

## **Nahuas, Gachupines, Patriarchs and Piris': Nicaraguan History through Highland Peasant Eyes**

**Timothy Charles Brown**

History, the art of trying to know the past in order to understand the present, and perhaps even catch a glimpse of the future, is lived by all but written by few. Latin American history is no exception to this rule. Writers of the region's history have, with but rare exceptions, either been members of its Europeanate elite or foreigners, with perspectives reflecting their origins.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps while elites ruled unchallenged this sufficed. But today, as democracy takes tentative hold, once marginal and historically unnoticed groups are emerging as important political players and major *demandeurs* of attention and quotas of power in country after country as the newly unleashed processes of free trade, open economies and one-man-one-vote democracy cause profound changes to social systems and structures.<sup>3</sup> This makes it useful to consider now how these new players view the world, since their perspectives and interests, even if they could once be ignored, are now important.

The highlands mountain peasant "indio" campesinos of Nicaragua, an erstwhile marginalized group with well over a million members, have just emerged from facelessness into national prominence and can therefore serve as a case in point.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence of the Sandinista revolution and highlands peasant resistance to it (the latter a process inaccurately known to the outside world as the Contra War) the campesinos of Nicaragua's central mountains regained an important measure of historical group coherence. Since they number about 35% of the country's population, this has made them a major new political force and, as a consequence of their having voted heavily in Nicaragua's 1996 national elections, arguably that nation's most decisive yet least known electoral constituency, with the power to decide virtually any national election.<sup>5</sup>

Pre-literate and historically marginalized, Nicaragua's highlander campesinos have no written history of their own and they and the region they inhabit are virtually "black holes" even to academics. With extremely rare exceptions, scholarly studies of

them simply do not exist.<sup>6</sup> Their emergence as possibly the decisive constituency in the country makes it important to begin to fill in this gap. This study attempts to initiate that process by trying to see Nicaraguan history through their eyes. It is, in a sense, a case study of one of many such marginal groups that, stimulated by newly emergent participatory democratic processes, are beginning to emerge into political prominence in the region. Other such groups include Peru's Quechuas, Bolivia's Aymaras, and Guatemala's highlands Maya, and numerous less precisely defined post-tribal/sub-national populations. It is hoped that this particular case study, limited though it is, may serve as a model, or at least an inspiration to others to take another look at similar heretofore marginalized peoples in Latin America, or even elsewhere, and to begin asking of questions about them as well. If the world is indeed finally drawing out of its authoritarian past into a more democratic future, such exercises might well prove of more than mere passing value.

A caveat: since the writer is neither a Nicaraguan nor highlander campesino, this attempt will, of necessity, involve a certain degree of pretentiousness, and the view will be inexact. Nonetheless, the writer feels that his credentials to write a proxy history for this people, while imperfect, are arguably at least above average, including as they do over 42 years Nicaragua and Central America experience, 15 years living and working in five of the republics of the region, bilingual Spanish, and more than ten years working directly with and studying Nicaragua's highlands peasant populace, including preparation of a successful doctoral dissertation on them. With that point made, the reader is now invited to accompany the writer in an attempt to refocus the mind's eyes, to look at Nicaraguan history not, as has been traditional, from the center out but in a new way, from the periphery in, from the point of view of a constituent mass, a once faceless people who have just emerged as a major actor on the national scene. And so, to the his-

tory of Nicaragua through highlander eyes. The story begins 4000 to 6000 years ago.

#### *The Arrival of the Ancestral Highlanders*

According to gloto-chronologists and ethnic markers in the mitochondria of DNA molecules, about four to six millennia ago, macro-Chibchan Indians began drifting into the land that was to become Nicaragua, slowly moving northward from their ancestral South American homelands beyond the Darien wilderness.<sup>7</sup> Hunter-gatherers and slash-burn farmers, their social organization was minimal and included neither an organized government, a ruling class nor nucleated settlements. Little or no archeological data exists on the Nicaraguan Chibchans of this period and, with but few exceptions, modern scholarship is largely uninformed as to what they were like.<sup>8</sup> But from what little can be teased out of colonial era and later accounts, they appear to have been innately libertarian, but not anarchic, with each nuclear and extended family living in relative isolation, hunting and gathering as a group and farming small, independent plots. While they had market centers, these were not occupied full-time, and they pursued their daily lives on individual homesteads and had neither fixed villages nor even hamlets. Despite the apparent lack of central authority, the Chibchans seem to have been very efficient users of the land since, by the early 1500s, they had a population of about 358,000, a level close to the maximum sustainable on the lands they then occupied.<sup>9</sup> This strongly suggests that their social organization was close to ideal for the times and available technology.

The Chibchans seemed to prefer living as they did, without government or central authority, as this pattern was interrupted only when an external threat appeared. It appears that only in such instances did families or settlement groups come together to defend themselves from outsiders under "war-leaders" who took charge during conflict periods. Once a threat dissipated, these "war leaders" blended back in to the base populace.<sup>10</sup> The Spanish erupted onto the scene during a prolonged period of such conflicts between the mountain Chibchans and Nicaragua's first Conquistadors, Nahua tribal groups of Aztec Empire/Mexican origin.

#### *Nicaragua's First Conquistadores—The Nahua*

In the 9th century, Nahua groups from the region of modern-day Puebla, Mexico began a long march into Central America. Centrally organized and directed, they slowly moved southward. Bypassing the highlands Maya, the Nahua slowly conquered or

displaced other native American groups in their path. Moving across the isthmus of Tehuantepec, they first subdued Soconusco, the lowlands of modern Chiapas, and then continued on. By the time of the Spanish Conquest in the early 16th century, these Nahua groups had conquered and colonized parts of Pacific lowlands Guatemala, all of El Salvador and the Pacific lowlands of Nicaragua, and Costa Rica as far south as the Gulf of Nicoya.

Quite urbanized by the standards of the times, and in particularly sharp contrast to the Chibchans, the Nahua lived in large, tightly organized groups with very hierarchical societal structures that included hereditary princes or chiefs and elite castes of priests, warriors and professionals. Beneath this elite was a "middle class" of artisans and low-level administrators who managed the labor of the Nahua's largest "class," proletarian laborers. At the very bottom were slaves, either Nahua who had been captured, condemned or sold into servitude from within Nahua society, or non-Nahua captives.<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Managua was the largest Nahua settlement in what was to become Nicaragua, with a pre-Columbian population estimated by some at about 40,000, making it the second largest city in the Americas at the time and comparable in size to contemporary Paris, London or Rome, and larger than any city in Spain.<sup>12</sup> Other large Nahua towns included Imabite with 15,000 people, Jalteba with 8,000, and DENOCHARI with 2,000.<sup>13</sup> While direct evidence is scant, it appears that the Nahua, in conquering the Nicaraguan lowlands, had either subjugated or displaced a large pre-Nahua population of Chibchans. The latter were presumably either enslaved or fled into the central mountains to join other Chibchans already there.

Once they had conquered Nicaragua's Pacific lowlands, the invading Nahua tribal states had established a sort of agricultural colony suzerain to the Aztec empire, dotted with cities, towns and agricultural plantations, with a population of about 800,000.<sup>14</sup> Among their major economic activities, they produced cacao, or coco beans. Since at the time cacao beans were the principal medium of exchange of the region, this was an instance in which money literally grew on trees. Cacao, in the form of chocolate drinks and food condiments, was also a sumptuary good consumed by the privileged elite. Cacao served the Nahua as a dual purpose crop, as a high value-low bulk export commodity and as a luxury good for the privileged few. As an export, cacao was apparently carried northward to Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City) on the backs of human porters known as *tamemes* and

possibly also in coast-wise small vessels, to be paid to the Empire as tribute or in exchange for luxury import goods that were not produced locally, setting a pattern that continues to dominate the Nicaraguan economy today.

Since there is no written record, the Chibchan highlander's reaction to the Nahua conquerors can for now best be derived only inferentially or by speculation. But since few people love invaders of their homelands and the Chibchans had been either displaced or enslaved by the Nahua, it can reasonably be assumed that relations were not friendly. More direct indications of this can be drawn from Spanish colonial chronicles. When the Spanish arrived in the early 1520s, the Nahua and Chibchans were at war, as was attested by unusually large standing Nahua armies. As an added source of Nahua-Chibcha tensions, according to Spanish descriptions of their markets, the Nahua not only bought and sold slaves, but also consumed human flesh as a luxury consumer good to be barbecued or stewed on special occasions. While most roasting slaves bought and sold at local markets were Nahua from nearby groups, many of those served up at parties appear to have been Chibchans captured by the Nahua during raids into the mountains. While the Spanish chroniclers speak only of the Nahua, the Chibchans may well have engaged in returning this particular favor since, as is described later, they too seem not to have been adverse to consuming human flesh.

In any case, between the Nahua conquest, slave raiding, and their eating habits, it seems reasonable to conclude that the the Nahua and Chibchans felt considerable antipathy towards one another and that this was manifest in their having engaged in low-intensity conflict, if not outright warfare, against one another for several centuries. As a consequence, when Nicaragua's second set of Conquistadores arrived waving the Castillian banners of Ferdinand and Isabela, and the Papal banners of Spanish Catholicism, the country was sharply divided along ethnic lines, with the Nahua in the Pacific lowlands and the Chibchans in the mountains. The sole exception was a line of Nahua trading posts, known as *pocheca*, that ran through the mountains at about a day's *tameme*, or human porter, march from one another, apparently a trade route northward into Nahua areas of present-day Honduras. When the Spanish appeared, there were thus two Nicaraguas—the Chibchan highlands with a population of about 358,000, and the Nahua lowlands, home to perhaps 800,000 Nahua.

The Spanish conquered the Nahua lowlands, but did not conquer the Chibchan highlands, and this was to perpetuate a sharp underlying division of the country along pre-Columbian ethnic lines. Nicaraguan historians consider this perpetuation of the Chibcha-Nahua division critical to understanding modern Nicaragua.<sup>15</sup> As one of modern Nicaragua's most prominent scholars of its history, Jaime Incer, puts it:

To the west, on the dry plains (of the Pacific) lived indigenous groups whose historic roots and culture was tied to the notable civilizations of Mexico; to the east (the Highlands), among rain drenched mountains and torrential rivers wandered tribes of clearly circum-Caribbean origins and customs. As a consequence of these differences of geography and of origins, Nicaragua is really made up of two nations living in one country, sharing a isthmian bridge where the natural and the cultural have come together from the most remote of times to allow the passage of both biological and ethnic migrations from North to South America, and vice versa.<sup>16</sup>

Pablo Antonio Cuadra, currently Editor in Chief of *La Prensa* newspaper and arguably Nicaragua's greatest living man of letters, has labeled this difference, even more succinctly, the founding duality of modern Nicaraguan character.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Nicaragua's Second Conquistadores—Spanish "Gachupines"*

The Spanish Conquistadores arrived in Nicaragua in the early 1520s from two different directions, entering from both Panama and Mexico. Those from recently conquered Mexico were accompanied by Nahua-speaking guides and, on occasion, Nahua auxiliary troops. Since the Nahua societies of Nicaragua were outlying groups suzerain to the Aztec Empire, this made the Spanish conquest of Nicaragua simply an extension of the conquest of Mexico. The Spanish seem to have found Nicaragua extraordinarily attractive. Lopez de Gomara described it as "healthy, fertile and full of gardens and orchards." Bishop Bartolome de Las Casas, the famous champion of Indian rights, visited Nicaragua, for which he was also responsible, and found it "a delightful and happy find for the human race...which fills me with more wonder than any other place I know, so fertile, so abundant, so fresh and agreeable, so healthy, so filled with fruitfulness, as orderly as the orchards and villages of Castilla, and completely provisioned to comfortably house, entertain and provide gracefully for man."<sup>18</sup> Jeronimo Benzoni reported that the Spanish "for the

abundance of all they found there, called (Nicaragua) the Paradise of Mohammed."<sup>19</sup> In his monumental *Conquest of Peru*, Prescott remarked that Conquistadores who had been in Nicaragua before joining Pizarro, when faced by the dreary Peruvian landscape, longingly remembered "their pleasant quarters in their luxurious land, (and) sighed only to return to their Mahometan paradise."<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps for the Spanish Conquistadores Nicaragua was Paradise, but they quickly converted it into a Purgatory on earth for the Nahua. The Spanish were hungry for gold and souls, not gardens and orchards. Their armies came seeking earthly wealth and were accompanied by Catholic priests dedicated to baptizing pagans by the thousands and to instilling into them as quickly as possible to the glory of God and themselves new beliefs based on the Spanish Catholic version of Christianity in the era of the Inquisition. They came armed with the "modern" steel of Castile, an unbridled hunger for fortune and power, and the missionary zealotry of true believers.

To advance all their causes at once, the Spanish employed a most curious procedure known as a *requerimiento*. This involved reading to each native group as it was encountered, probably to the complete bewilderment of its members, a declaration in Spanish that henceforth they would be obligated (*requerido*) to convert to a new ideology, Catholic Christianity, and to submit to a new master, the King of Spain. Submission to the King was to be demonstrated both by acts of fealty and payments of tribute. Acceptance of Catholic Christianity was to be demonstrated by submitting to baptism and participating in activities and organizations led by the priests. Those who refused to do either voluntarily would be forced to do so by the Army.

In the very first meeting of Conquistador and Nicaraguan Nahua ruler, Gil Gonzalez offered Chorotega Chief Nicarao, a Nahua, the stark choices of a *requerimiento*. Accept Catholic Christianity and baptism and become a vassal of the King of Spain, or meet us on the field of battle. In either case, bring gold. Nicarao chose to come in peace, bringing with him as tribute 18,500 Castillian pesos worth of gold. He also accepted baptism and became a vassal of the King. Gil Gonzalez reciprocated by giving him a linen shirt and a red cap.<sup>22</sup>

The second important Nahua Chief to appear was Diriangen, accompanied by over five hundred retainers. He brought an even larger tribute of gold, worth over 19,000 Castillian pesos. But unlike Nicarao, Diriangen was not submissive. Asked why he had come, Diriangen replied that he wanted to meet the

Spaniards, to touch them, and to see if they really did have beards and travel astride beasts of prey.<sup>23</sup> But he did not promptly submit to baptism nor did he agree to become a vassal of the King of Spain. Instead he left, promising to return three days later. Return he did, but at the head of an army of some 3,000 warriors. The battle that followed appears to have been noisy and, for the Indians, bloody. But the Spanish emerged triumphant without the loss of a single soldier.<sup>24</sup>

Although Diriangen was not immediately hunted down and killed, Spanish reactions to later Indian resistance were often brutal in the extreme. Rodrigo de Castillo, a high-ranking Spanish Crown Inspector who investigated one expeditionary foray by Army troops, provided a colorful description of their conduct:

On their way from Honduras to Nicaragua, the Spaniards burned towns and caused great destruction. Recently-delivered babies were taken from their mother's breast and tossed aside. Caciques and *principales* were put in collars and chains.... In Aguateca (Honduras) 200 Indians were punished; one-third of them were put in a large hut and burned to death; another one-third were torn to pieces by dogs.

Rodrigo de Castillo, apparently a humanist by Conquest standards, did not disagree with punishing resistant Indians, but he did object to their being "roasted alive, disemboweled by dogs, or (treated) in other savage ways."<sup>25</sup> Such punitive forays were apparently far from rare, and accounts of Indians being burned alive, torn apart by packs of dogs, or killed in other colorful ways can be found in the writings of almost every historian of the period.

Other battles followed the clash between Diriangen and the Conquistadores but, on balance, the conquest of Nahua Nicaragua took place swiftly and with minimal Spanish casualties. Newson found that the Spanish "conquest of Pacific Nicaragua was relatively easy." But in the Chibchan highlands, "resistance to Spanish colonization was vastly different and, in fact, persisted throughout the colonial period."<sup>26</sup> The first Spanish soldiers killed in combat against Nicaraguan Indians were to die at the hands of Chibchan Chontals, not Nahuas.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Decimation in the Lowlands*

For the Nahua, the price of defeat was appalling. In one generation, the Spanish annihilated almost the entire population of Pacific lowlands Nicaragua. From an estimated 800,000 population in 1523, by 1544

Spanish *oidor*, or Crown Inspector, Diego de Herrera, reported that the population in the Nahua region had been reduced to only 30,000.<sup>28</sup> By 1548, Managua "had only 265 tributary Indians...while Jalteba had been reduced to 195 tributary Indians."<sup>29</sup> It is possible that a few Nahua fled to relative safety among their hereditary enemies in the mountains, and disease and forced labor undeniably took their tolls. But the principal cause of this decline was slaving. The supply of existing gold and other precious goods available in Nicaragua had been exhausted almost immediately by early Spanish exactions of tribute and, with the exception of a small mining district in the highlands (Nueva Segovia), Nicaragua offered no other notable sources of gold or silver. The only long-term productive generator of wealth in Nicaragua was farming, hardly an attractive option to Conquistadores during the early Conquest. They were extractors of existing wealth not long-term foreign investors. With the native populations of the Antilles disappearing rapidly, and every Spaniard demanding personal servants and concubines as his price for continued service in the New World, Indian slaves quickly became Conquest-era Spanish colonial America's second most valuable export commodity. Pedro de Alvarado brought commercial scale Indian slaving to Nicaragua via Soconusco, Guatemala and El Salvador.<sup>30</sup> MacLeod, in his study of *Spanish Central America*, calls slaving one of the two "golden keys to wealth" for the Conquistadores.<sup>31</sup> "Central America was the most convenient center of large Indian populations, and within Central America lacustrine Nicaragua was the closest nucleus. Thus it became the main center of the slave trade in Indians."<sup>32</sup>

The Spanish Crown was Janus-faced on Indian slaving, opposed in principal but immensely tolerant in practice. In Nicaragua, the newly founded Spanish colonies in Leon and Granada became the centers of the trade, and slaving formed the basis for much of their initial prosperity.<sup>33</sup> By 1542, an estimated half-million Indian slaves had been exported from Central America to Panama, Peru or Cuba, the vast majority from Nicaragua.<sup>34</sup> Little, if any, evidence of their arrival at their destinations remains, but given the extremely high relative costs of Pacific ocean cargo transportation during the earliest years of the Conquest, the practice would presumably not have continued for two decades had the Indian slaves not arrived with sufficient remaining economic value to serve as a salable commodity.<sup>35</sup> It is not necessary to relate here the full details of the immense tragedy of the Conquest. But because a number of events and processes of the period had later echoes of importance

to understanding the beliefs, values and group interests of Nicaragua's highlands campesinos, certain details and contrasts are of interest. One was the regional nature of the Conquest.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Survival in the Highlands*

Resistance to the Conquest by the highlands Chibcha and their subsequent group survival stand in sharp contrast to the relatively quick submission and subsequent near annihilation of the Pacific lowlands Nahua. The difference had multiple origins. The Chibchans had little the Spanish could exploit for profit. They had no gold or silver, did not offer to the Spanish already organized agricultural plantations complete with organized proletarian labor forces of docile workers accustomed to taking orders, and were far too rebellious and independent-minded to make good slaves. But, and also unlike the Nahua, the Chibchans put up fierce, constant and violent resistance. It is hard to say which was more important, the Chibchan's poverty or their ferocity, but the end results are clear.

Within a relatively short period, the remaining Nahua were launched into a process of deracination and acculturation. Some cultural and social markers survived and even today certain Pacific lowlands communities such as Subtiava and Monimbo still retain a sense of "indio" identity. But in relative terms, indigenous Pacific lowlands Nicaragua made the transition to an ersatz Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic culture far more quickly and deeply than did the highlands.<sup>37</sup> Miscegenation more quickly created a majority mestizo populace in the Pacific and ladinoization proceeded more rapidly.<sup>38</sup> By the early 18th Century the Pacific was essentially hispanicized and mestizo. By way of contrast, the use of Indian languages as mother tongues among the highlander campesinos continued into the 20th century, important vestiges of Indian religions and folk customs still remain, and pre-Columbian cultural patterns continue to be important.<sup>39</sup> In a 1994 study, Costa Rican ethnologist Eugenia Ibarra found that in the highlands campesino descendants of the Chontales and Matagalpans still retained cultural traits identifiable as Chibchan.<sup>40</sup>

The case should not be over-stated. Spanish has become the highlander's mother tongue and Catholicism its predominant formal religion, and mestizaje and ladino-ization have made considerable inroads, especially in the region's towns and market centers. There are also numerous small enclaves of Europeans, and the most Indian of the campesinos continue to retreat more and more deeply into the

region's shrinking agricultural frontier. But an overwhelming majority of highlander campesinos still self-identify as "indios," not "espanoles" (Spaniards), and the "indio-español" racial divide remains the most important social identity divide in the region. Many *comarcas*, or peasant settlement communities, continue to be heavily, if not entirely, Indian; pre-Columbian practices such as the extensive use of sorcery, witchcraft and native medicines continue, and there are even tantalizing hints that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, a few native speakers of Chibchan languages may still continue to exist in isolation, carefully hidden from the Spaniard's eyes.

#### *The Instruments of Conquest*

In terms of the Pacific and the Nahua, the Conquest proceeded quite differently. The Conquistadores installed themselves as Nicaragua's new ruling elite and deployed both the ideology of the Catholic Church and the power of the Spanish State in the person of its Army as instruments of control.<sup>41</sup> At first, when a Chief or leader submitted to a *requerimiento*, the Spanish ruled via the Indians' own pre-Conquest hierarchy. But this quickly gave way to the use of institutions that combined persuasion with coercion.

The most important early institution of Conquest was the *encomienda*, a State grant to a Spaniard of a tract of land and authority over the Indians living on it. In return, the grantee, or *encomendero*, at least in theory, was to provide his Indians with "protection and instruction in the Catholic faith,"<sup>42</sup> but its principal real impact was to take land from the Indians and put it and Nicaragua's rural labor force under the control of the new elite. But since quick profits were of far greater interest to most *encomenderos* than instructing Indians, many maximized their immediate incomes by stripping their properties of workers, and *encomienda* Indians quickly became a prime source of slaves. Because the Pacific was the only region under effective Spanish control, the highlands were largely spared.<sup>43</sup> This slaving, excessive labor demands, and disease, caused "a drop in labor supplies...when all but the wealthiest *encomenderos* were no longer able to maintain even a meager level of city living.... The Institution would linger on for nearly two centuries more, but it changes radically in nature and purpose after 1575."<sup>44</sup>

A short while later, faced by severe shortages of native labor caused by their practices (Spaniards did not *labor*), the Spanish invented another institution, the *repartimiento*, designed to mobilize remaining native manpower to the benefit of the now labor-short colonists.<sup>45</sup> Its principal purpose was to parcel out

Indian workers to Spanish masters. The *repartimiento* swiftly became the key to generating virtually free forced labor from the remaining Indian populace to the benefit of the elite.<sup>46</sup> In politico-economic terms, stripping the countryside to benefit the cities and the few became the normal pattern in Nicaragua very early on. But *requerimientos*, *encomiendas*, and *repartimientos* worked efficiently only where the natives were relatively submissive, the military effective, the Church successful, and cultivable land and Indian labor readily available, conditions that prevailed in the Pacific lowlands, but not in the highlands.

#### *Colonial-Era Chibchan Resistance*

Contrary to their quick conquest of the Pacific, the Spanish never fully subjugated the highlands. They did stage *entradas*, or incursions, and Catholic priests tried sporadically to establish *reducciones*, or frontier missions.<sup>47</sup> But in only one place, Nueva Segovia's gold fields, were they prepared to pay the price the Chibchan *indios bravos*, or wild Indians, extracted for maintaining a real presence. The result was what Nicaraguan historians call *la línea de la frontera española*, the Spanish Line. They argue that west of the Spanish Line, Spain's fiat was supreme, but to the east it was not, and several trace the Spanish Line as running through the middle of the highlands via Nueva Segovia into Honduras, along the line of pre-Columbian Nahua *pocheca* outposts.<sup>48</sup> But in practice, much of the highlands to the west of the *pochecas* also remained Chibchan.

Not that the Spanish did not try to subdue the highlanders. They did. But throughout the three centuries of the colonial era, the Chibchans put up fierce resistance. Some of the most violent early colonial-era Spanish-Chibchan Indian fighting took place near Nueva Segovia. Founded in 1527 to exploit nearby gold finds, Nueva Segovia was attacked and destroyed repeatedly throughout the 16th century by Indians from the surrounding mountains and had to be moved several times before it finally came to rest in a new location where, in 1611, it became Ciudad Antigua.<sup>49</sup> Such Indian resistance continued through the Colonial era and was widespread throughout the highlands, especially in the Segovias to the north.<sup>50</sup> One rash of attacks came against a small mining region on the Rio Segovia<sup>51</sup> where the "aggressions of the natives, especially those then called Jicaques 'who came from the mountains' continued for...centuries."<sup>52</sup> In another instance, "Lencas who killed with witchcraft, and hordes of Jicaques, poured forth from the Rio Pantasma region to attack and pillage Christian settlements around Nueva Segovia."<sup>53</sup>

Histories of 16th to 18th century Spanish-Indian warfare list places where particularly notable battles occurred. Prominently named are Kilambe, El Cua,<sup>54</sup> Pantasma, Wamblan, Bocay, Penas Blancas, Matagalpa, Wiwili,<sup>55</sup> Quilali, Somoto and Jalapa. Many of these battles were caused by efforts by Catholic priests, supported by the Army, to collect the Chibchans into mission *reducciones* in order to convert and indoctrinate them. In one memorable case in 1611, a Spanish patrol of 25 soldiers commanded by a Captain and acting in support of Dominican priests, tried to capture a group of Taguaces. When the Army:

Arrived in the Indian's territory, at first they [the Taguaces] seemed cautious and submissive, but they soon rebelled, forcing the army troops to hold them off with musket fire during several skirmishes, but not before several Spanish soldiers were killed by Indian lances made of a very hard wood and tipped with poison.<sup>56</sup>

The Army and the priests nonetheless persisted for several months. Finally, two Spanish soldiers, frustrated and angered by the Taguaces resistance, captured an important Indian leader. When he fought back, they taught him a lesson by nailing him to a tree using a strap of iron and eight nails, and leaving him to die. His comrades found him and apparently decided to rid themselves once and for all of the troublesome priests and their escort. Pretending finally to be ready to submit, the Indians lured first the priests and then the soldiers to their deaths. A half century later a Taguace Chief described to a passing Friar what then happened. As was their custom, the Taguaces celebrated their victory by feasting on "the arms and legs of the unfortunate Friars, seasoned with chili sauce." They also hollowed out the Spaniard's skulls and used them as cups for their favorite drink, *chicha*. The story may include an element of Indian psychological warfare, but there seems little doubt that, when pressed too hard, the Chibchans often reacted violently.

#### *Post-Colonial "Conquistadores"—Los Patriarchs*

Independence from Spain did not end conflicts between the mountain Chibchans and the Pacific "Spaniards." To the contrary, it exacerbated the problem. Spain's soldiers and administrators went home, but Nicaragua's Europeanate oligarchy, descendants of Spain's colonial elite, remained very much in control. The principal difference was that they were no longer fettered by distant bureaucracies or Royalty with their occasionally liberal ideas. E. Bradford Burns found post-colonial Nicaragua sharply divided

between a Spanish "Patriarchy" and mestizo and Indian "folk" masses.<sup>57</sup> The Patriarchs of the era were quarrelsome in the extreme among themselves but, as a group, consistently used their control of the country's power structures to gain economic, social and political advantage for themselves at the expense of the "folk." Tensions and outright violence regularly arose when the Patriarchy pushed its advantages too far, especially when they decided they needed to take some more Indian land to produce a new export cash crop like sugar, cotton, indigo, coffee or cattle, or needed additional cheap labor in order to maximize their profits. From the Patriarchy's perspective, the fundamental problem was that Nicaragua produces like Central America but they wanted to live like Europeans, an attitude not unlike that of their Nahu elite precursors. To do so, they too had to earn hard currencies with which to buy foreign luxury "necessities" Nicaragua could not produce. This in turn required producing export crops at minimal costs to generate sufficient cash to import these "necessities," a process requiring cheap land and even cheaper labor. As a consequence, they felt forced to stage repeated forays against the "folk." When these threatened the "folk's" life style, the masses often resisted.<sup>58</sup>

Occasionally the "folk" would find a champion. Among the more fascinating incidents were attacks in 1845, 1847, and 1849, on Pacific coast cities led by a charismatic leader, General Bernabe Somoza, (an ancestor of Anastacio "Tacho" Somoza Garcia, founder of the 20th century Somoza dynasty). Bernabe was a Liberal and the conflict had political roots. But he was also a populist and natural leader. In addition to occupying Chinandega, Managua and Rivas at various times, Somoza twice sacked one of the two quintessential aristocratic cities of Nicaragua, Leon, against which he held a personal grudge. The Patriarchs reacted with exceptional virulence. What they seem especially to have feared was that "Somoza would win the confidence of the Indians and unite them."<sup>59</sup> The official press:

Fired a ceaseless barrage of pejorative against him: "barbarian," "cannibal," "savage," "bandit," "madman," and "brigand" (and) accused him of burning haciendas and killing at least one patriarch.<sup>60</sup>

Burns' own impression was that while Somoza's sackings of Leon were far from gentle, they were not especially different from other incidents of the period:

What doubtless intensified the heat of rhetoric in this case was the popular dimensions of this war, its potential threat

to all patriarchs.... If the popular and dashing figure of Bernabe Somoza succeeded in coalescing discontent, the elites would confront a formidable foe. They feared a unified and popular agrarian movement (and) persuaded themselves that nothing less than Western civilization was at stake.<sup>61</sup>

It was one of the rare instances in which the Patriarchs pulled together, apparently because their fear of the "indio" masses overcame their otherwise interminable internecine drive to compete for power, prestige and the spoils of office.

A few years later, in 1881, a major Indian rebellion occurred in the highlands department (province) of Matagalpa as a consequence of tensions created by elite grabs for remaining Indian communal lands, attempts to establish involuntary military service, and forced recruitment of campesino "indio" labor in the nearby highlands. The first attack against the department's capital of Matagalpa took place on March 30, when "a large party of armed Indians" attacked the city for over three hours. Twenty-five Indians and three city residents were killed.<sup>62</sup> The town's Europeanate residents, remembering depredations during similar attacks in 1824, 1827 and 1844, reacted in panic and petitioned the government to save them "lest they be exterminated."<sup>63</sup>

Jeffrey Gould concluded that "the (Matagalpan) Indian rebellion of 1881 compelled the state to devise methods to contain the Indian military potential."<sup>64</sup> The government and Patriarchy launched an apparently orchestrated assault on the Indian's society and identity which included further expropriations of land, coercion of Indian labor, attacks on remaining Indian social markers such as religious symbols, and assaults on the ethnic cohesiveness of their communities.<sup>65</sup> Concurrently, in a process analogous to the deconstruction-discussion-reconstruction process favored by post-modernists today, Nicaragua's intellectual elite set out to define away the Indian-ness of the highland's campesinos by promoting a myth of mestizaje that re-defined Nicaragua as a homogeneous society of mixed-blood mestizos within which, save for the then distant and isolated Atlantic coastal Mosquitia, Indians no longer existed. Since, save for small surviving pockets, the Pacific had already been largely mestizo-ized and ladino-ized, this newly invented hegemonic discourse affected mostly the highlands campesinos.

Between 1880 and 1950, the Indians suffered dramatic losses of land, language, and identity. Those losses were codified in census returns that reported the virtual disap-

pearance of the Indians into the ladino population. So powerful was the dominant discourse that hundreds of thousands of Central American Indians....became "ashamed" of their ethnic markers as the word Indian became a synonym for "ignorant" or "savage."<sup>66</sup>

Jeffrey Gould suggests that the 1881 Matagalpan Rebellion:

Be understood in the context of five years of violent changes in the Indian's lives; losses of thousands of acres of communal land, forced labor, internal economic and political divisions, and a conflict with the church over ownership of their *cofradías*<sup>67</sup> and possession of images that included representations of the "apostles." The movement responded to and fomented ethnic strife.<sup>68</sup>

The elite's onslaught triggered Indian resistance that "thwarted eight governmental attempts to abolish (indigenous) comunidades between 1877 and 1923."<sup>69</sup>

The Nicaragua elite's new hegemonic discourse created a "mirror of Nicaraguan society that reflects only the faces of the mestizos."<sup>70</sup> Gould argues that this mirror both reflected a deliberately falsified image and failed, and lists subsequent Matagalpan Indian uprisings in 1898, 1904, 1909, 1915, 1919 and the 1920s, bringing violent Chibchan highlands resistance into the era of the Marine-Sandinista war. Nonetheless, this elite effort to destroy the Indian's identities has continued to this day.<sup>71</sup>

#### *Social Revolution as Conquest—Piris as Conquistadores*

From the perspective of the highlands campesinos, the Sandinista revolution must have looked very much like a fourth major attempt at conquest. It is unlikely they were conscious of the details of what had taken place during the early Nahua and Spanish conquests. But since Indian wars had taken place within the living memories of campesino comarca elders of the region, the concept of resistance would have been very much a part of their living oral traditions. Interviews done in 1994-97, in connection with a study of the origins of Nicaragua's Contras, turned up considerable evidence that the highlanders still perceive themselves and Pacific lowlands "espanoles," or Spaniards in "us versus them" conflictual terms and consciously self-identify with the opposing "indio" side of this historic conflict. Further, the highlands "indio" campesino Resistance movement that was parent to the main "Contra" war emerged most strongly from precisely those campesino comarcas most famed for Spanish-Indian



warfare: Quilali, Wiwili, El Cua, Pantasma, and so forth.<sup>72</sup> In 1990, three in four of the "Contra" Comandos (7,178 of 9,591) who laid down their arms returned to places named by Nicaraguan and other historians as locales where Spanish-Indian battles had taken place repeatedly as recently as the 1920s.<sup>73</sup> These data appear strongly to support a conclusion that the "indio" nature of Nicaragua's highlander campesinos has perdured and their resistance to attempts to seize their lands and control their labor has remained constant. Efforts to convert them to new ideologies, force them to work for others, to take their land, and to punish them if they resist have met with violent resistance for the last thousand years, and the 1979-1990 years of the Sandinista revolution seem to have been no exception.

The Spanish Conquistadores used the *requerimiento* to demand conversion of the Indians from pre-Columbian religions to Roman Catholicism, and instant transference of loyalty to a new regime. The demands of the Sandinistas that the highlanders accept, almost instantaneously, a new secular "religion," give their loyalty to a very different new political ideology and regime, and pay "tribute" to a Pacific city dominated regime led by an elite and self-appointed vanguard via the Revolution's Agrarian reform policies seem hauntingly similar to a *requerimiento*.

The Spanish had also employed the institution of the *encomienda* to re-distributed land ownership and place Nicaragua's "indio" rural labor force under a new set of outside "managers." The revolutionary-era echo of this practice was the State Farm, created from agricultural properties that were seized by the State and then consolidated into new farms which were then managed by technocrats sent in from Nicaragua's Pacific lowlands cities. While this may have seemed perfectly reasonable to technicians or revolutionary cadre from Managua, Leon or Granada, it did not seem so to the highlander campesinos. In addition, from the very beginnings of the Revolution, the highlands campesinos were required by law to sell their products to the government at low prices and then buy their necessities from that same government at high prices, a process economically equivalent from the perspective of the campesinos to the exaction of tribute. This, too, echoed a Spanish Conquest-era practice.

The narrow Pacific urban origins of the Sandinista movement and the cadre it deployed into the highlands also echoed earlier attempts at conquest and generated a great deal of anger and resistance.

The massive arrival [in the countryside] of urban combatants...created problems because of differences between their cultures and the idiosyncracies [of the local peoples]. The problem was that] the majority of the political leadership of the FSLN and the officers of the Sandinista armed forces were from the [urban] Pacific....<sup>74</sup>

As the highlanders saw themselves as the beleaguered "indios" and Pacific lowlanders as conquering "Spaniards," the result was an ethnic conflict disguised by ideology. Orlando Nunez, writing after the Revolution had failed, comments that:

The decade of the 80s was witness to a prolonged counter-revolutionary war that divided the country and created a breach between the countryside and the cities.... In the urban and rural zones of the Pacific everything seemed normal. The strongest blow to the cities came indirectly, from the recruitment of urban [Pacific] youths to defend the Revolution.... During the bloodiest periods of the war the cities became witness to coffins arriving from the North bearing the remains of urban combatants who had gone there to defend the Revolution.<sup>75</sup>

But he failed to pick up on the millennial historic and ethnic roots of the conflict. How did the Sandinistas manage to stumble into a centuries-old ethnic war?

#### *"Descampesinizar" and "Proletarianizar" the Segovias*

A primary objective of the Sandinista Revolution was to transform rural Nicaragua. They saw the existence of hundreds of thousands of independent "indio" campesino micro-bourgeois as an intolerable barrier that had to be removed. For them, the campesinos, as bourgeoisie, totally lacked revolutionary consciousness,<sup>76</sup> and as such constituted a major obstacle "to the technical and social modernization of production" they considered vital to the success of their revolution.<sup>77</sup> The final solution they chose was to engage in a process of social class cleansing. They would first *descampesinar* and then *proletarianizar* the countryside by destroying the bourgeois campesinos as a social group and then converting them into rural proletarians.<sup>78</sup> This required that the peasantry be stripped of its independence, and that Nicaragua's farms and rural labor force be brought under State control and subjected to the discipline of Party/State organizations. This in turn required that Nicaragua's agrarian economy be in the hands of the revolution.

To accomplish their objectives, the Sandinistas created a system of State Farm Cooperatives (collec-

tives) onto which the rural populace, once *descampesinando* and *proletarianizado*, would to be pushed. The Cooperatives would produce basic foods for domestic consumption, replacing the pre-Revolution campesino agricultural sector. To assure that they played their required role as political socializers, the Farms would be managed by Party cadre not newly proletarianized campesinos. A second system of State Agricultural Enterprises, larger and more capital intensive, would become the primary producer of agro-industrialized food-stuffs and export crops. These would be, in effect, State-latifundias. These would also be under Sandinista control. The two new systems would be heavily favored by the State and the Party. By the end of the revolution in 1990, over 45% of all of Nicaragua's farmlands had been nationalized. Almost half the properties seized were farms or ranches smaller than three hundred acres, a single family-sized farm unit in much of the highlands, especially in cattle-growing regions.<sup>79</sup> State Farm Cooperatives (collectives) came to control some 1.5 million acres and some 1,200 new State Agricultural Enterprises occupied another 1.4 million.<sup>80</sup>

The majority of confiscated lands were operated in large state-owned units instead of being re-distributed through a land reform, and old mistrust of agricultural policies and the government in general was revived among the disillusioned small farmers. The State, as the largest owner of farm land, had once again oriented its agricultural policies to favor the interests of the big farms.<sup>81</sup>

The impact of this was very different in the highlands than it was in the Pacific. As has been noted, in the Pacific lowlands, large scale capital-intensive farming and plantation agriculture had been the rule since before the Spanish Conquest, and most workers were already rural proletarians, so the social distance to be traveled by a peasant from wage-laborer on a commercial farm to worker on a cooperative was short. In the Pacific, because the Cooperatives could offer year-round employment, they were even an improvement for many. But, in the mountains, the highlander campesinos owned their own farms and the social distance from independent micro-bourgeois to rural proletarian wage laborer on a State Farm was immense. But as injurious as this process was, from the perspective of the highlander campesinos, the coercive manner in which it was implemented caused even greater injury. As Sandinista intellectual Alejandro Bendana (again writing only after the Revolution), has recently admitted:

The (State) economic aggression that most hurt the campesinos took place at road-blocks. At these Police and other authorities enforcing, or over-enforcing orders to stop middle-man operations, literally ripping from the [campesino's] hands their few remaining bags of beans and corn.<sup>82</sup>

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For the small (independent) farmer the State Enterprises and the Cooperatives, clearly Sandinista entities, came to constitute new forms of 'terratenientes' with extensive resources and advanced technology, while official policies on pricing, sales and supply availabilities discriminated against campesino producers.<sup>83</sup>

From the perspective of the highlands "indios," the Revolution's State Farms were in essence new *encomiendas*. To them, the Sandinista revolution was merely another attempt at conquest.

#### *Current Politics*

In 1990, Nicaragua held its first relatively free elections. The Sandinistas lost and a Conservative oligarch won. The highlands campesinos participated to a limited degree only to find that the government they had elected was, in essence, to be an intra-Spanish elite affair. In 1996, Nicaragua held a second national election in which, for the first time, the highlander campesinos participated almost *en masse*. They also turned sharply against the Conservatives. As a consequence, the result of the 1996 election was a victory for leaders who had shared, albeit for different reasons, the highlander campesino's aversion to the Sandinista Revolution. Several officers or senior officials of the highlands campesino's "Contra" Army and its parent Resistance movement were elected or appointed to important positions, from cabinet and sub-cabinet positions to ambassadorships. On close examination, it became clear that in any one-man-one-vote election, the highlander campesinos, as 35% of the country's population, emerged in 1996 as the largest, perhaps the decisive electoral constituency in the country. It is not yet clear if this will translate into an end to attempts to conquer them, and events as recent as September of 1997 bode ill for this outcome. But if the campesinos' new participatory role translates into a real voice for them in national affairs, perhaps their thousand year resistance will come to an end. If not, violence can be expected to flare once more whenever outsiders try to exploit the highlanders beyond their threshold of resistance. The outcome of the process will depend on whether Nicaragua's newly minted and highly fragile democratic system perdures or is once again captured by one

or another fraction of its traditional, and traditionally exploitative minority oligarchy. On that question, the returns are still out.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Nahua: Mexican Indian; Gachupin: pejorative for Spaniard, from the Portuguese cachopo, or spoiled child; Piri: from piricuaque, Miskito Indian for rabid dog, highlands campesino pejorative for Sandinista.

<sup>2</sup>Europeanate is the author's term for those Latin Americans who, while born in the New World, are descendants of European colonial migrations and try to live European lives on American soil, making them neither Native Americans nor Europeans, but an amalgam of both.

<sup>3</sup>See Timothy C. Brown, "Realist Revolutions," *Policy Studies Review*, Summer 1998.

<sup>4</sup>In the context of Nicaragua, the term peasant does not sufficiently differentiate between dependent rural laborer proletarians who predominate in the rural lowlands Pacific, and independent micro-bourgeois small farmers who predominate in the central mountain highlands, a fundamental class distinction crucial to this study. To make this distinction, in this study the micro-bourgeois highlander peasants are called campesinos.

<sup>5</sup>The Highlanders number between 1.8 and 2 million and comprise between 35% and 52% of Nicaragua's population, making them the country's largest separately identifiable sub-population. The difference depends on whether one uses the official 1995 census or a 1996 count by the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Welfare (Proyecto NIC/92/PO1-FNUAP/OIM). The latter reports 600,000 more highlanders than the former, almost all campesinos, a result favored by the vote count of 1996's elections (Consejo Supremo Electoral, *Elecciones 1996* [Managua: Consejo Supremo Electoral, 1997]). This suggests Nicaragua's real population is about 4.8, not 4.2, million.

<sup>6</sup>One American exception is William Denevan's *The Upland Pine Forests of Nicaragua*, Berkeley, University of California, 1961. Costa Rican scholars have also recently done some work related to the highland's peoples. See for example, Eugenia Ibarra, "Los Matagalpa a Principios del Siglo XVI," in *Vinculos*, 18-19, 1992-1993, Ramiro Barrantes, "Mitochondrial DNA Clock for the Amerinds and Its Implications for Timing Their Entry into North America," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, Genetics* 91 (1994): 1158-62, and Ramiro Constenla U., *Las Lenguas del Area Intermedia: Introduccion a Su Estudio Areal*, San Jose, Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1991.

<sup>7</sup>See Constenla, *Las Lenguas* and Ramiro Barrantes' *Evolucion en el Tropico—Los Amerindios de Costa Rica y Panama* (San Jose: EDUCA, 1993), and "Mitochondrial DNA 'Clock'".

<sup>8</sup>Even most histories of Nicaragua ignore them and their descendants. Of the exceptions, see Ibarra's "Los Matagalpa"; Denevan's *The Upland Pine Forests*; Linda Newson, *Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1976); and Richard N. Adams, *Cultural Surveys of Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras* (Washington, DC: Pan American Sanitary Bureau, 1957).

<sup>9</sup>Newson, *Indian Survival*, 88.

<sup>10</sup>As far as is known, because archeological surveys are finally underway in the highlands which, as with the Maya, may produce a different pattern.

<sup>11</sup>For discussion, see William R. Fowler, *The Cultural Evolution of Ancient Nahua Civilizations ; The Pipil-Nicarao of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1989).

<sup>12</sup>Madrid did not yet exist.

<sup>13</sup>Newson, *Indian Survival*, 48-49.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>15</sup>Readers interested in pursuing this question are referred to such works as Jaime Wheelock Roman's *Raices Indigenas de la Lucha Anti-Colonialista en Nicaragua de Gil Gonzalez a Joaquin Zavala* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1986); Julian Guerrero and Lola Soriano's series on the various Departments of Nicaragua (see bibliography); German Romero Vargas, et al, *Persistencia Indigena en Nicaragua* (Managua: CIDCA-UCA, 1992); Guillen de Herrera, *Nueva Segovia*; Jaime Incer, *Nueva Geografia de Nicaragua* (Managua: Editorial Recalde, 1970), *Viajes, Rutas y Encuentros* (San Jose: Libro Libre, 1993), and *Toponimias Indigenas de Nicaragua* (San Jose: Libro Libre, 1985); and Carlos Mantica, *El Habla Nicaraguense*, (San Jose: EDUCA, 1973). For more primary sources, see the *Coleccion Somoza : Documentos para la Historia de Nicaragua*, 17 vol., (Madrid, 1954-57), Andres Vega Bolanos, ed.; and the three volume series *Nicaragua en los Cronistas de la Indias ; Serie Cronista* (Managua: Fondo de Promocion Cultural del Banco de America, 1975-76), edited and annotated by Jorge E. Arellano.

<sup>16</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, 19. All translations are by the author.

<sup>17</sup>Pablo Antonio Cuadra, *El Nicaraguense*, 13th ed. (San Jose: EDUCA, 1976.)

<sup>18</sup>Bartolome de Las Casas, *Nicaragua el las Cronistas de las Indias* (Sevilla: Serie de las Cronistas), 1, 71.

<sup>19</sup>As quoted by Incer. *Viajes*, 62.

<sup>20</sup>Roger Howell, editor, *Prescott—The Conquest of Peru, The Conquest of Mexico, and Other Selections* (Washington, DC: Washington Square Press, 1966), 247-48.

<sup>21</sup>The *requerimiento*, or “requirement,” fit the tone of the times. The Spanish State and Church were inextricably intertwined. From the perspective of the State, absolute submission and loyalty to the King was (at least in theory) mandatory for all subjects of the realm, no matter how recently enrolled or how bewildered. From a theological perspective of the Church, a person who had never been exposed to Christianity might die in limbo and not go to hell. But, once exposed and offered an opportunity to convert, refusal was a mortal sin. The demands created by this duality made concurrent political conquest by the State and ideological conquest by the Church both mandatory and inevitable.

<sup>22</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, 47.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>25</sup>William Sherman, *Forced Native Labor in Sixteenth Century Central America* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska, 1979), 46.

<sup>26</sup>Newson, *Indian Survival*, 92.

<sup>27</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, 68.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 117. Newson considers this number “fairly accurate, since the *oidor* (as sort of Inspector General sent by the Crown or a Viceroy) was familiar with the area at the time, and it is also fairly consistent with the numbers of tributary Indians registered in the *Tasaciones* (tribute books) made for the greater part of Western Nicaragua in 1548.” Newson, *Indian Survival*, 86.

<sup>29</sup>Newson, *Indian Survival*, 110. Each tributary Indian represented a household. Using a multiplier of 4, Managua had been reduced from 40,000 to slightly over 1,000 and Jalteba from 8,000 to about 800. The drop from one million to 30,000 represented a reduction of 97%.

<sup>30</sup>Sherman, *Forced Labor*, 21.

<sup>31</sup>Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America—a Socio-Economic History, 1520-1720* (University of California, Berkeley, 1973), 49.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>33</sup>Sherman, *Forced Labor*, 55.

<sup>34</sup>Newson, *Indian Survival*, 105.

<sup>35</sup>Historians of colonial Peru, Javier Tantalean Arbulu and Pablo Macera, consulted in August of 1995 at the Universidad Católica de San Marcos in Lima, could not recall having seen evidence that slaves had actually arrived there from Nicaragua. Only the flavor of some folk customs and dances from northern coastal Peru, especially the region of Chiclayo, seems to hint at what may have happened to them.

<sup>36</sup>Those interested in pursuing this matter in greater depth are referred to Newson, Sherman, MacLeod, Incer, Wheelock, Romero Vargas and others.

<sup>37</sup>See Jeffrey Gould, “La Raza Rebelde : Las Luchas de la Comunidad Indígena de Subtiava, Nicaragua” (1900-

1960, *Revista de Historia*, Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica, No. 21/22, 1990), 69-117.

<sup>38</sup>Mestizo, from *mestisaje*, a physical process involving genetic commingling. *Ladino-ization*, a social process involving the loss of one culture and its replacement by another. Writers on Latin America rarely distinguish between the two, but they are fundamentally different processes.

<sup>39</sup>Jeffrey Gould has estimated that as recently as 1920, 15% to 20% of the population of Nicaragua, 125,000 people, mostly in the highlands, retained their indigenous ethnic consciousness and identities, but his estimate is based on a far narrower definition of “indio” than the one employed here. Jeffrey Gould, “Vana Ilusion!—The Highlands Indians of Nicaragua: the Myth of Mestiza, 1880-1925,” *Hispanic American Historic Review*, Aug. 1993: 3.

<sup>40</sup>Ibarra, “Los Matagalpas,” 233.

<sup>41</sup>For a fascinating *tour d'horizon* of the Central America state that grew out of this process, readers are referred to Samuel Stone [Zemurray], *The Heritage of the Conquistadores—Ruling Classes in Central America from the Conquistadores to the Sandinistas*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1990). Stone sets out genealogical relationships between various Central American political leaders, especially lines of common descent from specific Conquistadors. For example, ten Nicaraguan Presidents are related to 24 Costa Rican Presidents by common descent from Conquistador Juan Vasquez de Coronado. One Guatemala, two Salvadoran, one Honduran, one Panamanian, seven Nicaraguan and 32 Costa Rican presidents are descendants from Conquistador Jorge de Alvarado. Twenty-seven leading Sandinistas and ten Nicaraguan Presidents are in the Lacayo Tree. Eighteen more are Cuadras.

<sup>42</sup>Newson, *Indian Survival*, 12.

<sup>43</sup>There was a small exception around the gold mining area of Nueva Segovia.

<sup>44</sup>MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 206.

<sup>45</sup>The population of Nicaragua did not recuperate to its 1520s levels until about 1950 and Nicaragua still has labor shortages at harvest time.

<sup>46</sup>Those interested in pursuing this issue are referred especially to MacLeod, Newson and Sherman.

<sup>47</sup>For those familiar with Vietnam-era terminology, *entradas* were colonial-era “reconnaissances-in-force.” *Reducciones* were early versions of “strategic hamlets,” or “resettlement areas.”

<sup>48</sup>*Diagnostico Basico de las Municipalidades—I Region “Las Segovias”* (Managua: CNUAH-Habitat, United Nations, July, 1994), 2. Part of a nine volume series. For chronicles of the travails of early colonial Nueva Segovia, see Guerrero and Soriano, *Nueva Segovia—*

*Monografía* (Managua: Litografía y Editor Arte Grafica, 1969); and Guillen de Herrera, *Nueva Segovia*, 37-44.

<sup>49</sup>The town and Department of Nueva Segovia should not be confused. The town is now Ciudad Antigua. The Department remains Nueva Segovia.

<sup>50</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, mentions major Spanish-Chibchan confrontations in 1547, 1560, 1597, 1603, 1608, 1610, 1611 and 1623. In *Monografía de Matagalpa* (Managua: Banco Nacional, 1967), Guerrero and Soriano dedicate twelve pages to short synopses of numerous clashes and other Indian problems in that province during the 1600s, 1700s and 1800s. Their studies of Nueva Segovia, Jinotega, Boaco, Chontales, Esteli and Madriz include similar lists.

<sup>51</sup>Also called the Wangki. Better known today as the Rio Coco.

<sup>52</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, 252.

<sup>53</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, 256. Jicaques and Lencas were Chibchan tribes. The use of sorcery or witchcraft to kill remains a practice among the highlands "indios" today. During the so-called "Contra War," the Sandinistas demonstrated an awareness that even today the highlanders are Chibchans. In one especially notable instance, in 1988-89, Sandinista army psychological warfare operatives set up a school for sorcery, or *hechiceria*, and trained infiltrators in the use of *oraciones malas* (evil spells and incantations) such as El Duende Rojo (the Red Goblin), La Anima Sola (Abandon Soul), Las Tres Divinas Personas (Three Holy Persons), and Santa Marta, and how to make poisonous potions made of such things as *nido de pajarito macua* (swallow's nest) boiled together with sewing needles passed through the female vulva and placed in the form of a Christian cross, then boiled with female menstrual fluids, to cause animals such as scorpions, snakes, worms, spiders and poisonous frogs to grow in the heart or brain. The school was set up in Apantillo del Zabalar in Matagalpa under the direction of a Sandinista Army officer, Lt. Antonio Blandon Flores. The Directress was Erlinda Tavalera Gutierrez (*Informe de Hechiceria*, 1989. Private collection. About 600 pages of investigative files.) These are forms of witchcraft based on Chibchan practices (see Ramiro Constenla Umana, "Rasgos caracterizadores de la cultura Guatemesa tradicional," in *Estudios Varios Sobre Las Lenguas Chibchas de Costa Rica* (San Jose: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1990).

<sup>54</sup>Also known as Cua Bocay.

<sup>55</sup>Sometimes spelled Guiguili.

<sup>56</sup>Incer, *Viajes*, 262-65.

<sup>57</sup>E. Bradford Burns, *Patriarch and Folk—The Emergence of Nicaragua, 1796-1858* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991).

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>62</sup>Julian Guerrero and Lola Soriano, *Caciques Heroicos de Centroamerica—Rebellion Indigena en 1,881 y Expulsion de los Jesuitas* (Boaco, Nicaragua: n.p., 1982), 92-93.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>64</sup>Gould, "Vana Illusion," 403.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 402-09.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 393-94.

<sup>67</sup>"Catholic" lay brotherhoods of "indios." They have served the "indios" for centuries as one of very few socially accepted institutions through which their "indio" identity and values could be transmitted from generation to generation.

<sup>68</sup>Gould, "¡Vana Illusion!" See also his *La Raza Rebelde*.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>70</sup>Gould, "¡Vana Illusion!," 4.

<sup>71</sup>For example, in English, the title of a book by a Sandinista leader, Jaime Wheelock Roman, reads "The Indigenous Roots of the Anti-Colonial Struggle in Nicaragua from Gil Gonzalez to Joaquin Zavala (1523-1881)," placing him squarely in the tradition of elite attempts to dominate the masses via the hegemonic discourse described by Gould. Wheelock is an oligarch on both sides, married to a Conservative member of Managua's exclusive Club Terraza. The Wheelocks are a grand bourgeois business family. The Romans are distinguished Central American oligarches. He is married to a Conservative member of Managua's exclusive Club Terraza. During the Sandinista revolution, Wheelock managed the Agrarian Reform Program, working with what was known as the "San Antonio Group" drawn from the personnel of the Pellas Family Group's Nicaraguan Sugar Estates. The Pellas are Nicaragua's richest family.

<sup>72</sup>Timothy C. Brown, "Comandos of the Comarcas—The Origins of Nicaragua's 'Contra War,'" Ph.D. dissertation. New Mexico State University, 1997.

<sup>73</sup>"Numero de Desmovilizados por Lugar de Nacimiento," Managua, Comision Internacional de Apoyo y Verificacion, Organization of American States [CIAV/OAS], computer run, June, 1993.

<sup>74</sup>Orlando Nunez, *La Guerra en Nicaragua* (Managua: CIPRES, 1991), 82.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>76</sup>David Nolan, *FSLN—The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables: U of Miami P, 1981), 119-20.

<sup>77</sup>Alejandro Bendana, *Una Tragedia Campesina* (Managua: Editora de Arte, 1991), 42-43.

<sup>78</sup>*Descampesinizar*: To rid of campesinos. *Proletarianizar*: To transform into proletarians. Bendana,

*Una Tragedia*, 42-43. Readers curious about the dialectical process involved are referred to Nolan, *FSLN*, 106-21.

<sup>79</sup>Jaime Wheelock Roman, *La Verdad Sobre la Pinata* (Managua: El Amanecer, 1991), Anexo 1, Cuadra 1, 25.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>81</sup>Nico A. Van Tienhoven, *Smallholder Farming in Nicaragua* (Kiel, Germany: Wissenschaftsverlag Vauk Kiel, 1985), 24.

<sup>82</sup>Bendana, *Una Tragedia*, 47.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

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**Timothy Charles Brown** is a Research Fellow of the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. A former career

diplomat and Marine, with forty-four years international experience, including fifteen in Central America. He earned a Ph.D. in 1997 at New Mexico State University with a dissertation on the origins of Nicaragua's Contras. he currently researches ethnic conflicts and Latin America, and publishes regularly in both professional and popular publications, from the *Annals of the American Academy* to the *Wall Street Journal*.