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ETHNOHISTORIC SOURCES ON THE PIPIL-NICARAO OF CENTRAL AMERICA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

A substantial corpus of documentary data exists for the ethnohistoric study of the Pipil-Nicarao, the Precolumbian Nahuat-speaking groups of Central America. Since the middle of last century, scholars have shown a sustained interest in the Pipil-Nicarao. But until recently an explicit historiographic analysis of the sources on the Pipil-Nicarao had yet to be conducted. A detailed critical analysis of the authorship, origin, reliability, relative importance, and interrelationships of the sources is presented here. The kinds of information that the sources provide on the Pipil-Nicarao and their neighbors are outlined. The importance of systematic critical studies in ethnohistoric research is emphasized.

One of the most pressing needs in the ethnohistorical analysis of specific cultures is for a rigorous review of sources that may be used. This is no less true of ethnohistory in Mesoamerica than anywhere else, a point emphasized in the past by both Nicholson (1955) and Carmack (1972).

The purpose of this essay is to provide a brief critical review of the importance and reliability of the major sources for an ethnohistoric study of the Pipil-Nicarao of Central America; their migrations, demography, economy, social and political organization, and other aspects of their culture. For the most part an emphasis is placed on the major published sources and on lost or misplaced documents that are referred to in the published material. The primary goal is to examine the most important sources in order to ascertain what they contain of use in writing a prehispanic ethnography of the Pipil-Nicarao. This paper is also offered as an example of the rigorous analysis of historiographic sources, an illustration of the importance of systematic critical studies in ethnohistory.

The Pipil and the Nicarao were Nahuat-speaking groups who moved from central and southern Mexico into Central America in several complex stages or "waves" of migrations which began possibly as early as A.D. 700 and continued until about A.D. 1350 (Thompson 1948; Borhegyi 1965; Luckenbach and Levy 1980; Fowler 1981). Their movements, one of the clearest cases of large-scale migration in Mesoamerican prehistory, were probably indirectly connected with the collapse of Teotihuacan and both directly and indirectly related to the expansion and later demise of the Toltec empire (Davies 1977; Weaver 1981). An important consequence of the latest series of Nahuat incursions into Central America was the splitting up of the Pipil and the Nicarao and the movement of the latter into Nicaragua at about A.D. 1200 (Healy 1980; Fowler 1981).¹

Nahuat speakers eventually came to control prime agricultural lands and other economic resources in Pacific Central America. At the time of the Conquest, the Pipil were primarily located in the Escuintla region of southeastern Guatemala and most of western and central El Salvador. There were probably also a few small Pipil enclaves in Honduras; there was certainly one in north-

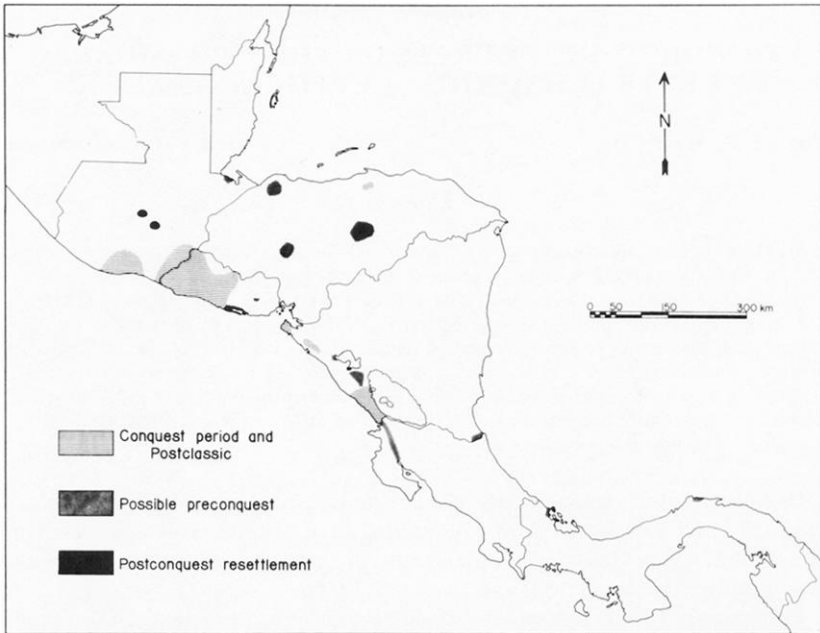


Figure 1. Central American Nahuatl distribution (based on Fowler 1981: 469-523). The enclaves in southeast Nicaragua and in Panama might have spoken Nahuatl rather than the Nahuatl dialect of the language.

eastern Honduras. Their neighbors were the Xinca and the Cakchiquel, Pokoman, and Chorti in Guatemala; the Pokoman, the Chorti, and the Lenca in El Salvador; and the Lenca, the Paya, the Jicaque, and possibly the Chontal Maya in Honduras (Fowler 1981, 476-508). The Nicaraos held a small area in northwestern Nicaragua, most of the Rivas region of southwestern Nicaragua, and possibly a part of the Guanacaste region of northwestern Costa Rica. They shared these regions with two other groups of Mexican origin, the Chorotega (or Mangue) and the Subtiaba (or Maribio), as well as a small group called the Tacacho whose linguistic affiliation is unknown (Fowler 1981, 509-18).² The historical distribution of the Pipil and the Nicaraos is shown in Figure 1.

Approximately 2,000 Nahuatl-speaking Pipils maintain an indigenous way of life in western El Salvador, most of them in the towns of Cuisnahuat and Santo Domingo de Guzmán (Kaufman 1974; Campbell 1975). The Nicaraos were either removed from Nicaragua by the slave trade or effectively exterminated by warfare and epidemics within a century after the Conquest (Radell 1976; Newson 1982), although remnants of a Nahuatl-speaking population may have survived in southern Nicaragua into the mid-19th century (Squier 1852, 2:313-14).

The basis for classifying and grouping the sources is the identity of the authors and their interdependency. Ethnic identity serves to split the sources into two main groups: native sources and European/Creole sources. The category of native sources includes documents produced by indigenous writers, either in glyphic form or in the native language expressed in European script.

European/Creole sources may be further subdivided on the basis of their personal statuses or positions. This results in the four broad subcategories of conquistadors, historians and quasi-ethnographers, royal officials, and travelers. The conquistador sources are arranged in rough geographical order of the places of their conquests. The other European/Creole sources are arranged in chronological order. This ordering is, however, violated at times in order to emphasize the dependence of one source upon another.

Native Sources

The existence of native manuscripts among the Pipil and the Nicarao is indicated by statements made by Diego García de Palacio (1881, 35) and by the historians Fuentes y Guzmán (1932-33, pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 5, p. 91; chs. 11-12, pp. 108-110; bk. 3, ch. 8, p. 143; bk. 4, ch. 1, p. 172; ch. 10, p. 204), Oviedo y Valdés (1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 1, p. 36), and López de Gómara (1946, 284). Herrera y Tordesillas (1934-57, dec. 3, bk. 4, ch. 7, p. 395), who mistakenly copied Gómara on this matter, was confused when he stated that in Nicaragua only the Chorotega had books. Unfortunately, none of the Pipil-Nicarao manuscripts mentioned by the historians is known to exist today. At least four Pipil documents were well known by Fuentes y Guzmán, however, and he recorded sufficient information on them to permit a partial, albeit rather unsatisfactory, reconstruction of their origins and contents. In addition to the Pipil documents discussed by Fuentes, a manuscript written in Nahuatl was discovered recently in Santa María Ixhuatán, Guatemala.

The *Manuscrito Pipil* was cited by that title by Fuentes y Guzmán in his account of Pipil history and social organization (1932-33, pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 5, p. 91). He gave no indication of where or when it was written, nor did he state where he obtained it. Carmack (1973, 74) has suggested that Fuentes obtained the document while serving as *alcalde mayor* (governor) of Escuintla or Sonsonate. It is entirely reasonable to suppose that the document may have come from one of these two major Pipil regions, but, although he knew the region intimately, I know of no evidence that Fuentes y Guzmán ever held the post of *alcalde mayor* of Escuintla. It is possible that Fuentes's father, who was *corregidor* (governor) of Escuintla, obtained the manuscript there and passed it on to his son. It is *impossible* that Fuentes found the document while acting as *alcalde mayor* of Sonsonate, for he did not assume that post until 1698, three years after he had completed the second part of the *Recordación Florida* in which he referred to the Pipil manuscript.

Because the *Manuscrito Pipil* contained information on the conquest of the region around Jumay, Ixhuatán, and Jalpatagua in southeastern Guatemala (Fuentes y Guzmán 1932-33, pt. 2, bk. 3, ch. 8, p. 143), this writer is inclined to attribute the provenience of the document to this region. The same evidence would indicate a postconquest date of composition for at least parts of the document. If the entire document was composed after the Conquest, the parts of it cited by Fuentes which contained data on pre-conquest Pipil history and social and political organization may have been based on an earlier manuscript. The fact that the *Manuscrito Pipil* included pre-conquest and Conquest-

period historical information raises the possibility that it may have been broadly similar in content to the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* (Recinos and Goetz 1953).

Fuentes y Guzmán (1932-33, pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 11, pp. 108-10) discussed two so-called *pergaminos* (parchments) which were brought to him from Sonsonate by the priest Juan de los Ríos. To judge from Fuentes's description, these were Pipil tribute records. Various symbols in the tribute lists were described and illustrated by Fuentes. From these it is evident that the Pipil used the typical Mexican vigesimal system of numerical notation similar to that used in the second part of the Codex Mendoza (Galindo y Villa 1925, folios 19-25). Fuentes also described and illustrated several ideographic glyphs for various tribute commodities, a glyph for a ruler's name, and a place-name glyph (1932-33, pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 11, pp. 109-10).

The historian referred explicitly to his confusion and difficulty in deciphering the glyphs. One may infer, therefore, that the notations were not accompanied by Spanish glosses and that the documents probably dated to a preconquest or early postconquest time. Regarding the provenience of the tribute lists, since Los Ríos, who obtained the documents for Fuentes, was a resident of Sonsonate, it is reasonable to assume that the records came from one of the many Pipil towns in the region surrounding Sonsonate (for example, Izalco, Nahui-zalco, Nahulingo, and Caluco).

Fuentes y Guzmán also described and illustrated a carved wooden board which was brought or sent to him from Nicaragua by the Mercedarian friar Luis Xirón (Fuentes y Guzmán 1932-33, pt. 2, bk. 2, ch. 12, pp. 110-11). In spite of its Nicaraguan origin, Fuentes attributed the artifact to the Pipil. Interestingly, the same ruler's name glyph that Fuentes illustrated from one of the Pipil tribute lists also appeared on the board. According to Fuentes's informant, Xirón, the board marked the passage of time and completion of a 52-year the cycle. This appears to be true, for Fuentes's illustration clearly shows several Mexican calendrical glyphs, including the glyph for the completion of a cycle, a bundle of thin sticks tied together (cf. Thompson 1948, 14). But it is surprising that the board also appears to have had glyphs for rulers' names, tribute commodities, and aboriginal conquests. If the interpretation that the "calendar board" contained a record of aboriginal conquests is correct, then a preconquest date for its execution is indicated.

A document written in Nahuatl was discovered by Lyle Campbell in 1972 in the *alcaldía* of Santa María Ixhuatán, Guatemala, one of the towns that may be the place of origin of the *Manuscrito Pipil*. The document consists of 55 folios. It has yet to be studied in detail for its content, but Lawrence H. Feldman (personal communication, 1981) has made a preliminary analysis of the manuscript, and I have made a cursory inspection of a photocopy of the document. Its title, proclaimed on the cover page, is *La Escritura de Ixhuatán*. The text is almost entirely in Nahuatl, although some Spanish has crept into some of the dates cited and Spanish names occur throughout. There are at least two references to Pedro de Alvarado and at least one to "don Carlos Emperador." The events recorded in the document span the period from approximately A.D. 1400 to 1620. The document has a series of entries relating to other towns in southeastern Guatemala and western El Salvador such as

Jalpatagua, Comapa, Jumay, and Mopicalco. Obviously, *La Escritura de Ixhuatán* has the potential of providing some very useful data on preconquest and postconquest Pipil economic and cultural patterns.

Two famous Highland Maya documents, the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* (Recinos and Goetz 1953) and the *Popol Vuh* (Recinos 1947; Edmonson 1971),³ are important although they have no direct information on the Pipil or the Nicarao. In the *Annals* there is a significant mention of Alvarado's expedition to the Pipil capital of Cuscatlán in central El Salvador, and his siege of Panatacat, near Escuintla, which was planned in the Cakchiquel capital, Iximche (Recinos and Goetz 1953, 121-23). A transcription error committed by Brasseur de Bourbourg in his study and French translation of the *Annals*, made in 1856 (see Gibson and Glass 1975, 392), resulted in the invention of a Salvadoran national folk hero, the renowned Pipil chieftain Atlacatl. According to Recinos's interpretation, Panatacat or Atacat (rendered by Brasseur as "Atlacatl") was a Cakchiquel designation for the town of Escuintla (Recinos and Goetz 1953, 122, n. 232). In the Recinos and Goetz translation, the document states that "twenty-five days after his arrival in the city [Iximche], Tonatiuh [Alvarado] departed for Cuzcatán, destroying Atacat on the way. On the day of 2 Queh [9 May 1524] the Spaniards killed those of Atacat" (1953, 122-23). Recinos has rectified Brasseur's error, but two problems remain. *Atacat* is Nahuatl—not Mayan—and it does not have a locative ending. Perhaps *Atacat* was indeed a Pipil ruler, but of Escuintla, not Cuscatlán. Recent studies by Francis Polo Sifontes (1979; 1981) of the *Título de Altonenago*, a 16th-century legal document, provide further information relevant to this matter. This document arose from a land dispute between the Cakchiquel of Alotenango and the Pipil of Escuintla. The Cakchiquel testimony confirms that there was a locality referred to in the document as Panacal or Panacaltepeque located one league to the north of Esquitepeque (Itzcuintepec, modern Escuintla) (Polo Sifontes 1979, 15-18; 1981).

The second Highland Maya document, the *Popol Vuh*, contains material on Quiche myths, cosmology, ritual, legends, and history. The historical section of this document (Recinos 1947, 186-264; Edmonson 1971, 145-255) narrates the story of the immigration of the founders of the three original Quiche lineages to the mountains surrounding the Quiche basin, their conquests, and the establishment and growth of the Quiche state (Carmack 1973, 27). The Quiche represent a dynamic fusion of Toltec (Nahuatl) priest-rulers with the autochthonous Maya population of the central highlands of Guatemala (Carmack 1977, 4). The history of this fusion is recorded in the *Popol Vuh*. The relevance of the *Popol Vuh* to the Pipil-Nicarao derives partially from the Toltec heritage of the Quiche and from the fact that its historical content is indispensable to our understanding of the preconquest culture history of southeastern Mesoamerica.

European/Creole Sources

A number of European and Creole authorities whose collective works span the period from the time of the Conquest to the late 18th century contributed

useful information on the Pipil and the Nicarao as well as other indigenous groups of Central America. The important traditional accounts of the Pipil-Nicarao migrations recorded by the central Mexican historians Motolinía and Torquemada are relatively well known⁴ and will not be dealt with here. Instead, the focus will be on several sources who provided data on such diverse topics as Pipil-Nicarao economy, social organization, warfare and militarism, religion and cosmology, preconquest history, and geographical distribution. These include the conquistadors Alvarado, González Dávila, Cereceda, and Andagoya; the historians and quasi-ethnographers Martyr D'Anghera, Oviedo y Valdés, Bobadilla, Fuentes y Guzmán, and Vázquez de Espinosa; the royal officials García de Palacio, Pineda, and López de Velasco; and the travelers Benzoni, Ponce, and Cortés y Larraz.

Conquistadors

The best eyewitness account of the conquest of Guatemala and El Salvador known to exist is found in the letters that Captain Pedro de Alvarado sent to his commanding officer, Hernán Cortés.⁵ Alvarado was born about 1486 in Badajoz, Extremadura, Spain. Nothing is known of his formative years. He and his four brothers served with Diego de Velazquez in the conquest of Cuba (Recinos 1952, 8-17), and after seven years in Cuba Alvarado joined Juan de Grijalva on the first expedition to Yucatan (Mackie 1924, 27). He joined Cortés in 1519 to undertake the conquest of Mexico, in which Alvarado played a major role. On 6 December 1523, with the subjugation of Mexico effectively complete, Cortés dispatched Alvarado from the great city of Tenochtitlán to conquer the province of Guatemala. According to Cortés's own account, Alvarado took with him on the mission 120 cavalymen, 300 foot soldiers, 160 horses, four cannon with powder and ammunition, and an unspecified number of native auxiliaries (Cortés 1963, 226). The Texcocan chronicler Ixtlilxóchitl (1891-92, 1:391) stated that Alvarado was accompanied by 20,000 Mexican troops, but this figure appears to be exaggerated. The size and force of Alvarado's invading army is important, for it forms part of the data base with which to approach the problem of Conquest-period Pipil demography (Barón Castro 1942; Daugherty 1969).

Alvarado sent at least four letters to Cortés detailing the events of his forays into the southern territories of New Spain. Only two of these are extant. They were first published as an addendum to Cortés's fourth letter to the emperor (Cortés 1525). Since then they have been translated into Italian, French, and English and reprinted in various sources (Esteve Barba 1964, 270, 633-34). A useful edition is a facsimile version of a copy of the original with an English translation published by the Cortés Society (Alvarado 1924).

Alvarado's fourth letter is of special interest for the study of the Pipil. In it he described his encounters with the Pipil chiefs and warriors of southeastern Guatemala and western and central El Salvador. Because he was in contact with the native cultures of this area before Spanish influence, his reports are of prime importance. Unfortunately, however, Alvarado observed only those aspects of native culture which were of interest to him as a military captain

with the aim of conquering and exploiting the enemy. He paid special attention, therefore, to such things as native military tactics, weaponry, population size, settlement patterns, and geography. Although the information is limited, it is very useful on these topics, and the letters are full of the freshness of being written in the field, a quality which enhances their value as primary documents.

Alvarado overestimated the importance of his conquest, comparing it with that of Cortés. A certain amount of exaggeration can be detected in his account, but he appears to be generally reliable as a source of limited data. He was very ethnocentric and had a great disdain for native culture, but his reporting is not seriously tarnished by these attitudes. One may lament the fact that there was a great deal of information on the Pipil (and the Highland Maya) which escaped Alvarado's attention, but a general validity can be assumed for the facts that he did see fit to put down.

The first Spanish explorer to enter the territory of the modern republics of Costa Rica and Nicaragua was Gil González Dávila (not to be confused with the 17th-century chronicler of the same name). After an arduous and eventful voyage from Spain to Panama and a hostile encounter with the infamous governor of Castilla del Oro, Pedrarias Dávila, González began an overland journey in 1522, accompanied by 100 men and four horses, from the Gulf of Chiriquí through the Burica and Diquís regions of Costa Rica, around the north shore of the Gulf of Nicoya into the Nicoya Peninsula, and through the Guanacaste region of Costa Rica to the Isthmus of Rivas in Nicaragua (González Dávila 1883, 8-9, 17).

González visited for ten days with the Chorotega cacique Nicoya (after whom the province was named) who informed him that 50 leagues to the north lay the town of the powerful Nicarao cacique Nicaragua (whose name, of course, the country bears). González was well received by Nicaragua, and the cacique engaged the explorer in a lengthy philosophical dialogue before consenting to be converted to Christianity. González did not record this discussion, but it was reported by the treasurer of the expedition, Andres de Cereceda, in a document (apparently now lost) sent to Peter Martyr who described the conversation in detail (Martyr D'Anghera 1912, dec. 6, bks. 4-5, pp. 221-25). The discourse was also reported by López de Gómara (1946, 281) who referred to the account by Martyr (Fowler 1981, 628-30).

González himself wrote an account of the expedition in March 1524 which he dispatched from Española to Spain with Cereceda. Apart from an account of his discoveries, revenues, and conversions, the main content of the González Dávila *relación* focuses on his intention to find the Atlantic outlet of Lake Nicaragua. Peter Martyr used the report as a source of his sixth decade (Martyr D'Anghera 1912, dec. 6, bk. 1, p. 211). Oviedo also relied upon the account and quoted it extensively in the *Historia General* (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 2, bk. 29, ch. 21, pp. 97-107). The letter was published in Madrid in 1883 by Manuel María de Peralta (González Dávila 1883).

Various authorities (such as Bancroft [1882-87, 1:486] and Fernández Guardia [1913, 92]) have applauded González Dávila's humane treatment of the Indians. Indeed, he was an atypical conquistador: he did not resort to genocide to achieve his goals. But if his treatment of the Indians was enlightened, he does not appear to have taken much notice of their customs. At least he did

not choose to write about such things in his *relación*. The report is important for the study of the conquest of Central America, but it contains little of any ethnographic value on the Nicarao or any other indigenous group with which he came into contact. His mission did, however, result in the writing of a report of high ethnographic quality by the treasurer Cereceda.

Andres de Cereceda wrote at least two important documents concerning the González Dávila expedition of 1522-23 and the area's native inhabitants. The first of these is an itinerary listing the caciques that González contacted and specifying the amount of gold that each cacique contributed to the mission, the number of conversions effected in each community, and the distance in leagues between the settlements that he and González entered. The list was preserved in the *Archivo General de Indias* (AGI) in Seville and published twice in the late 19th century (Cereceda 1870, 1883). The 1883 edition has notes by Manuel María de Peralta and is preferable for that reason. In the second document Cereceda included many valuable ethnographic data on the Nicarao. As far as this writer has been able to determine, this report is now lost (the likely place to search for it is the AGI), but it was summarized and quoted extensively by Peter Martyr (1912, dec. 6, bks. 4-7, pp. 221-23).

Cereceda was a keen observer, and he took a strong interest in the Nicarao. The ethnographic information on the Nicarao contained in his report includes: Nicaragua's discussion with González Dávila, settlement patterns, markets, ceremonial and elite residential architecture, religious ceremonies, human sacrifice, cannibalism, and priestly attire and paraphernalia (Martyr D'Anghera 1912, dec. 6, bks. 4-5, pp. 221-32).

Some of these matters were reported in greater detail—and Cereceda is corroborated by—Oviedo y Valdés (1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, chs. 1, 11-13). Cereceda's contact with the Nicarao preceded that of Oviedo by five years, however, and Cereceda witnessed certain aspects of Nicarao culture, especially religious ceremonies, that Oviedo heard about but never actually saw.

Many of Cereceda's ethnographic data on the Nicarao, reported by Peter Martyr, were repeated and quoted almost verbatim from Martyr's sixth decade by López de Gómara (1946, 281, 283-84) and Herrera y Tordesillas (1934-57, dec. 3, bk. 4, ch. 7, pp. 396-97). In fact, the latter appears to have taken most of this information from Gómara rather than Martyr. Gómara's reliance upon Martyr is obvious; consequently, it is an error to state, as does Chapman (1960, 59), that Martyr agrees with Gómara.

Another interesting conquistador writer is Pascual de Andagoya who accompanied Pedrarias Dávila to the New World in 1514. Andagoya took part in expeditions to Nicaragua under Gaspar de Espinosa in 1519 and Francisco Hernandez de Cordova in 1523 (Andagoya 1945, 405). Andagoya traveled extensively throughout the Indies from 1514 to 1539. Probably from 1541 to 1546, while in Spain, he wrote an account of his travels including brief descriptions of the Indians and indigenous customs of the areas he had visited. A small portion of the account includes brief comments on the Nicarao (Andagoya 1945, 405-8).

Andagoya appears to have taken an interest in native culture, but unfortunately his comments on the Nicarao are all too brief to be of much value. The brevity is probably due to the fact that he was writing about 20 years after he

had made his observations, and it may be that he had only limited contact with the Nicarao. In spite of its lack of detail, however, Andagoya's *relación*, because it is of primary status, cannot be ignored. It is at least an important supplement to the more extensive sources of information on Nicarao culture such as Oviedo and Bobadilla.

Historians and Quasi-ethnographers

Although not a primary source, the writings of Peter Martyr D' Anghera (Pietro Martire D'Anghiera, Pedro Martir de Anglería) are of great value in the study of Conquest-period American ethnology. The life of the priest, diplomat, educator, and chronicler Martyr and his important work are very well known (MacNutt 1912; Wagner 1946). From the time of the "discovery" of the Americas by Columbus until Martyr died in 1526, the scholar actively collected geographical, biological, and ethnographic data on the New World. His sources were official documents, and written and verbal reports from explorers and conquistadors. Among his most illustrious informants, to name but a few, were Columbus, Cabot, and Vespucci (Esteve Barba 1964, 54). Martyr related the information that he gathered in a series of letters written in Latin to various prelates and noblemen. The letters have been compiled in two books: the *Opus Epistolarum*, a collection of 813 letters on various subjects with scattered references to the New World (Esteve Barba 1964, 52), and *De Novo Orbe Decades Octo*, a collection of eight extensive reports on the New World written between 1493 and 1525 (Warren 1973, 47). The latter work contains considerable information on the Nicarao in Decade Six. As mentioned previously, Martyr's sources on Nicaragua were Gil González Dávila and Andres de Cereceda.

Martyr was a humanist and a naturalist. His broad interests led him to try to describe almost every aspect of the discovery of the New World, its exotic species of flora and fauna, and the strange inhabitants that the first European explorers found there. His journalistic instincts were responsible for his sensationalism and his predilection for the extraordinary.⁶ Martyr has been criticized, and perhaps justly, for these tendencies and for his disorganization and lack of precision in describing "new" biological species. He has also been accused of a lack of responsibility in selecting reliable informants, and one scholar (Ulloa 1948) has even questioned his personal integrity and sincerity. Although Martyr's critics are generally correct in their views, his writings merit careful attention, largely because he relied so heavily on primary sources that are now unavailable. Concerning Martyr's choice of informants, he did indeed accept exaggerated or fictitious reports at times, but he also drew information from a great many unimpeachable sources. The relevance of this fact seems to have escaped the attention of Martyr's detractors.

The printing history of the *Decades* is long and complex (MacNutt 1912, 49-52; Palau y Dulcet 1948-77, 1:358-60). From 1511, when the first Decade was published, until the present, the work has gone through a number of editions and translations. Probably the best English translation for scholarly use is that by Francis Augustus MacNutt (Martyr D'Anghera 1912).

Another historian who requires no introduction is the official chronicler of the Indies from 1532 to 1557, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés. He first went to the New World with Pedrarias Dávila in 1514 (Amador de los Rios 1851). He later opposed Pedrarias and in 1526 succeeded in having him replaced as governor of Castilla del Oro. In 1528 and 1529 Oviedo traveled through Nicaragua where he made direct ethnographic observations on the Indians of the region, especially the Nicarao and the Chorotega (Esteve Barba 1964, 65). Oviedo recorded these observations in his massive *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* which was not published in full until the mid-19th century (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55), nearly three centuries after his death.

Oviedo has been criticized as a pedant, a snob, a propagandist of counter-indigenist thought, and a bad-tempered, resentful, avaricious bigot. There can be little doubt that Oviedo was indeed protective of his own interests and that he did take a very ethnocentric attitude toward the Indians; but on balance, and considering his cultural milieu, he was an excellent historian, quite a good naturalist, and even a decent ethnologist. Oviedo's primary goal as a historian was to write history in full and with veracity. As official chronicler of the Indies, he had access to a wide range of reports and unpublished documents. He also relied heavily on his own personal experience and observations, and he believed very strongly in citing the sources of his data.

Oviedo's anthropological observations covered the physiology, language, social and political organization, subsistence, economy, religion, and material culture of the indigenous groups of *Tierra Firme*.⁷ He did not hold a favorable opinion of Indians, and some of his statements about them do not even approach reality, as, for example, when he claimed that the skulls of Indians are four times thicker than those of Christians (Oviedo y Valdés 1959, 43). But in spite of his biases and the fact that so many indigenous practices were anathema to him, he was able to record most of his observations impartially and without passing moral judgement. At times he even showed a remarkable trace of cultural relativism, as when he compared the Nicarao deities to the ancient Egyptian and Hebrew pantheons (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 11, pp. 101-2).⁸

The greatest problem one finds in using Oviedo as a source of ethnographic data on the Nicarao is the inherent disorganization of the *Historia General*. This is a problem of which Oviedo himself was aware as he stated,

Voy discurriendo por diversidades de materias, diferentes e apartadas unas de otras... porque esta ensalada o mixtura de cosas toda es en la mesma Nicaragua... [I am rambling about through diverse topics, different and separated one from the other... because this salad or mixture of things is all in the same Nicaragua...] (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 11, p. 107)

With careful and repeated readings, however, this problem can be overcome. Oviedo's greatest fault as an ethnographer is that at times his text is maddeningly vague about which indigenous group he was referring to when he described certain customs. This shortcoming is fortunately offset by his frequent clear and specific references to each group. Oviedo's thinking relative to the Nicarao was slightly tinged by what he had read and heard, especially in the letters of Cortés, concerning the Aztecs, but it is impossible that Oviedo could have been aware of the subtleties and detail in Aztec thought and culture

which were not known to the Western world until several years after he had completed the *Historia General* (see León-Portilla 1972, 22-23).

Oviedo is by far the most extensive and the most valuable primary ethnohistoric source on the Nicarao. His importance stems from the fact that he was among the Nicarao before they fell under total Spanish domination. He entered their towns, talked with their caciques, saw their temples and houses, and witnessed several of their ceremonies. Enhancing the significance of Oviedo's work is his inclusion in Book XLII of a transcription of an interview of several Nicarao caciques and priests conducted by Francisco de Bobadilla in 1528.

Bobadilla collected some of our most important data on Nicarao religion, social and political organization, and the Pipil-Nicarao migrations. Pedrarias Dávila secured the governorship of the province of Nicaragua in 1528, and one of his first official actions was to appoint his friend Bobadilla, a Mercedarian friar, the head of a commission to investigate the religious beliefs and practices of the Indians. Pedrarias's objective in appointing the investigation was to secure evidence to dispute the evangelistic claims of Gil González Dávila and others that they had converted over 50,000 indigenous souls to Christianity (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 2, bk. 29, ch. 22, pp. 116-17; bk. 31, ch. 1, p. 190; pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 2, p. 39; Bancroft 1882-87, 1:592-94, 605). Bobadilla commenced his investigation in the Nicarao town of Teoca (Tecoatega) on 20 September 1528 (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 2, pp. 39-40). A transcription error in Oviedo gives the year of Bobadilla's inquiry as 1538. Oviedo states elsewhere that Bobadilla, having concluded his investigation, preached a sermon in the Nicarao town of Totoaca on 2 October 1528 (1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 3, p. 56). As León-Portilla pointed out (1972, 19), Pedrarias Dávila died in 1531, so he could not have commissioned Bobadilla to conduct his inquiry in 1538. Furthermore, it is known that Bobadilla went from Nicaragua to Peru where in 1538 he arbitrated a dispute between Pizarro and Almagro (Markham 1892, 101-2; Vargas Ugarte 1966, 1:120-27).

Either in Spain or in Nicaragua, Oviedo obtained a copy of the transcript of the proceedings of Bobadilla's inquiry. Realizing the ethnographic significance of the document, Oviedo published it in full in the *Historia General* (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, chs. 2-3, pp. 39-56).

Bobadilla's procedure was, first, to conduct individual interviews with eight Nicarao caciques, priests, and elders. Five of the eight responded in varying degrees of candor and precision to the friar's questions. The interviews were conducted according to a questionnaire that Bobadilla had presumably prepared prior to commencing the inquiry. The items of the questionnaire have been reconstructed by León-Portilla (1972, 38). The informants were asked whether they were Christians, and then they were questioned about their beliefs concerning the creation, life after death, and related matters. After interviewing the five informants, Bobadilla convened a group of 13 Nicarao caciques, priests, and nobles to ask them a number of detailed questions concerning their religious beliefs and practices. To conclude his investigation, Bobadilla interrogated an unspecified number of Nicarao caciques, nobles, and elders on such topics as matrimonial ritual, law, prostitution, slavery, cannibalism, political organization, the calendar and religious festivals, warfare and military organi-

zation, markets, cranial deformation, hunting, ownership of property, forms of confession and penitence, and human sacrifice.

In asking some of the questions, especially those on social and political organization, Bobadilla seems to have been guided to a certain extent by ethnographic curiosity rather than the sheer objective of his commission to show that in 1528 the Nicaraos still maintained their native religious beliefs and customs. It is gratuitous to note that this goal was handily accomplished. The only serious criticism that one could have of Bobadilla's methods is that perhaps he was overly zealous and sought too hard to expose as many pagan superstitions and beliefs as possible. This may be true, but in a sense the same factor was a guarantee of thoroughness and persistence in the investigation (León-Portilla 1972, 20).

Turning to sources on the Pipil, a leading secondary source which relies heavily on lost or unavailable primary sources, including many native documents, is the *Recordación Florida* written in the late 17th century by the Creole patriot Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán. Although it was completed in 1695, the work was not published in full until the early 1930s (Fuentes y Guzmán 1932-33).

Like Oviedo, Fuentes's writing is ponderous, pedantic, and disorganized, and he had an obvious bias against Indian culture, but the *Recordación Florida* is an important source of ethnographic data on the Indians of Guatemala. This writer agrees fully with Carmack that Fuentes "was a better student of Indian culture than is usually recognized" (1973, 184). Although Fuentes's goal in life was to write good history, ironically, his importance stems from his competence as an ethnologist rather than as a historian. Value also accrues to his work from the fact that many of his sources were native documents which are now lost or destroyed. For instance, many of his data on the Pipil were taken directly from the Pipil manuscript discussed previously. Fuentes was relatively thorough about citing his sources. He relied primarily on native documents, native informants, reports from Spanish officials, litigation papers, personal observation, tradition, and published and unpublished works of other historians (for example, Acosta, López de Gómara, and Torquemada). Carmack has noted that "any modern ethnographer would be proud to claim a similar list of sources" (1973, 185).

His prime objective was to publicize the glories of Guatemala and to praise the accomplishments of the inhabitants of his *patria*, Spanish and Indian alike (Esteve Barba 1964, 281; Carmack 1973, 186). For this reason, he was given to exaggeration when he described, for example, the size of native armies or settlements. In his efforts to eulogize the cultural achievements of the Indians, he placed more emphasis on documents than on personal observation, and the most important facts about the Indians were to him those that indicated their progress toward civilization. To these tendencies we owe Fuentes's preservation of valuable data on Pipil social and political organization, writing, and calendrics.

A good general description of the Spanish Indies in the early 17th century is the *Compendio y Descripción de las Indias Occidentales* by the Carmelite friar Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, who traveled extensively throughout Mexico, Central America, Ecuador, and Peru from 1607 or 1608 until 1621. His com-

pendium was written when he returned to Spain in 1622 until the time of his death in 1630 (Velasco Bayón 1969). The original manuscript was discovered in the Vatican library in 1929 by Charles Upson Clark who published an English translation of the work in 1942 and the Spanish text in 1948 (Esteve Barba 1964, 613; Warren 1973, 53-54). The *Compendio* has also been published as a volume of the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* (Vázquez de Espinosa 1969).

The fifth book of the first part of the work deals with the territory of the *audiencia* (circuit court) of Guatemala (Vázquez de Espinosa 1969, pt. 1, bk. 5, chs. 1-33, pp. 140-80). Included are comments on the geography, flora, fauna, and natural resources of all of Central America. Although Vázquez's ethnographic data are limited, his economic data are useful and pertinent to both the Pipil and the Nicarao, as well as other groups of the area. This section is based primarily on personal observations, but it is obvious that he relied to a certain extent on an earlier report by Diego García de Palacio.

Royal Officials

The most important primary 16th-century source on the Pipil is the *relación* written to King Philip II by Lic. Diego García de Palacio (Fowler 1982). Palacio was educated for a nautical and military career, and from 1572 to 1579 he served as *oidor* (associate justice) of the *audiencia* of Guatemala⁹ (Warren 1973, 103). The year after he received this appointment, the Council of the Indies sent to royal officials a 135-item questionnaire on the geography, resources, population, native customs, and so on, of Spanish overseas possessions (Cline 1972, 189). This form was a precursor of the 50-item questionnaire of the *Relaciones Geográficas* of 1578-86. In response to the 1573 questionnaire, García de Palacio wrote his famous *relación*.

As Carmack (1973, 127) has pointed out, a note appended to a 16th-century *relación* dealing with the Verapaz region of Guatemala by Francisco Montero de Miranda (1954, 358), which was addressed to García de Palacio, states that the original Palacio manuscript bears the date 8 March 1574. On the other hand, Joaquín García Icazbalceta (1896-99, 6:86), who once owned the manuscript, gave the date of its composition as 8 March 1576, and all published versions of the document repeat this date. A scribe's error at the end of the manuscript actually gives the date as 8 March 1676; this is an obvious mistake and intended for 1576. There is no date in the heading paragraph nor on the outside of the manuscript itself. García Icazbalceta's cover page for the document has the date as 8 March 1574. There are marginal notes in various hands in the manuscript, many of which consist of the date 1574 and other dates. Aside from the marginal notes, the manuscript is all in the same copyist's hand, with the final line by García de Palacio himself and his signature.¹⁰ This evidence would seem to indicate that the *relación* was first composed in 1574 and perhaps revised or put into final form in 1576.

The García de Palacio *relación* has been published in English, French, Spanish, and German.¹¹ One of the best known editions is that which was issued with a somewhat imprecise English translation by E. G. Squier in 1860. The author has compared all the Spanish editions of the document, and in his opin-

ion the best for scholarly use is one published in 1881 with notes by Alexander von Frantzius and León Fernández (García de Palacio 1881).

Palacio conducted firsthand ethnographic research in preparation for the writing of his report. He began his travels in the Guazacapán region of eastern Guatemala starting at the Michatoya River and continuing into western El Salvador as far as the Lempa River (García de Palacio 1881, 7-9). He also visited the ruins of Copan, Honduras, where he obtained a native manuscript of some sort (García de Palacio 1881, 47-50). Palacio was the first European visitor to Copan and the first to write a description of the ruins. Much of his account, especially the descriptions of the towns and regions that he entered, is based on personal observation. On historical matters he was conscientious about seeking reliable informants, usually elders (García de Palacio 1881, 50). He also relied to a lesser degree on native documents, and according to Carmack (1973, 146) there is evidence that he consulted a Pipil manuscript. It seems that he also solicited written reports from secular and clerical officials such as Montero de Miranda (1954), but he did not cite these sources in his *relación*.

A valuable aspect of the document is Palacio's summary of the late 16th-century geographical distribution of indigenous linguistic groups in Chiapas, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica (García de Palacio 1881, 5-6). A few other highlights of the report are: a description of salt making on the coast of Guazacapán (p. 9), a description of cacao trees and native rituals associated with their planting in the Izalco region (pp. 15-17), comments on pottery making in Ahuachapán (p. 21), and a description of the method of extracting balsam on the Balsam Coast of El Salvador (p. 28).

The most important part of the *relación* is a very well-drawn description of Pipil culture in Asunción Mita, eastern Guatemala (pp. 34-44). This aspect of the report clearly shows the great personal interest that Palacio took in native culture. Included in the description are details on Pipil religion, social and political organization, militarism and warfare, and material culture. The source of Palacio's data on the Mita Pipil is unknown; Carmack (1973, 128) has suggested that the information may have come from a Spanish priest in the area.

Palacio's major shortcoming as a source is his lack of citation. He was not prone to exaggeration, nor was he driven by religious zeal to expose the demonic customs of the savages (although he did aver the opinion that Satan was responsible for the great linguistic diversity of southeastern Mesoamerica). His major motivations in writing about native culture seem to have been intellectual curiosity and his duty to the Crown to report the facts as he perceived them. Apart from his *relación*, further evidence of Palacio's knowledge of native culture is provided by a set of directions and ethnographic guidelines that he prepared for royal officials assigned to conduct tribute counts (García de Palacio 1940).¹²

Compared to his contemporaries, Palacio's ethnographic capability was indeed prodigious. Among 16th-century students of indigenous Mesoamerican culture, he is surpassed in quality of information only by the likes of Sahagún, Motolinía, Torquemada, Ixtlilxóchitl, and Landa. As a postconquest ethnographer of Central American cultures, he was a near equal of Oviedo in competence if not in prolixity.

Much of Palacio's information on Pipil culture was incorporated by Antonio de Herrera into his *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos* (Herrera y Tordesillas 1934-57, dec. 4, bk. 8, chs. 8-10, pp. 129-48). As noted previously, Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa (1969, pt. 1, bk. 5, chs. 1-33, pp. 140-80) also extracted portions of the Palacio *relación*.

Another noteworthy official of the *audiencia* of Guatemala was the *juez contador* (fiscal inspector) Juan de Pineda who served the *audiencia* from 1557 or 1558 until 1594. Toward the end of the 16th century, Spanish royal officials were apparently disturbed that native tribute payments to *encomenderos* were greater than those paid to the Crown. To investigate the situation Pineda was commissioned to travel through the province of Guatemala with a scribe and interpreters and make an account of the area's agricultural and industrial resources and to assess the amount of tribute that each town could pay.

Pineda's report to the *audiencia* was written in 1594¹³ and published in Spain for the first time in 1908 (Pineda 1908) and in Guatemala 17 years later (Pineda 1925). The latter edition carries the obvious misprint "Año de 1549" next to the author's name. The report has also been published in Costa Rica and in El Salvador (Pineda 1939, 1952).

The ethnographic information contained in the Pineda report is limited primarily to the agricultural and industrial products (for example, pottery or woven goods) of each community. Pineda seems to have been particularly interested in cacao and he included a brief description of its cultivation (Pineda 1925, 358-60). He did not give specific figures for tribute or population, nor did he mention the native language spoken in the towns that he investigated.

Pineda's bias against the Indians is painfully obvious; for almost every town he noted that the natives were wealthy and well dressed, that they paid little tribute, and they could easily pay much more. While it is accepted that the increase in demand for cacao after the Conquest caused an increase in cacao production and profits, especially in the Izalco region (Fowler 1983), few of the increased profits went to the Indians (Browning 1971, 57-59; MacLeod 1973, 87-89), and it is unlikely that they were as wealthy as Pineda reported. An interesting aspect of the report is the degree of "ladinoization" of late 16th-century Guatemalan Indians that can be discerned through Pineda's comments (1925, 333, 336, 352-53). Although the Pineda account contains some useful information, because of its blatant exaggeration it must be handled with skepticism (see Carmack [1973, 135-36] for further comments on this source).

The final royal official that will be treated here is Juan López de Velasco, the first official chronicler-cosmographer of the Council of the Indies. It was principally through his efforts that the *Relaciones Geográficas* of 1578-86 came into existence (Cline 1972, 189-90). His most important work, the *Geografía y Descripción Universal de las Indias*, was compiled from 1571 until 1574, but it was not published until over three centuries later (López de Velasco 1894). López de Velasco's successor as major chronicler, Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, took information from the work for his *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos* (Warren 1973, 49).

The *Geografía Descripción* was based largely on the responses to a set of questionnaires sent to royal officials in 1569 by Velasco's mentor, Juan de Ovando (Cline 1972, 189). Earlier sources were consulted for some areas, and

the section on Central America (López de Velasco 1894, 282-336) is primarily a tribute record based mainly on the 1548-51 *Tasaciones de los naturales* prepared by Cerrato, Ramirez, and Rogel¹⁴ (Carmack 1973, 139-40).

The *Geografía y Descripción* is, as its title implies, geographically oriented with special emphasis on the physiology, climate, and natural resources of each area of the Spanish Indies. Its value for Pipil and Nicarao ethnography is limited, but it does provide a certain amount of useful economic information on 16th-century Central America, and it is an admirable synthesis of geographic data on the Indies to 1571. The work is a very good piece of scholarship for its time, especially in view of the fact that López de Velasco never visited America.

Travelers

One of the most widely traveled 16th-century Europeans in the Indies was the Italian Girolamo Benzoni. In 1541 he journeyed to the New World where he remained for the next 14 years. His account, which includes observations on the areas he had visited as well as comments on the Spaniards and their actions, was written when he returned to Italy in 1556. The *Historia del Mondo Nuovo* was first published in Venice in 1565. The work was well received and republished seven years later (facsimile edition 1969). It has gone through a number of subsequent editions and has been translated into Latin, French, Spanish, English, German, and Flemish (see Palau y Dulcet 1948-77, 2:171-72). The English translation by W. H. Smyth was published in 1857 by the Hakluyt Society (Benzoni 1857).

Benzoni's account is quaint and disorganized, but it does have some useful snippets of information, particularly on Nicaragua, as well as some amusing anecdotes. He has a few general remarks on the Nicaraguan countryside and a brief description of cacao trees in the area (Benzoni 1857, 148-50). He was curious about the Indians and native languages, and he noted that in Nicaragua "they speak four languages; the best, however, is the Mexican [Nahuatl], which pervades fifteen hundred miles of country, and is the easiest to learn" (p. 151). He gave a brief list of a few Nahuatl words he had learned, one of which was *mitote* (dance ceremony), and he proceeded to describe a (Nicarao?) mitote (pp. 151-52). His comments on Guatemala (pp. 153-69) were limited to Pedro de Alvarado, the city of Guatemala, and the behavior of the Spaniards. He apparently did not enter El Salvador, but he included a note on the importance of cacao cultivation at Izalco (p. 158).

A valuable 16th-century travelogue on Mexico and Central America is the *Relación Breve y Verdadera de Algunas Cosas...que Suciedieron al Padre Fray Alonso Ponce en las Provincias de la Nueva España* by Antonio de Ciudad Real.¹⁵ In 1584 Ponce was appointed Commisary General of the Franciscan Order in New Spain. For the next five years he traveled with his personal secretary, Ciudad Real, and an interpreter, through Mexico and Central America. The year of their tour through Central America, from Chiapas to Granada, Nicaragua, and back, was 1586. Ciudad Real kept a log of the trip, carefully noting the native language that was spoken in each of the towns and villages

they visited.¹⁶ He made brief comments and observations on the Indians and their customs, and he frequently referred to the principal crops and other economic resources of the various settlements that they entered. As Carmack has noted, the primary significance of the Ponce *relación* is the data it provides on the linguistic, economic, and physical geography of the 16th-century Pipil, the Nicarao, and their neighbors (1973, 133). Although Ciudad Real did not include detailed ethnographic data, his comments on 16th-century native language distribution and economy are very useful.

The *Relación* was published in 1872 based on a manuscript (probably a copy of the original) owned by Mariano de Zabalburu (Ciudad Real 1872), and it was published again one year later (Ciudad Real 1873). Published indices of the work are cited by Warren (1973, 60).

A later traveler whose report dates to nearly two centuries after that of Ponce and Ciudad Real is the Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz who traversed his archdiocese (which comprised the modern republics of Guatemala and El Salvador) in three trips from 1768 to 1770. The *Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala*, which was published for the first time only recently (Cortés y Larraz 1958), was based on observations made during these trips as well as the written answers to a questionnaire that he sent to the priests under his jurisdiction (Carmack 1973, 199-200).

Cortés y Larraz reported population figures for most of the towns and parishes of his archdiocese, and he specified the language(s) spoken in each town or parish. The population figures must be viewed only as order-of-magnitude estimates; the detailed tribute assessments made throughout the Colonial period which are held at the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville and the *Archivo General de Centroamérica* in Guatemala are much better sources of demographic data. But the archbishop's figures readily point out the drastic reduction of the indigenous population that occurred during the Colonial era. The language-distribution data are the most important aspect of the report, and these make a good complement to the similar data reported by Ciudad Real. This information can be used in reconstructing the prehistoric linguistic boundaries of the Pipil and their neighbors. The report also contains useful data on agricultural production and subsistence, trade, social organization, and settlement patterns. As Carmack (1973, 200) has noted, Cortés y Larraz also included information which clarifies the extent of native opposition to the Spaniards in the late Colonial period—in terms of both physical opposition and ideological resistance to Christianity.

In addition to the Pipil, Cortés y Larraz provided data on many other indigenous groups of Guatemala and El Salvador: the Chorti, the Cakchiquel, the Tzutujil, the Quiche, the Mam, the Ixil, the Pokoman, the Pokomchi, the Kekchi, and the Xinca. An indication of the ethnographic value of the *Descripción Geográfico-Moral* is provided by the effective use to which it was put by Solano (1970, 1974).

Conclusion

In this paper, the major and a few minor published documentary sources on the Pipil-Nicarao, the Nahuat-speaking indigenous groups of Central America,

have been critically reviewed. An emphasis has been placed on the relative importance, credibility, and reliability of the sources, their interrelationships, and the types of information that they offer on the Pipil-Nicarao and their neighbors.

It is not gratuitous to stress the need for this kind of analysis. Although Mesoamerican ethnohistoric research has a long-standing tradition of calling for rigorous critical analysis, it is still not commonplace. Few Mesoamerican ethnohistoric studies are preceded by the critical analysis of the sources upon which they rely; many archaeologists, for example, who deal with historically documented cultures and who use documents to amplify their historical and sociocultural reconstructions, fail to analyze adequately their sources, a point that (as mentioned earlier) has been stressed by Nicholson (1955, 595-96; 1975, 490) and Carmack (1972, 232-33).

Until recently an adequate critical analysis of the sources on the Pipil-Nicarao was lacking.¹⁷ The Nahuatl-speaking populations of Central America are among the best documented Pre-Columbian ethnic/linguistic units of southern Mesoamerica, and a sustained ethnological interest in these groups has been taken by scholars since the time of E. G. Squier (1852, 1855). The lack of such analysis has not impeded the publication of useful but limited ethnohistoric syntheses on the Pipil (Thompson 1948; Armas Molina 1974) and the Nicarao (Lothrop 1926; Chapman 1960; Stone 1966). But with a fuller appreciation of the sources provided here a thorough reconstruction of Pipil-Nicarao culture and culture history, correlating documentary, archaeological, linguistic, and other evidence, becomes more feasible. Needless errors which have resulted from a lack of understanding of the sources can be avoided. Much work remains to be done; the unpublished manuscript corpus on the Pipil-Nicarao has barely been touched. The published sources must be analyzed and understood before the archival resources can be utilized to the fullest. Handled with care and precision, the documentary sources on the Pipil-Nicarao offer a wealth of information on the culture, adaptations, and history of the Nahuatl-speaking groups of Central America.

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Notes

1. Before the movement of the Nicarao to Nicaragua these groups were probably a single sociocultural entity. They share a common historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage.
2. Sources for the study of the linguistic composition of southeastern Mesoamerica at the time of the Conquest include Oviedo y Valdés (1851-1855), García de Palacio (1881, 5-6), Ciudad Real (1873), Fuentes y Guzmán (1932-33), Cortés y Larraz (1958), Stoll (1958), Thomas and Swanton (1911), Lehmann (1915, 1920), Larde

- (1926), Lothrop (1926, 1939), Johnson (1940), Thompson (1948; 1970, 84-102), Stone (1941, 1957, 1966), Miles (1957), Campbell (1972, 1976), Sharer (1974), Andrews (1977), Healy (1980), and Fowler (1981).
3. The *Annals of the Cakchiquels* is also commonly known as the *Memorial de Sololá* and the *Memorial de Tecpán Atitlán*. Details on its history, authorship, discovery, previous ownership, publication, and translation may be found in Recinos and Goetz (1953, 3-27), Carmack (1973, 47-50), and Gibson and Glass (1975, 391-92). For historiographic analysis of the *Popol Vuh* see Recinos (1947), Edmonson (1971), Carmack (1973, 24-28), and Gibson and Glass (1975, 394-95).
 4. Oral traditions of the Pipil-Nicarao migrations from Mexico to Central America were recorded by Bobadilla (Oviedo y Valdés 1851-55, pt. 3, bk. 42, ch. 2, p. 45), Motolinía (Benavente 1971, 12), and Torquemada (1969, 1:bk. 3, ch. 40, pp. 331-33). For an analysis of the ethnohistoric, archaeological, and historical linguistic evidence on the Pipil-Nicarao migrations see Fowler (1981, 825-49).
 5. A fruitful source of data on the Conquest is the *probanzas* ("proofs, official records of merits and services to the Crown") of the conquistadors, especially those taken down in the 1520s and 1530s. Useful information on the Conquest also often appears as a brief insert in the *probanza* of a descendant of a conquistador. The largest corpus of *probanzas* is in the Patronato section of the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville (L. H. Feldman, personal communication, 1981).
 6. Martyr was also influenced, obviously, by the general world view of contemporary Europe which expected to find strange and exotic things in distant lands.
 7. At the time of its discovery, *Tierra Firme* was the name given to the entire coast of the mainland south and west of Española. In 1509 Ferdinand the Catholic divided *Tierra Firme* into two parts: Nueva Andalucía, the region extending from the middle of the Gulf of Urabá east to Cabo de la Vela; and Castilla del Oro, the region extending west from the middle of the Gulf of Urabá to Cabo Gracias a Dios.
 8. It was a common practice for writers of the times to reconcile the newness of the peoples and customs of the New World with the contemporary European world view, drawing comparisons between the Indies and the biblical and classical world. Oviedo at times seems to have searched for more than this reconciliation of the new and the old. In spite of his anti-indigenist attitudes, he sometimes displayed a true ethnographic sensitivity toward aboriginal Central American culture.
 9. Palacio could very properly be considered a quasi-ethnographer, but since he served as *oidor* in Guatemala and Mexico and as *visitador* (inspector general) in Yucatan the author has included him as a royal official.
 10. The author is indebted to Nancy Troike, who inspected the original manuscript which is now in the University of Texas Latin American Collection, and supplied this information.
 11. For a full bibliography of all the published versions of the García de Palacio *relación* see Fowler (1982).
 12. The original copy of García de Palacio's ethnographic guidelines is in the Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de Guatemala, legajo 128. Other documents composed or compiled by, or pertaining to, García de Palacio in the Archivo General de Indias include Audiencia de Guatemala 10, Justicia 330, Contaduría 978-3, and Patronato Real 272-2-6. Although a certain amount of archival research has been done with these and other documents connected with Palacio, this work remains, unfortunately, mostly unpublished.
 13. The original Pineda report is in the Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de México, legajo 114.
 14. Tasaciones de los naturales de las provincias de goathemala y nicaragua y yucatan e pueblos de la villa de comaigua q se sacaron por mandado de los señores presidente e oidores de la audiencia y chancillería real de los confines, 1548-51. Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de Guatemala, legajo 128. For recent work with this valuable document see Lovell, Lutz, and Swezey (1982) and Feldman (1983).
 15. Although Ciudad Real labored in anonymity, authorship of this account is generally attributed to him. He is also noted for his work in Yucatan where he compiled a dictionary of Yucatec Maya, but possibly not the Motul dictionary which is

- attributed to him (see Bright 1967, 20, 37; McQuown 1967, 203; Barrera Vásquez 1980, 21a).
16. For a detailed map of Ponce's 1586 route through Central America, settlements visited, and distribution of native languages as reported by Ciudad Real see Fowler (1981, Fig. 71).
 17. Another recent study dealing with some of the same sources treated here is Abel-Vidor's excellent analysis (1981) of the sources for the Greater Nicoya archaeological subarea.

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H. B. Nicholson

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The Prehistory of the Southeastern Maya Periphery

Robert J. Sharer; Horacio Corona Olea; U. M. Cowgill; Thomas E. Durbin; Ernestene Green; David C. Grove; Norman Hammond; William A. Haviland; Nicholas Hellmuth; David H. Kelley; Evelyn S. Kessler; Lech Kryzaniak; John M. Longyear III; John Paddock; Marc D. Rucker; James Schoenwetter; Jaroslav Suchy; Milena Hubschmannova; Ronald K. Wetherington; Gordon R. Willey

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