways that centuries of British-Spanish, and later British-Nicaraguan, competition for the Mosquito Coast shaped the early years of uncontested Nicaraguan control of the Mosquitia.⁵ Looking exclusively

³ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” *American Historical Review*, Vol 104, No 3. (1999), 816.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 815.

⁵ A note on language: Throughout this paper I use the spelling Mosquito in referring to the corporate political group and the territory of Atlantic Nicaragua, as in Mosquito Coast and Mosquito King. For all ethnographic descriptions I use Miskitu, one of the preferred contemporary spellings. English language documents produced by the Nicaraguan government in the late nineteenth century refer to the Afro-

at international rivalries, however, does not explain the differed treatments of Indigenous peoples and West Indians in the bordered lands. I will therefore discuss how an emerging ideology of mestizaje and indigeneity as components of a broader Nicaraguan national identity led to different outcomes in the “bordered lands” for the Miskitu and people of African descent.

Imperial Rivalry in the Caribbean Borderlands

Before discussing how Nicaragua bordered its Atlantic Coast, it will be useful to review the Mosquitia’s long history as a site of Anglo-Hispanic rivalry and the roles played by both the indigenous and Creole population in that history.⁶ The British presence on the shore began in 1633 when a group of traders from Providence Island made contact with indigenous people on the mainland around what is now Cape Gracias a Dios. In the years that followed Englishmen established several small settlements in the area around present day Bluefields, mostly cutting mahogany and in some locations growing sugar cane.

Following the capture of Jamaica by the British in 1655, joint Miskitu-English forces raided Spanish settlements in Central America while British settlements on the coast took root. By 1750, the British had firmly established themselves at Bluefields and Black River, with the latter’s population approaching 3000. There was no official

descendent population of the Atlantic Coast as “Negroes.” I follow this usage and translate the Spanish *negros* as Negroes in all direct quotes.

⁶ This account is compiled from Craig Dozier, *Nicaragua’s Mosquito Shore: The Years of British and American Presence*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985); Robert A. Naylor “The British Role in Central America Prior to the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol. 40, No. 3 (August 1960) pp. 361-382.; and Frank Griffith Dawson “The Evacuation of the Mosquito Shore and the English who Stayed Behind, 1786-1800.” *The Americas*. Vol. 55, No.1 (July 1998) pp. 63-89.

relationship between the Miskitu and the British, despite close ties, save a 1720 treaty negotiated by the Governor of Jamaica that provided the Miskitu with arms to aid in the capture of fugitive slaves. During the British wars with Spain in the mid-eighteenth century, the Crown cultivated its links with the Miskitu, who fought alongside the British in many of their campaigns in Central America. Britain and Spain signed the London Convention in 1786, after the treaty of Versailles, calling for the removal of all British settlements along the Mosquito Coast in exchange for formal recognition of British rights to cut dyewood and mahogany in Belize. Some British settlers chose to stay along the coast and forfeit protection from the crown, but more than two thousand were evacuated from the coast, effectively ending the formal English presence on the coast, though not for long.

British settlers slowly began to return to the coast in the early decades of the nineteenth century as Spain lost its grip on its colonies. This time, British settlement concentrated to the south, around Bluefields, where the British began to formalize their relationship with the Miskitu. First Jamaican traders and a handful of mahogany cutters made their way to the shore, but beginning in the 1830s British settlers, including Jamaicans, Cayman Islanders and Baymen from Belize began arriving in greater numbers, some to participate in new colonization schemes. A British subject, Alexander MacDonald, became a formal advisor the Mosquito King in 1840 with the blessing of the Queen's Minister to Central America. When Nicaragua sent a commandant to a small settlement at the mouth of the San Juan River in 1841, MacDonald, together with the Mosquito King, sailed to the town on a ship flying both the British and Mosquito flags to demand Nicaragua recognize Mosquito jurisdiction over the port. Shortly thereafter the

British government made its de facto protectorship of the Mosquitia official and sent a colonial representative, Patrick Walker, to the region.

British officials moved to consolidate control following the formalization of the protectorate. In 1847, Lord Palmerston announced that the official limits of the Mosquito Kingdom reached from Cape Gracias a Dios in the north to the mouth of the San Juan River. It is worth noting that while Palmerston's boundaries included only about half of the territory traditionally controlled by the Miskitu, it was the half that contained the majority of British settlers. In 1848, things escalated when Walker, the Mosquito King, and a Bluefields militia sailed to San Juan del Norte in a British warship and drove out the Spanish. They then renamed the port Greytown in honor of the Governor of Jamaica, Sir Charles Grey. Nicaragua launched a counteroffensive, retook the town, and took the Mosquito governor and the British Captain of the Port prisoner. Britain responded decisively. A large force dispatched from Jamaica retook the port and then pushed up the San Juan River to Lake Nicaragua, destroying one fort and capturing another along the way. Nicaragua released the prisoners when faced with the British incursion, but made it clear that it did not recognize the Mosquito territory or British protectorate.

The capture of Greytown and the raid up the San Juan represent the peak of Britain's formal presence in the Mosquitia. United States power in the hemisphere was growing and U.S. officials felt that British actions in Central America violated the Monroe Doctrine. More importantly, the San Juan River formed part of a proposed inter-

oceanic ship canal across Central America. The U.S., rapidly expanding westward, found British domination of such a route unacceptable.⁷

In 1850, the United States and Britain signed the Clayton Bulwer treaty in order to prevent any confrontation between the two countries over a proposed ship canal through Central America. The first article of the treaty ensured that neither Britain nor the U.S. would maintain exclusive control over the proposed canal, and that neither would build any fortifications commanding the canal. It also stated that neither would

assume or exercise any dominion over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, or any part of Central America; nor will either make or use any protection which either affords or any may afford, or any alliance which either has or may have, to or with any State or people, for the purpose of erecting any such fortifications or of occupying, fortifying or colonizing Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, or any part of Central America, or of assuming or exercising dominion over the same.⁸

While not included in the text of the treaty Clayton and Bulwer exchanged notes before the treaty was ratified agreeing that the British territory in Belize did not fall under the prohibitions of the treaty. This left in question however the legality under the treaty of the British presence in the Mosquitia.

The next decade saw continual diplomatic confrontation between the two powers, even as Britain began looking for a way to reconcile it's presence in the Mosquitia with the terms of the treaty. In a letter to Bulwer, the British representative, Palmerston indicated the desire for a shift to a less formal presence:

Her Majesty's Government feel that the present state of things in regard to the Mosquito Territory, and especially to the Port of Grey Town, is in many respects

⁷ For this period see Mary W. Williams, *Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy, 1815-1915*. (Washington DC: Americana Historical Association, 1916) and Wilbur D. Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841-1861*. (London: Macmillan, 1974).

⁸ Quoted in Williams, *Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy*, 97.

inconvenient, and not entirely in conformity with the true spirit and meaning of the convention just concluded between Great Britain and the United States. The British Government is bound in honour to protect the Mosquitos, but her Majesty's Government are of the opinion that the protection of Great Britain might be afforded to that nation as effectually in a different way, and without any direct interference of any agent of the British Government in the internal affairs of that country.⁹

This shift to an informal, but no less real British presence in the Mosquitia arrived with the Treaty of Managua of 1860.

When I argue that the British maintained their informal presence in the Mosquitia through the mechanisms of informal empire, I am referring specifically to the cultivation of local collaborators friendly to British interests and willing to guarantee free trade a key component of Britain's strategy of informal empire in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The treaty between Britain and Nicaragua, signed and ratified in 1860, devolved sovereignty of the Mosquito protectorate to Nicaragua with several caveats. First, it mandated the creation of the Mosquito Reserve, a semiautonomous territory within Nicaragua. The Reserve had nearly the same dimensions as the protectorate had, but ended a few miles north of Greytown. The Miskitu and all residents of the Reserve would "enjoy the right of governing according to their own customs, and according to any regulations which from time to time may be adopted by them," so long as they were not inconsistent with Nicaraguan sovereignty. Greytown, though not within the Reserve, was to become a free port and guarantees of trial by jury and religious freedom were made for residents. Additionally, the treaty also required an annuity be paid to the Mosquito by the government of Nicaragua, formalized all land grants made by the Mosquito after 1848

⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the idea of British informal empire see John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade." *The Economic History Review*, The New Series, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1953), 6.

and established a commission for dealing with land claims.¹¹ It was the articles that provided for Mosquito self government that served as the backbone of Britain's informal presence on the coast.

In 1861, less than a year after the British surrendered formal control of the Mosquitia, the Mosquito chief sent a letter to the British Consul in Greytown thanking him for his "kind and disinterested offer, as Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, to me personally, also to my people and country, of your valuable advice in the government under my control."¹² Having accepted the Consul's suggestion to form a Council of State "in whom shall rest and shall be represented all responsibility and authority" for the governance of the reserve, he then requested that all the headmen and the prominent foreign residents of the coast come to Bluefields in September.¹³

Fifty-one people attended when the Council convened on September 12. Of those, only eleven can be identified as Miskitu and four were Rama, another indigenous group in the Reserve. Of the remaining thirty-seven, four were Moravian missionaries, one was American, three were British, and the rest were Creoles or "negroes," recent arrivals from Belize, Jamaica and the Cayman islands. All of those who attended the meetings were elected to the General Council, with the exception of eight of the eleven Miskitu representatives. The Council approved a new constitution for the Reserve and elected an

¹¹ Treaty of Managua, 1860. House of Commons. Sessions Papers, 1731-1913. Papers relating to the Arbitration of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Austria in the differences between the Government of Her Britannic Majesty and the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua respecting the interpretation of certain articles of the Treaty of Managua signed on the 28th of January 1860 (hereinafter Session Papers), 2.

¹² The Mosquito Chief, George, to Mr. Consul Green, Bluefields, July 11, 1861. Session Papers, 51.

¹³ Circular, Bluefields, July 11, 1861. Session Papers, 52

Executive Council of eighteen of its members to govern the Reserve.¹⁴ The laws that the council passed were quite acceptable to Britain, being based on “customs” developed during the period of formal British protectorship.

The fourth article of the new constitution serves as an indication of the council’s deference to the British:

Art. 4. That conformably with the Act of the Mosquito Council dated October 1846, entitled An act conforming the establishment of the laws of England and the common laws, as well as the Statute Law of England, as the same are now known and acknowledged, the same shall be, and are hereby made, the laws of the Municipal Authority of the Mosquito Reservation, so long as the same can be made applicable to the present and future position, circumstances and forms of authority, and when the same shall not be inconsistent and at variance with the sovereignty of Nicaragua.¹⁵

The constitution also contained articles that virtually guaranteed that Creoles, Negroes, and other foreigners would continue to enjoy political power. Article IX required that the hereditary Chief hold the position of President of the General Council, but Articles VI and VIII limited other Miskitu participation in the government. One had to have lived in the Reserve for three years and own property worth \$250 to serve on the General Council. Appointments to the Executive Council required five year’s residency, literacy, and \$500 in property.¹⁶ These property and literacy requirements effectively limited participation to the non-Miskitu residents of the reserve or those indigenous leaders who had become sufficiently anglicized to read English. As a result, Negroes and Creoles

¹⁴ Michael D. Olien. “Micro/Macro-Level Linkages: Regional Political Structures on the Mosquito Coast, 1845-1864.” *Ethnohistory*. Vol. 34, No. 3 (Summer 1987), 282-3.

¹⁵ Municipal constitution of the Government of the Mosquito Reservation. Session Papers, 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

dominated the government and served as effective collaborators for foreign commercial interests until the Reserve was incorporated into Nicaragua at the end of the century.

The Government of Nicaragua began trying to assert control over Greytown and the Reserve not long after it gained sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast. Nicaragua refused to pay the annuity called for in the treaty, arguing that the government of the Reserve was dominated by outsiders rather than Miskitu. They also tried to require licenses for timbering and other extractive industries inside the reserve, tried to apply tariffs at Greytown and on resources leaving the Reserve, and prohibited the erection of sawmills along with other curbs on local control of the Reserve.¹⁷

Unable to reconcile their interpretations of the treaty, the Governments of Nicaragua and Great Britain agreed to arbitration by the Emperor of Austria in 1879. Britain's case demonstrates the extent to which officials wished to maintain the status quo. Article VI of the original treaty stated that Britain would "use her good offices with the Chief of the Mosquito Indians, so that he shall accept the stipulations which are contained in this convention." In its case, Britain advocated a very liberal interpretation of this article:

The article gives the British Government, as against the Nicaraguan Government, a right to intervene between the Nicaraguan Government and the Mosquitos. This right is, of necessity, not limited to the original acceptance of the treaty by the Mosquitos. It is a continuing right lasting as long as the stipulations of the treaty remain unfulfilled by Nicaragua.¹⁸

The argument, from the Crown in an international arbitration, clearly shows that Britain remained committed to its presence in the Mosquitia. In regards to Nicaraguan attempts

¹⁷ Memorial to the Government of Her Britannic Majesty, Bluefields, April 4, 1879. Session Papers, 26.

¹⁸ British Case. Session Papers, 22.

to regulate commerce in the Reserve the British government argued that the right to self-taxation, or in this case choosing free trade, fell under the right to self government included in Article III of the treaty. They argued that “if the Mosquito are to enjoy self-government at all, they must be free in respect of taxation, and in the disposal of the natural resources of their country.”¹⁹ Britain also used the arbitration as an opportunity to defend non-Miskitu participation in the government of the Reserve. The crown argued that:

the dwellers on the Coast have long been mixed, comprising Sambos, negroes of African descent, whites from European and other countries, and half-castes of various kinds. There is no argument to be derived from the Treaty for limiting the benefits of the Treaty to Indians strictly so called.²⁰

The arbiter’s decision upheld almost every one of Britain’s arguments and the Mosquito Reserve enjoyed near-autonomy for more than a decade. The Mosquitia’s near autonomy over the coast came to an end shortly after Nationalist José Santos Zelaya came to power through a coup in 1893.

A Liberal both in terms of party affiliation and governing philosophy Zelaya came to power in late 1893 after overthrowing the Conservative government. Nicaragua had been engaged in a border war with Honduras and using the pretext of preventing a Honduran occupation, Zelaya sent the Nicaraguan Army to occupy Bluefields and declared marshal law. Local residents, especially Jamaicans, resisted the Nicaraguan occupation of the city and for a brief time forced the troops from the highlands to withdraw. Nicaraguan troops returned several weeks later, more determined than ever to

¹⁹ British Counter-Case. Session Papers, 93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

assert Nicaragua's sovereignty over the Mosquitia. In August 1894, Nicaragua "reincorporated" the Mosquitia when with the Mosquito Chief, Robert Henry Clarence, in exile in Jamaica, and Miskitu delegates, under highly questionable circumstances, signed away the region's autonomy by agreeing to the Decree of Reincorporation a process provided for in the 1860 treaty of Managua.²¹

Bordering the Borderlands

The Zelaya regime wasted little time in moving to consolidate control of both the people and the territory of the Mosquitia after acquiring undisputed title to it in 1894. The forms of control that he sought, however, were a direct response to the nearly three century long imperial rivalry that played out along the coast. The regime established increased customs enforcement and imposed commercial controls on extractive and productive industries within the Mosquitia, moved to culturally Hispanicize the coast's population, and moved administrative and police personnel into the region.

To understand how Nicaragua enforced its sovereignty over the coast, it will be useful to discuss how each of their actions addressed a different component of the complex concept of sovereignty. Political scientist Stephen Krasner identifies four types of sovereignty which may or may not be present to varying degrees in any given state. These are *domestic sovereignty*, the organization of public authority within a state and the ability of those holding authority to exercise control; *interdependence sovereignty*, the

²¹ Hale and Dozier have very different interpretations of the reincorporation. According to Hale, most of the Miskitu agreed to reincorporation in response to coercion and intimidation from Nicaraguan authorities. Dozier, on the other hand, argues that the indigenous leaders agreed to reincorporation because they "had long been dissatisfied with the corrupt, self serving Mosquito government, from which they had long been excluded." Charles Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894-1987* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), Chapter 2; Dozier, *Nicaragua's Mosquito Shore*, 155.

ability of a government or its agents to control movement of people and goods across borders; *international legal sovereignty*, the mutual recognition of states; and *Westphalian sovereignty*, freedom from external interference in local affairs.²² Of these four, Nicaragua only enjoyed international legal sovereignty over the coast at the time of the reincorporation. The 1860 treaty of Managua and the 1881 arbitration decision recognized Nicaragua's titular claim to the coast. In order to turn titular possession into meaningful control however, the Nicaraguan government would have to take measures to address the other three forms of sovereignty.

Asserting interdependence sovereignty, that is, controlling who and what crosses into and out of Nicaraguan territory presented a major challenge to Nicaragua's authorities. The Caribbean coast of Central America has always been and remains a haven for smugglers and others with little respect for government attempts to control border crossings. from the Dutch pirate Abraham Blauveldt who used the bay there as a base of operations at the turn of the seventeenth century, and gave the city of Bluefields its name, to the narco-traffickers who use the coast as a transshipment point for cocaine coming from Colombia to the United States, control of the Mosquitia, and especially its territorial waters has been poor at best.²³ Moreover, control of what and who passed into and out of the territory was at the center of Nicaragua's disputes with the British in the period of the Mosquito reserve. The Nicaraguan government took a dual approach to the problem of policing nearly 450 kilometers of coastline along with the lagoons, rivers, and inland waterways that followed the coast were the principal routes of commerce for

²² Stephen D. Krasner "Problematic Sovereignty" in *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities*. Stephen D. Krasner ed. (New York: Columbia University Press 2001) 7-9.

²³ John Burnett "Cocaine Republics" Morning Edition, October 22, 2004.

goods both legitimate and contraband. Nicaragua tightened customs regulations and increased enforcement, but the Zelaya government also outsourced territorial control through the sale of commercial and navigational concessions.

One of the first acts of the national government after the Miskitu agreed to incorporate themselves into the republic in 1894 was to convene a Special Commission to study the customs situation in the newly annexed department and suggest improvements.²⁴ Authorities limited the hours of operation of the port at Bluefields from six in the morning to six in the evening. Boats were prohibited from entering or leaving the anchorage outside of these hours and violators would face a fine of up to \$100. Officials also decreed that anyone who wished to go on board a ship in the harbor would have to first go and get written permission and would need present himself to customs officials for inspection immediately upon leaving the ship.²⁵ The commission also considered a plan to move the customs house from Castillo to San Juan del Norte, despite its status as a free port. By controlling who and what left the free port for other points on the Coast, authorities could remove some of the burden of the customs officers at Bluefields. Finally, authorities purchased a small shallow draft steamboat to patrol the

²⁴ National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, Record Group RG 84, (hereinafter RG84) Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Bluefields Nicaragua, Vol 1. Report of the Special Commission of the Supreme Government on the offices of the Atlantic Coast of the Republic. November 20, 1895.

²⁵ RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Bluefields Nicaragua, Vol 1 p.204. Decree, General Reyes. Nov. 18, 1895; RG 59 Records of Dept of St. Despatches from U.S. Consuls in San Juan del Norte, Nicaragua 1895. O'Hara to Uhl. September 7, 1895.

lagoons and inland waterways around Bluefields in order to compete with the small fast canoes that smugglers used to go where authorities could not.²⁶

A second approach to the control of Nicaragua's borders and cabotage was through the outsourcing of enforcement to concessionaires. In July of 1895 the Zelaya regime announced that it would sell the rights to fishing and turtling in territorial waters to a concessionaire and two months later it announced that it was extending a concession to sell liquor to the newly incorporated region. Within ten years of the reincorporation of the coast, nearly all of the industries of the coast had been sold off to concessionaires. The right to navigation of the Escondido River, which meant a monopoly on the rights to buy bananas as well as a monopoly on the trade between Bluefields and Rama, wharfage at Bluefields, butchering in the towns along the coast, fishing along the Atlantic coast and the adjoining islands and cays, the lease of Little Corn Island and all of its products (mainly turtle shells and coconuts), the right to extract rubber from national forests, and the rights to navigation on the Cape Gracias River, among others were all in the hands of concessionaires.²⁷

Several authors have suggested that Zelaya's sale of concessions was a result of his "casting about for sources of revenue" after having come to power to find a bankrupt

²⁶ RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Bluefields Nicaragua, Vol 1. Report of the Special Commission of the Supreme Government on the offices of the Atlantic Coast of the Republic. November 20, 1895.

²⁷ RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, San Juan Del Norte Nicaragua, Vol.7 p 193. O'Hara to Uhl. Sept. 27, 1895; FO56/45 193 Boehlen to Parsons 10 July 1895; RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, San Juan Del Norte Nicaragua, Vol. 11 p 29. List of Monopolies. May 19, 1904.

country and an empty treasury.²⁸ Although there is no doubt that the government benefited from the quick influx of cash from selling concessions, a review of some of the details of some of these sales shows that generating income for the state must not have been the primary goal. Included in many of the concessions was the right of the concessionaire to collect import and export duties on the products of their concession. The concession for extracting rubber from government lands in the Mosquitia, for example, included the right to collect a ten cent per pound export duty. The U.S. Consul at San Juan del Norte estimated that this concession, sold for \$160, would generate as much as \$50,000 for its holder in duties.²⁹ By selling the rights to collect duties the Nicaraguan authorities relieved themselves of the responsibility and with the amount of money to be made they could be sure that the concessionaires would police the rubber trade.

Around San Juan del Norte, holders of fishing and turtling concessions would rent the rights to fish along an area of coast and out to sea for one mile to individual fisherman for a small fee. They would then advance the fisherman money for equipment under the stipulation that he would sell the merchant all the shell he collected for a set price. The renters of strips of shore made certain that their rights weren't poached on themselves.³⁰ At the same time, the concessionaire could watch for people turtling outside of the one mile zone and report them to the Nicaraguan authorities who could apply appropriate

²⁸ Rising Lake Morrow "A Conflict between the Commercial Interests of the United States and its Foreign Policy" *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol 10 No 1 (February 1930), 4; see also Dozier. *Nicaragua's Mosquito Shore*, 149.

²⁹ RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, San Juan Del Norte Nicaragua, Vol. 12. p183-9. List of monopolies and executive gratuities, dominated by the president and his friends. March 24, 1906.

³⁰ FO 53/62 Bingham to Fastrell.

force to enforce the concessions. The Nicaraguan government did not hesitate to step in and enforce concessions when the holders were unable to. In 1904 authorities arrested the captains of five schooners, all British subjects from the Caymans, caught turtling illegally. Not only were their turtles confiscated, but their schooners were impounded and they themselves were brought to Bluefields for trial.³¹ There was a three tiered system to enforce Nicaragua's right to the products from her coastal waters with renters and concessionaires providing the first lines of defense against a breach of Nicaragua's interdependence sovereignty and the government only having to step in as a last resort.

While putting new checks in place to help limit who and what could enter Nicaraguan territory, the Zelaya government also felt the need to assert the rights of domestic sovereignty within the newly annexed territory. Again, the government of Nicaragua employed a two tiered strategy to ensure domestic sovereignty. The first and more straightforward step was to put in place a corps of individuals who could keep watch on the territory for Managua and who had the authority and power to force residents to comply with the central government's wishes. The second step was to condition the residents of the coast to accept control from Managua and to assimilate to the emerging Nicaraguan nation. This was to be achieved through a hispanization campaign that would transform the culture of those living on the coast.

One of the first things that the Zelaya regime did after taking control of the coast was organize it into administrative subdivisions that mirrored those of western Nicaragua. Officials divided the old reserve into the districts of Prinzapolka y Siqui, Cuicuina, Wawa Rivers. These together with the departments of San Juan del Norte to the south of the

³¹ RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Cape Gracias a Dios Vol.7, p 27 Hinly [?] to Loomis. April 12, 1904.

former reserve and Rio Gracias a Dios to the north covered the entire Atlantic littoral. The position of Inspector General was created to govern the entire coast and a system of sub-inspectors for each branch of public administration assured that then the Inspector General traveled to Managua there would be a government representative in the department's capital to administer public affairs. Together with the inspector and sub-inspectors a corps of Hispanic police and magistrates was stationed in the communities along the coast to keep order and represent the national government.³²

Zelaya also consolidated control of the Atlantic littoral through the creation of geographic knowledge and the symbolic act of naming. Soon after ascending to the presidency and taking control of the Atlantic coast, Zelaya commissioned a surveying expedition of the entire territory of Nicaragua, including the Atlantic coast. This surveying and mapping expedition was a part of Zelaya's broader liberal project for Nicaragua, but it contained some of the most detailed surveys of the Atlantic coast, including elevation drawings for a proposed railroad from Bluefields to Managua.³³ Along with a map of the reserve Zelaya left his mark on the coast, quite literally, through the process of naming. The final article of the document through which the Reserve was formally incorporated into Nicaragua renamed the area the Department of Zelaya, "in token of gratitude to General J Santos Zelaya, the President of the Republic, to whose

³² Isolda Rodríguez Rosario. *La Educación durante el liberalismo, Nicaragua: 1893-1909*. (Managua: Hispamer, 1988), 164-5.

³³ H.G. Chalkley. *Official map of Nicaragua / compiled by his Excellency order of the President, General Don Jose Santos Zelaya, from surveys by Maximiliano Sonnenstern, government civil engineer ; assisted by William P. Collins, g.c.e.* (Chicago: Poole Bros. 1898).

efforts we owe the privilege of enjoying our liberty.”³⁴ This renaming of the territory was more than an expression of vanity by Zelaya. It was a way of asserting sovereignty over the area and linking it to the political structures of the Pacific.

Although commissioners, police, and inspectors could impose Nicaragua’s central rule through force, the eventual goal was to make coercion unnecessary. By transforming the population and culture of the coastal residents, Nicaragua’s central government could ensure that they would stay under control. On the first day of January 1895 Rigoberto Cabezas, by this time governor of the new Department of Zelaya, proclaimed that Nicaragua had “a great mission to fulfill... There must be commenced at once the slow but efficacious work of assimilating the indigenous element, and rendering it one of the sources of strength in the country.”³⁵ To achieve this goal, Nicaraguan authorities focused on the two cultural elements that they believed most separated Costeños from the rest of Nicaragua: language and religion.

In 1890 the Nicaraguan government established a number of primary schools along the coast and issued a law requiring that all instruction in the Department of Zelaya was to be carried out in Spanish. This Spanish language requirement, Nicaraguan authorities argued, would bring about more than a linguistic change along the coast. It would also bring about a change in perceptions of Nicaraguan rule. One administrator explained to the British consul that one of the principle functions of the teacher was to instill civic values and since the meaning of being Nicaraguan was so closely tied with

³⁴ “Decree” Nov. 20, 1894. in Government of Nicaragua, *Documents Relating to the Affairs in Bluefields, Republic of Nicaragua in 1894*. (hereinafter *Affairs in Bluefields*) (Washington D.C.: Press of W.F. Roberts, 1895), xix.

³⁵ Rigoberto Cabezas, January 1, 1895. Quoted in Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction*.

the Spanish language “a professor who could only speak English or some other language could not exercise his functions as a teacher.”³⁶ Not only was Spanish the only acceptable language of instruction, but that instruction became compulsory. Parents who refused to send their children to Spanish language schools in order to be taught Nicaraguan civic values faced the possibilities of fines and imprisonment.³⁷

The enforcement of Spanish language education requirements also bled over into the other area in which the Nicaraguan government hoped to promote cultural assimilation - religion. Because all formal education on the coast had been associated with protestant sects, a blow against English education was also a blow against Protestantism. Teachers who disobeyed the law and continued to teach in a language other than Spanish faced the prospect of fines. Therefore both the Moravian and Anglican schools in Bluefields had to shut their doors.³⁸ By closing protestant religious schools a great barrier to hispanization would be overcome.

The government of Nicaragua not only tried to limit the influence of protestant missionaries, but tried to counteract it by encouraging Spanish speaking Catholic priests and nuns to take up residence in the new Department of Zelaya. In 1896 Zelaya sent three priests to the coast to assess the religious and educational system on the coast. The priests found that the influence of Moravian missionaries “menaced the definitive union of the Mosquitia with Nicaragua.” In order to counteract this menace the priests established a Catholic *Colegio* in Bluefields and sent sixteen teachers and eight priests to the coast.

³⁶FO 56/56 221 Ramirez to Jenner,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ FO 56/56 287 Bingham to Jenner, Novemeber 4 1900.

They also baptized all of the illegitimate children that the Moravians had refused to and sent four nuns to Bluefields to work in the hospital there. These nuns also set up a “women’s department” to teach manual and homemaking skills to residents.³⁹

In petitions from West Indian residents of the coast to the governor of Jamaica in 1900 over two hundred people signed a document that claimed that the government has shut down the Anglican church and is trying to do the same with the Moravian church.⁴⁰ While documents from the government of Nicaragua and the Moravian church make no mention of actually closing churches, it is understandable why residents of the coast might assume this. The government of Nicaragua had effectively ended all protestant education through its laws on the Spanish language and had expressed its preference for Catholicism by sponsoring the Church efforts to establish themselves in the territory.

Through its strict application of contraband controls and its hispanization campaigns the government of Nicaragua moved to assert the interdependence and domestic sovereignties over the Mosquitia that had eluded it since it gained international legal sovereignty over the coast with the 1860 Treaty of Managua. These measures alone could not, however, ensure Nicaragua’s Westphalian sovereignty. In the section that follows I will discuss how Nicaragua’s central government selectively enforced the commercial and educational reforms in order to curb foreign, especially British, influence in its territory.

³⁹ Hermann Gustav Schneider. *La Mosquitia: Historia de la Unitas Fratrum en la Mosquitia (1849-1898)* ed. CIEETS traducción del alemán al español. (Managua: CIEETS, 1998), 135.

⁴⁰ FO 56/56 178 RH Clarence to Lord Salisbury 15 August 1900; FO 56/56 287 Bingham to Jenner , November 4, 1900.

Ethnicity and Exclusion within the Bordered Lands

The government of Nicaragua, with good reason, perceived the British influence in the Mosquitia as the greatest threat to its Westphalian sovereignty along the coast. Both the Afro-descendent Creole population and the indigenous Miskitu had long colluded with the British to undermine Spanish and later Nicaraguan control of the coast and a large population of West Indian British subjects lived in the territory and had, during the period of the Reserve, played a major role in the Reserve's political life. Despite the fact that all three of these groups had worked with the British to limit Hispanic sovereignty over the coast in the past, the government of Nicaragua responded to them in very different ways during the early years of the reincorporation.

Baron Pineda, has argued, based on the Harrison-Altamirano treaty of 1905, which finalized the transfer of control of the coast from Britain to Nicaragua, that the Nicaraguan government treated all residents of the coast equally. "The distinction between Creole and Miskito was not significant," he argues. "The treaty granted both Creoles and Miskitos (indeed as well as 'the other inhabitants of the reserve') a special set of rights and obligations which would smooth their transition into full Nicaraguan citizenship."⁴¹ Though the treaty, finalized more than a decade after the reincorporation, did not differentiate between the two groups it is abundantly clear that the government of Nicaragua, both in its rhetoric and actions did distinguish between the two groups, especially in the early years of the reincorporation.

Native born Creoles and Jamaican-born British subjects were, as often as not, lumped together under the heading of *Negros* and found themselves portrayed as

⁴¹ Baron Pineda. *Shipwrecked Identities: Navigating Race on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast*. (Rutgers University Press, 2006), 65.

interlopers and abusers of the Miskitu. The speeches and writings of government officials and the testimonies of Nicaraguan citizens made it clear that these Negroes were a threatening and unwelcome element and stood as an obstacle to Nicaraguan sovereignty. These same sources, however, present the indigenous population of the coast as backward and oppressed, but as assimilable into the Nicaraguan nation. The differentiation between the indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples of the coast was not just expressed in government rhetoric. It also manifested itself in the enforcement of the regulations that the Nicaraguan government imposed along the coast. Educational restrictions were unevenly enforced and there are indications that commercial controls were as well.

A note from Carlos Alberto Lacayo, the *Comisario* of the Mosquito Reserve, to the British consul explaining the Nicaraguan decision to take control of the Coast reveals the different attitudes that Nicaraguan authorities took towards the indigenous and Afro-descendent populations.

From the treaty of Managua to the present date, The Mosquito Indians, victims of the poor treatment and slavery to which a tyrannical power has subjected them, have almost vanished, losing themselves in the depths of the forests, the small settlement that exist today, provide no reason to consider the ancient tribes alive. Time has radically changed the situation...What existed until yesterday, as I explained in my previous note, is a negro oligarchy, whose political and administrative immorality, and the vice that this causes, would justify, even if there were not other causes, the destitution that it has made its members suffer⁴²

This quote displays the dominant attitudes about both the Afro-descendant and indigenous populations of the coast.

The notion that a negro oligarchy, hostile to Nicaraguan sovereignty and working to advance British interests, had formed in the Mosquitia appears in everything from

⁴² Carlos Alberto Lacayo to British Consul, March 3, 1894. Quoted in Pedro Joaquin Cuadra Chamorro, *La Reincorporación de la Mosquitia* (Granada: 1944), 14-5.

presidential speeches to the testimony of ordinary citizens. In a July 25, 1894 speech to the expeditionary force sent to retake Bluefields, President Zelaya praised the patriotism of those men he was sending to “march to the Atlantic coast and to raise there the flag to such a height as national dignity demands.” He explained to the soldiers that they were off to fight “the Negroes from Jamaica, poorly advised by some adventurers that want to make themselves owners of the riches of the coast, that put out the call for insurrection against the authorities of Nicaragua.”⁴³ A few months earlier Don Eugenio Malvido testified in Bluefields about the hostility of Jamaicans towards Nicaraguans as well as the power that they had to act of that hostility. He testified that “The negroes are exceedingly hostile to the Nicaraguans, and that the Justices of the Court, when a Nicaraguan happens to be tried, even for slight offenses, and on some occasions without any cause, impose upon them excessive punishments.”⁴⁴

The threat that the Creoles and Jamaicans posed came not only from their control of the courts in Bluefields but also from their role as armed members of a local police force. Several deponents involved in an investigation of the resistance mentioned that the Creoles and Jamaicans in the police force mounted armed patrols of the streets and drilled in front of the city hall. If it were not enough that the negroes exercised police powers, they had the gall to confront the Nicaraguan Army. Don José Manuel Moya testified that:

“Said negroes caused a body of armed police to be stationed at the pier where the steamer Mabel Comeaux is moored, with instructions to vex the Nicaraguan soldiers and officers in the examination of their baggages and effects. Deponent

⁴³ Jose Santos Zelaya, Proclamation to Troops Leaving for Bluefields, July 25, 1894. Quoted in Enrique Aquino. *Zelaya: el libro de su vida* (Managua, 1945), 70.

⁴⁴ Don Eugenio Malvido, “Testimony” in *Affairs in Bluefields*, 6.

saw a military officer of such a high rank as General Dávila to be deprived of his revolver by the police.”⁴⁵

Throughout the testimony relating to reincorporation of the coast, Nicaraguan deponents use the term *Negroes* interchangeably with Jamaicans, and stress that these Afro-descendent people are holding positions of authority within the Mosquitia that they should not be.

Lacayo’s statement about the “negro oligarchy” does not only criticize it for resisting the authority of the Nicaraguan state, but also for oppressing the indigenous population. This criticism appears in testimony surrounding the Nicaraguan occupation of the coast. Mr. Luis N. Fry, an American engineer living in Bluefields, testified that “the negro government of this locality has been recently engaged in committing all kinds of outrages, especially against the Indian race, which is cruelly treated by the Negroes.”⁴⁶ George A. Palmer, another U.S. citizen living in the reserve, condemned local authorities. “Outrages of all classes are daily perpetrated against the Indians, that the latter are robbed, ill-treated, and even deprived of their wives and daughters by the local officials.”⁴⁷ Lacayo, in an official capacity, and the deponents in the investigation into the events at Bluefields present the Negroes as illegitimate outsiders oppressing those who belong within the reserve, both the Indians and the Nicaraguans who live in the reserve and visit it in a military capacity. In essence they are redefining the “us and them” of the coast. No longer are the Costeños, both indigenous and Creole, pitted against the Hispanics from the west, but instead, those with a legitimate claim to the coast, the

⁴⁵ Don José Manuel Moya, “Testimony,” *Affairs at Bluefields*, 5.

⁴⁶ Luis N. Fry, “Testimony,” *Affairs at Bluefields*, 7.

⁴⁷ K. Geo. A Palmer, “Testimony,” *Affairs at Bluefields*, 3.

Indians and Nicaraguans, are placed in opposition to the racially and culturally different interlopers.

This new association of the Miskitu with the Nicaraguans instead of their fellow *Costeños* reflects a shift in thinking about Nicaraguan identity that occurred at the close of the nineteenth century. An elite consensus from this period favored the civilization of Nicaragua's highland Indians and their assimilation into a Mestizo nation. According to Jeffrey Gould, this process began with the Conservative regime that preceded Zelaya's, but upon taking power, the Liberal leader intensified this civilizing project, focusing government efforts on two main fronts. The first was the privatization of community property and inducements to participate in the agro-export sector and the second was a series of educational reforms designed to liberate the Indians from their backwards culture.⁴⁸ While it is clear that the Atlantic coast's long history as a site of imperial rivalry was central to Zelaya's desire to reincorporate it, the dissolution of the Mosquito Reserve and the abrogation of the special rights and privileges conferred in the 1860 treaty of Managua is of a piece with the abolition of *Comunidades Indigenas* in 1906 and the dissolution of indigenous *cofradías* and turning over of their property to municipal governments.⁴⁹

It is in the field of education that the "slow but efficacious work of assimilating the indigenous element" is most visible and in which it is clearest that the indigenous population of the Mosquitia had become more wayward Nicaraguan Indian than Costeño

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Gould, *To Die in this Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 38-42; For a discussion of how this process played out among highland Indians, see Frances Kinloch Tijerino ed. *Nicaragua en busca de su identidad*. (Managua: IHN-UCA, 1995).

⁴⁹ Gould, 42; Ligia Peña y Luisa Amelia Castillo. "Estado y cofradías, Nicaragua siglo XIX" *Nicaragua en busca de su identidad*., 481-494.

to the national government. Isolda Rodríguez Rosales argues that the plans of study implemented on the coast were essentially equal to those of the rest of Nicaragua. Public schools taught Costeño children a history and geography that was not theirs, an unfamiliar language, and agricultural skills (the production of coffee) that was useless along the Atlantic littoral. “The state,” she argues, “did not worry about knowing the idiosyncrasies of the ethnicities [of the Atlantic], their necessities, and develop a plan of studies more in accord with their needs.”⁵⁰ An 1893 Pedagogical Congress in Nicaragua developed a plan for indigenous education nationally. They agreed that indigenous education should teach agricultural skills, that they must learn the national language, and that they abandon indigenous dress. They should establish schools in which “the Indian is instructed and in which they are educated for a civilized life.”⁵¹

The idea of civilizing savages and making them productive Mestizo Nicaraguans was equally present on the Atlantic coast. In an 1898 speech before Nicaragua’s Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Public Instruction explained that the goal in the Department of Zelaya was to “bring those errant tribes to civilization, waking in them the love of work...and cultivating in them those social habits that are, for the individual, a means of wellbeing and progress.”⁵² Educators agreed, as Lacayo suggested in his remarks, that it was the very backwardness of the Indians that had allowed them to be dominated by the Creoles and others who controlled the reserve. Adolfo Altamirano, the Minister of Public Instruction in 1905, believed that education would not only allow the indigenous population to become industrious and serve the nation, but would give them

⁵⁰ Rodríguez Rosales, *Educación durante el Liberalismo*, 174-5.

⁵¹ “Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores e Instrucción Pública”, 1894. Quoted in Rosario Rosales, 172-3.

⁵² J. Sansón. Ministerio de Instrucción Pública. *Memorias...1898*. quoted in Rodríguez Rosales, 170.

“the first impulses that will slowly lead them to claim [*conquistar*] their rights as true citizens of the republic.”⁵³ For the Liberal regime, the Indians of the Atlantic coast had ceased to be allies of the British and resisters of Hispanic hegemony, and instead became largely undistinguished from the highland Indians, backwards and uncivilized, but potentially full citizens of Nicaragua and a possible source of strength for the republic.

The different approaches to the Afro-descendent and indigenous populations of the Atlantic coast did not just show themselves in the rhetoric of the Liberal regime. They also took real form in the enforcement of the new regulations that the regime implemented along the coast. The “long slow process of assimilating” the indigenous population of the coast allowed for much more flexibility in the enforcement of regulations, whereas the threat to Nicaragua’s sovereignty from the English-speaking urban Afro-descendent population required immediate and strict enforcement. Moravian missionaries reported that shortly after the annexation Bluefields, the center of Creole culture on the coast was in a state of upheaval with many of the “best citizens” gone, never to return. Outside of these Creole centers however missionaries reported that “they had scarcely felt the effects of the Nicaraguan occupation of their territory. Indeed, the policy of their new rulers aims, for the present, at propitiating the Indians.”⁵⁴

As the plan to Hispanicize the coast got under way in earnest a few years later, the creoles in Bluefields again felt the campaign much more strongly than the Miskitu. In 1900 the Nicaraguan government established schools along the coast and decreed that all

⁵³ Quoted in Rodriguez Rosales, 170.

⁵⁴ Church of the United Brethren, *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Foreign Missions of the Church of the United Brethren. Second Century Volume II* (London: Brethren Society for the furtherance of the Gospel among the heathen, 1893), 466-8.

instruction along the coast had to be carried out in Spanish. Parents who did not send their children to Spanish schools faced fines and imprisonment. While the Moravian and Anglican schools that taught English and served the Creole population in Bluefields had to close their doors in order to avoid arrest, the schools in the interior run by the missionaries, that served the indigenous population remained open to students, even though the language of instruction was Miskitu.⁵⁵ A campaign with the goal of promoting the use of Spanish rather than of discouraging English would have closed down these Miskitu language schools as well.

The anti-Anglo, rather than strictly assimilationist, bent of Nicaragua's post reincorporation policy, took other forms as well. A group of British subjects that traveled to Jamaica to petition the British crown to intervene in the Mosquitia cited the Nicaraguan plan to eliminate English education, but also a plan to close Moravian churches and a demand that British subjects sign and declare themselves to be Nicaraguan subjects or else quit the country. Further, some missionaries complained to British officials that they felt mistrust from the Nicaraguans who thought that they exercised too much economic control through ownership of land in Bluefields and running the small shops associated with missions and more generally that they "dominate the people [Miskitu] with religious fanaticism."⁵⁶

The commercial regulations imposed by the government of Nicaragua after taking control of the coast also appear to have been enforced differently for the indigenous and foreign populations. The goal of dispossessing the Miskitu of communal lands and

⁵⁵ Bingham to Jenner, November 4, 1900; FO, 56/56, 287.

⁵⁶ Bingham to Jenner, September 21, 1900; FO, 56/56, 234.; RH Clarence to Lord Salisbury August 15, 1900; FO 56/56 178.

forcing them to enter the broader economy appears to have been largely successful. The Moravian missionaries all along the coast noticed a marked difference in the ability of their church members to provide for themselves following the takeover of the territory by the Government of Nicaragua. One missionary noted that the “people feel the oppression which has come upon them by the hand of the Spaniard [Nicaraguan] but you seldom hear them complain. They bear it submissively and silently...formerly they spent their time in idleness; they did not need to bestir themselves: everything was cheap and consequently they would not work.”⁵⁷ Despite these changes in the ability of indigenous people to live outside of the broader economy, they do not seem to have been targeted for violating commercial laws in the same way that outsiders were.

In a 1900 letter to exiled Mosquito Chief Robert Henry Clarence, residents of Pearl Lagoon begged the chief to intervene with British colonial authorities on their behalf. They claimed that they had been “Divested of every means of support...The country is famishing daily. Not only is there an exorbitant import duty imposed, but the most necessary articles of self support have been made contraband...We cannot go-a-turtling to the cays without a passport under penalty of imprisonment, fine or confiscation of our gatherings.”⁵⁸ It is very doubtful, however, that the ‘passport’ requirement kept the Miskitu from turtling. Moravian missionaries serving all along the coast regularly reported that their churches and meetings were nearly empty of males during the turtling

⁵⁷ Church of the United Brethren, *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Foreign Missions of the Church of the United Brethren. Second Century Volume II* (London: Brethren Society for the furtherance of the Gospel among the heathen, 1893), 613.

⁵⁸ FO, 56/56, 114. Ernest Lever, Charles Patterson, William Archibald and George Britton to Robert Henry Clarence, March 15. 1900.

season, as almost the entire village would travel out to the turtling grounds.⁵⁹ Whereas Cayman turtlers had their boats impounded and were taken to Cape Gracias a Dios for trial when caught fishing illegally, the annual exodus of male villagers along the coasts suggests that if restrictions were enforced, the penalties were insufficient to deter Miskitu turtlers.

Enforcement of alcohol concessions also suggest that Nicaraguan authorities used commercial controls to limit outside influences along the coast and allowed the indigenous population more leeway. Alcohol production and imports were among the most closely policed industries following the annexation of the Mosquitia and prosecutions for smuggling alcohol were among the most common to come before Nicaraguan authorities.⁶⁰ Within Miskitu villages, however, missionaries reported the widespread and open production of *mishla*, a drink made of fermented cassava and cane liquor. While this homemade liquor violated the concession for native liquors there is no indication in the missionaries' reports that villagers were prosecuted for its production. In one case in 1903 missionaries reported the villagers spending a rowdy holiday drinking the contraband alcohol and getting drunk with the Inspector of Police and while one villager was taken before a Magistrate for fighting, there appeared to have been no problem with the illegal alcohol.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See multiple entries in Moravian Archives, Bethlehem PA.: Station Diaries (hereinafter MA): Ephrata, 1899-1900; Kurata 1903-1906; Kukallaya 1903- 1904.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of alcohol smuggling and prosecution along the coast see Samuel Frazier "Commerce, Contraband, and Control: Illicit Trade on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast, 1860-1910." (MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2005).

⁶¹ MA, Kukalaya, January 5, 1895; Ephrata, October 29, 1905; Karata, January 2, 1905; Ephrata, December 28, 1900; Kukallaya, December 22, 1903.

The disparities in rhetoric and in enforcement of regulations between the urban Creole and West Indian population of the coast and the rural more indigenous populations is striking. It indicates that the Liberal regime saw the Creoles with their links to the British as a clear threat to Nicaraguan sovereignty over the coast, while they viewed the indigenous population as a backwards and uncivilized group, but not one that was a potential strength for the nation rather than a potential threat and as such did not need to be policed nearly as closely.

Conclusion

Despite the best efforts of Zelaya and the liberal regime, the Mosquito Coast's transition from a borderland to a bordered land was incomplete at best. After the regime was deposed in 1909, through more than two decades of civil war and military occupation by the United States, the Mosquitia served as a staging ground for coups and a site of commercial exploitation by foreign export agricultural firms; During the forty-year Somoza dynasty, an attitude that might best be described as benign neglect replaced Zelaya's aggressive incorporationism; And, fierce resistance to Sandinista attempts to control the coast as well as its emergence as an important sight for the transshipment of narcotics since the 1980s further demonstrate Zelaya's failure to achieve the incorporation of the Coast or its residents.

What is missing from this analysis is a discussion of how those Miskitu, Creoles, and others living along the coast accepted or challenged the roles and identities that the Nicaraguan state attempted to impose on them. These themes, as well as the lasting legacy of the events of the turn of the century, have been taken up by other authors, most

notably Hale and Pineda. What this paper has done, as Aron and Adelman advocate, is look at how the region's history as a site of imperial struggle, and its residents history as actors within that struggle, along with emerging notions of nation unrelated to that struggle combined to shape the varied ways in which residents of the Atlantic coast experienced that process. The two competing forces of imperial struggle and an emerging notion of an assimilationist Mestizo identity defined both the mechanisms of sovereignty and the possibilities of nationality as well as the lived experiences of those who were potential members of the nation and those who were not.

In addition to shedding light on the case of Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast, this paper also points to the importance of looking at borderlands as more than a meeting point of two cultures or a site inhabited by imperial rivals and an internally undifferentiated indigenous population. Different ethnic groups within a borderlands, or perhaps more importantly, those perceived as different from one another, experience the bordering process differently and an analysis that fails to recognize internal differentiation, real or imagined, cannot address a borderlands history completely. In this analysis the internal differentiation is ethno-racial, but an analysis that looks at gender, class, or life-stage differentiation would no doubt be equally illuminating.

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