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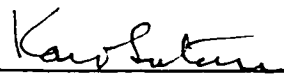
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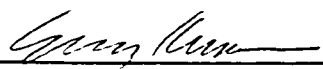
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**The Miskitu Kingdom**  
**Landscape and the Emergence of a Miskitu Ethnic Identity,**  
**Northeastern Nicaragua and Honduras, 1600-1800**

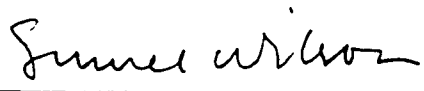
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**The Miskitu Kingdom**  
**Landscape and the Emergence of a Miskitu Ethnic Identity,**  
**Northeastern Nicaragua and Honduras, 1600-1800**

by

**Karl Henry Offen, B.A., M.A., M.A.**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
the University of Texas at Austin  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

May 1999

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For my parents

Henry and Bobbie Offen

## Preface

Combining archival records and field research, this study examines the formation of a Miskitu ethnic identity prior to 1800. Since 1990 I have spent some 29 months in Nicaragua, with 12 of those in the Mosquitia. Although my combined field experiences do not constitute an ‘ethnography’ in the sense that I developed deep linguistic insights into the Miskitu Indian world view, my cumulative research over the past years has allowed me to interpret the colonial period in ways that others have not. The initiation of this project can be traced to 1991 and 1992 when I worked in the Sí-A-Paz Reserve along the Rio San Juan in southeastern Nicaragua. During this period, background research introduced me to Atlantic Coast and to the labyrinths of Nicaraguan record depositories. Subsequent readings got me thinking about environmental history in eastern Nicaragua and I began orienting my doctoral research along those lines. In the summer of 1994 I traveled through the northern Mosquitia, including Honduras, and convinced the good folks at the *Centro de Investigación y Documentación de la Costa Atlántica* (CIDCA) to sponsor my research project.

Initially, I planned to conduct an ethnographic and hermeneutic study of foreign resource extraction, environmental management, and landscape perception in northeastern Nicaragua. I initiated this study by taking up residence among the Twahka Mayangna (Sumu) community of Wasakin where I stayed a total of three months. I also interviewed Miskitu and Creole ‘old-timers’ in Bilwi (Puerto



Cabezas), and among Miskitu communities along the middle Rio Wangki. My discussions covered a range of topics, but I concentrated my notes on labor experiences during *kompani taim* (company time), the period from 1925-1979 when North American enterprises dominated civil society through their production of bananas, gold, mahogany, cedar, pine, chicle, green turtles, and copper. I also took notes on what might be called folk tales, the workings of the Moravian Church, Miskitu cosmology, agricultural practices, ethnic discourse, inter-ethnic tensions, and experiences during the Sandinista conflict.

As I went about talking to people, mostly in Spanish, I became increasingly disillusioned with the historiography from which I was supposed to derive my historical perspective. In June of 1996 I returned to Managua in order to peruse the British and Spanish archival holdings available on microfilm at CIDCA. Although I was familiar with what I might find, the gap between the Euro-centric interpretations I had read and the picture that I was forming in my own mind began to grow substantially. When I returned to the United States I visited the Archives of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and the United States National and Marine Archives in Washington, as well as library collections at Harvard, Yale, and Philadelphia. Before I had a chance to outline the current study, I returned to Nicaragua. In April and May of 1997 I was involved with a project whereby Miskitu and Creole villagers mapped their own community lands using global positioning system (GPS) technologies. This work took me to several Miskitu communities along the upper Rio Prinzapolka, the lower Rio Wangki, and among several savanna communities that I had not previously visited.

Any project of this size could not have been completed without substantial support from numerous people and institutions. On the financial end, a Fulbright IIE Fellowship for Nicaragua, and two Continuing Graduate Fellowships from the University of Texas at Austin, provided me abundant resources, and I am happy to acknowledge their support. The Department of Geography at the University of

Texas provided me with a stimulating learning environment: I would especially like to acknowledge the open-ended support and wisdom of my dissertation's co-chairs Karl Butzer and Greg Knapp. Many of my fellow graduate students over the years have commented on my work and/or read partial drafts of the current study. Among them I would like to especially thank Juanita Sundberg, Jonathan Neumann, Phil Crossley, Natasha Barsotti, Maggie Lynch, Margaret Kaluzny, Jennifer Helzer, and Eric Perramond for generating a sense of community that I have sorely missed.

At the Moravian archives the Reverend Vernon Nelson and Dr. Albert Frank provided me with a great deal of assistance, as did Dr. Tom Minor, the director of the Reeves Library of the Moravian College. Brian Finnegan and Cathy Eisenhower provided me with food, a futon, and good company during my two-week stay in Washington, D. C. Bill Davidson provided me with manuscripts from his personal collection that changed the direction of this study mid-stream. He also went well beyond the call of duty by pushing my truck through the streets of Baton Rouge. The staff of the inter-library loan department of the Perry-Castañeda Library at the University of Texas at Austin probably extended this dissertation an extra year by tracking down sources from far and wide. My parents, Henry and Bobbie Offen, have provided me with financial resources well beyond anything I could have expected or deserved. The project could never have been completed without their support. In addition, I owe a separate debt of gratitude to my father for translating several German sources. The Moravian Reverends Warren Wenger and Kenneth Nowack graciously allowed me to make use of their slide collections from the 1940s through the 1960s. Reverend Wenger also provided me with several of his unpublished manuscripts which this study has only begun to make use of. My compañera Clemencia Rodriguez helped me translate some difficult Spanish sources and, whether she knows it or not, has inestimably and favorably shaped this study's outcome. She has tolerated a great burden over the last few years and simple appreciation does not begin to describe the debt of love and respect that I owe her.

Dozens of people in Nicaragua facilitated this project over the years, only a few of whom can be mentioned here. The folks at CIDCA-Managua, especially Lydia Calero, Melba McLean, and Mario Rizo opened their office to complete stranger and provided me with every necessary resource. The staff at CIDCA-Bilwi, Adán Silva, Fidel Wilson, Maureen, Adela, Isabel, and especially Cecil Monroe made me feel at home and in the process became my friends. In Puerto Cabezas and elsewhere in northeastern Nicaragua several people educated me about their lives and their personal histories. I would especially like to acknowledge the time and insight of Juan Acosta, José Baldelomar, Frank Chow, Santos Cleban, Bill Cunningham, Oscar Farmer, James Gordon, Danny Hayes, Otis Lam, Jerry López, Alejandro Luna, Jorge Matamoros, Manuel Medina, Nora Moses, Arturo Muller, Bono Muller, Juan Peter Pais, Simeon Rocha, Ivonne Rodriguez, Rodolfo Rivera, Boise Patterson, Sheffield Patterson, and Winston. The people of the community of Wasakin put up with my noisiness for several months and taught me a great deal about the Mosquitia. I would especially like to thank Alicia Gómez, Alberto Dolores Green, Ronas Dolores Green, Neddy Melado, Leonardo Franklin Montiel, Juan Morales, Morgan Johnny, and, most of all, Miriam and Reverend Evenor Fredrick. Of all Costeños, I owe the greatest debt to Ana Rosa Fagoth, the Director of the Casa Tininiska in Bilwi. Ana Rosa possesses a great passion for Miskitu society, and perhaps few people have worked harder than her to capture and disseminate the special wisdom of Miskitu culture. Her friendship, encouragement, and support is greatly appreciated.

**The Miskitu Kingdom**  
**Landscape and the Emergence of a Miskitu Ethnic Identity,**  
**Northeastern Nicaragua and Honduras, 1600-1800**

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Karl Henry Offen, Ph. D.  
The University of Texas at Austin, 1999

Supervisors: Karl W. Butzer and Gregory W. Knapp

Combining archival records and field research, this study examines the formation of a Miskitu ethnic identity prior to 1800. The project has a three-fold trajectory. First, within the context of geographical variation and Anglo-Spanish colonialism, I outline the importance of a self-referential identity variance between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. Second, I investigate the complementary role of commonplace and ideational landscapes in constituting and reflecting a Miskitu identity. Third, I scrutinize the colonial exchanges under which a shared Miskitu identity emerged. Although the peculiarities of an Anglo-Spanish colonial context configured broad conceptual categories that the Miskitu use to define themselves, the core of what it means to be Miskitu is built around commonplace identity markers that have been inscribed in the landscape.

Before contact with Europeans, a few thousand Miskitu-speaking Indians lived along pine savanna margins in what is today northeastern Honduras and Nicaragua. In 1641, African slaves escaping the failed English colony at Providence Island shipwrecked at the Rio Kruta and inter-married with select Miskitu families. Over the years two geographically distinct Miskitu groups emerged, the Sambo and the Tawira. In an attempt to produce a malleable Miskitu polity responsive to British objectives in the region, Jamaican officials commissioned a Sambo king and general, as well as a Tawira governor and admiral. These commissions organized Miskitu society around four territorial districts. Amalgamated through colonial exchanges and common regalia, these four districts helped spatialize a shared identity that began to cut across Sambo-Tawira lines while generating a collective notion of a Miskitu nation and Miskitu Kingdom.

The study contends that a Miskitu ethnic identity emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century around commonplace cultural understandings of Miskituness and elite disseminated conceptualizations of a spatially constituted Miskitu Kingdom. Contrary to prevailing scholarship, I find that a Miskitu identity emerged in the absence of colonial hegemony, is deeply rooted in age-old cultural-ecological relations, and emerged before the formation of the Nicaraguan nation-state and Anglo-colonialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These findings suggest that current Miskitu ethnic discourses and political activities need to be viewed in a much more cultural-ecological and diachronic perspective.

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## Abbreviations

ABH	<i>Archives of British Honduras</i> , 3 vols., ed. John A. Burdon (London: Sifton Praed and Co., 1931-35).
AGI	Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.
AMC	Archives of the Moravian Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
APCE	<i>Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series</i> , 6 vols., eds. W. L. Grant and James Munro (London: Anthony Brothers Limited, 1910).
BAGG	<i>Boletín del Archivo General del Gobierno</i> (Guatemala)
CDHCN	<i>Colección de Documentos Referentes a La Historia Colonial de Nicaragua</i> , ed. Anon. (Managua, 1921).
CDHCR	<i>Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Costa Rica</i> , 10 vols., ed. León Fernández (Barcelona: Imprenta Viuda de Luis Tasso, 1907).
CIDCA	Centro de Investigación y Documentación de la Costa Atlántica, Managua, Nicaragua.
CRC	<i>Costa Rica y Colombia</i> , ed. Manuel M. Peralta (San José, 1889).
CRCM	<i>Costa Rica y Costa de Mosquitos. Documentos para la Historia de la Jurisdicción territorial de Costa Rica y Colombia</i> , ed. Manuel M. Peralta (Paris, 1898).
CRNP	<i>Costa Rica, Nicaragua y Panama en el siglo XVI: su historia y sus límites</i> , ed. Manuel M. Peralta (Madrid: Librería de M. Murillo, 1883).

CSP	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies</i> , 39 vols., ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1933).
JCTP	<i>Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations</i> , 14 vols. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920-1938).
LCRC	<i>Límites de Costa-Rica y Colombia. Nuevos Documentos para la Historia de su Jurisdicción Territorial</i> , ed. Manuel M. de Peralta (Madrid, 1890).
NMHD	<i>The Nicaraguan Mosquitia in Historical Documents 1844-1927. The Dynamics of Ethnic and Regional History</i> , eds. Eleonore von Oertzen, Lioba Rossbach, and Volker Wünderrich (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1990).
PA	<i>Periodical Accounts of the Moravian Missions</i>
PIC	Providence Island Company
PRO	British Public Record Office, London.
FO	Foreign Office
CO	Colonial Office
PSPG	<i>Proceedings of the Society for Propagating the Gospel</i>
RHGAC	<i>Relaciones históricas y geográficas de América central. Colección de libros y documentos referentes a la historia de América</i> , vol. 8, ed. Victoriano Suárez (Madrid, 1908).
SPG	Society for Propagating the Gospel (London)
SUB	<i>Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen</i>
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USNA	United States National Archives, Washington, D. C.

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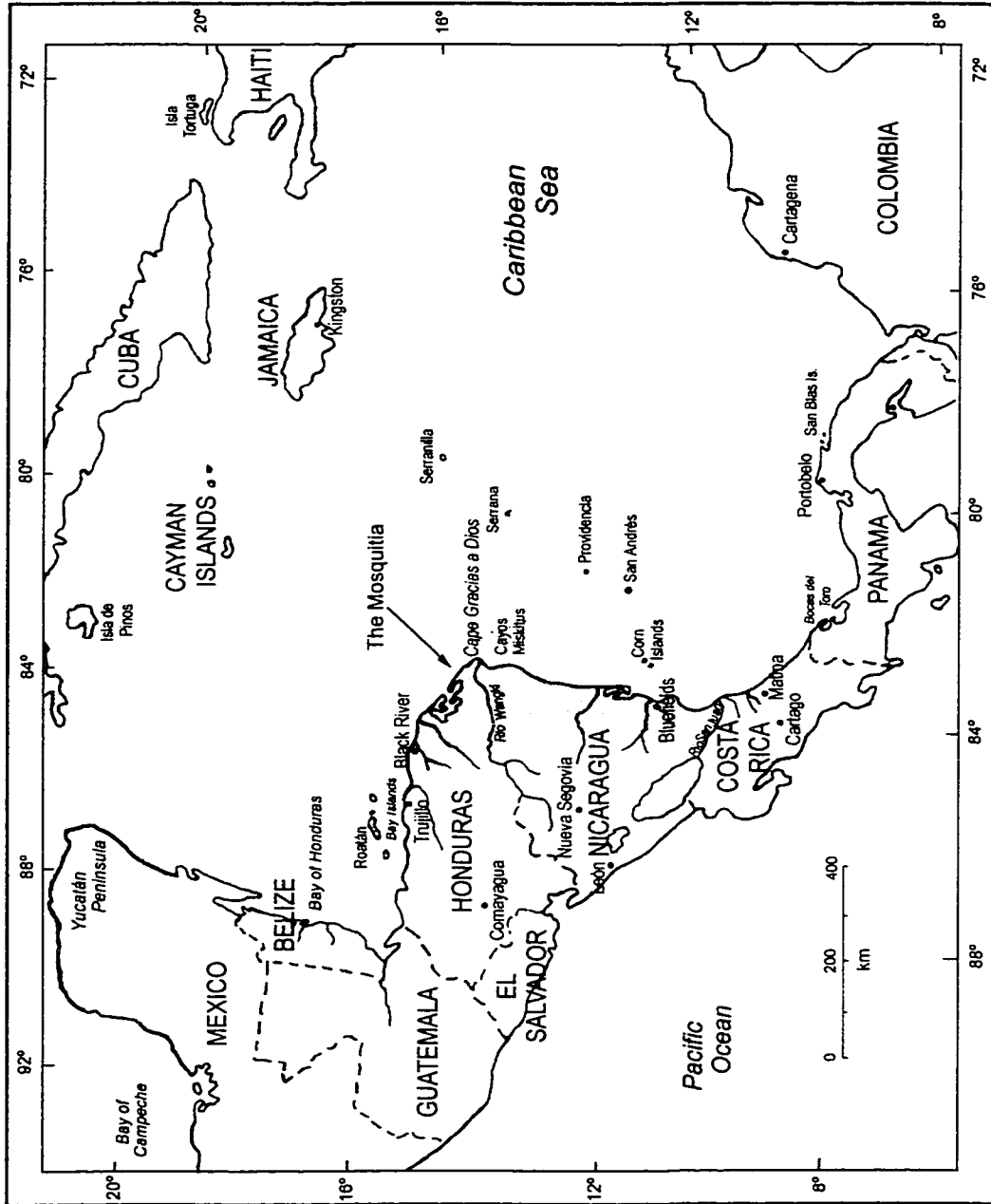
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## Chapter One

### Introduction

In 1641 a group of African slaves escaping the failed English colony at Providence Island, some 100 miles off the coast of eastern Nicaragua, shipwrecked and intermarried with Miskitu-speaking Indians near the Rio Kruta in what is today northeastern Honduras (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Seventy years later an English pirate wrecked at roughly the same point and had this to say to about the local effects of African integration:

Some of [the native Miskitu people] have separated from the main Body . . . and gave this Reason for it; They said, that some People who were not of the ancient Inhabitants, but new Upstarts, were got into the Government, and behaved themselves with so much Pride and Insolence that they could not bear it, and therefore had separated from the main Body. They related the Matter thus: A Ship with Negroes by Accident was cast away on the Coast, and those who escaped drowning mixed among the Native Muscheto People, who intermarried with them, and begot a Race of Mulattoes, which were the People that Society could not brook should bear any kind of Command amongst them.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 1.1** The Western Caribbean.

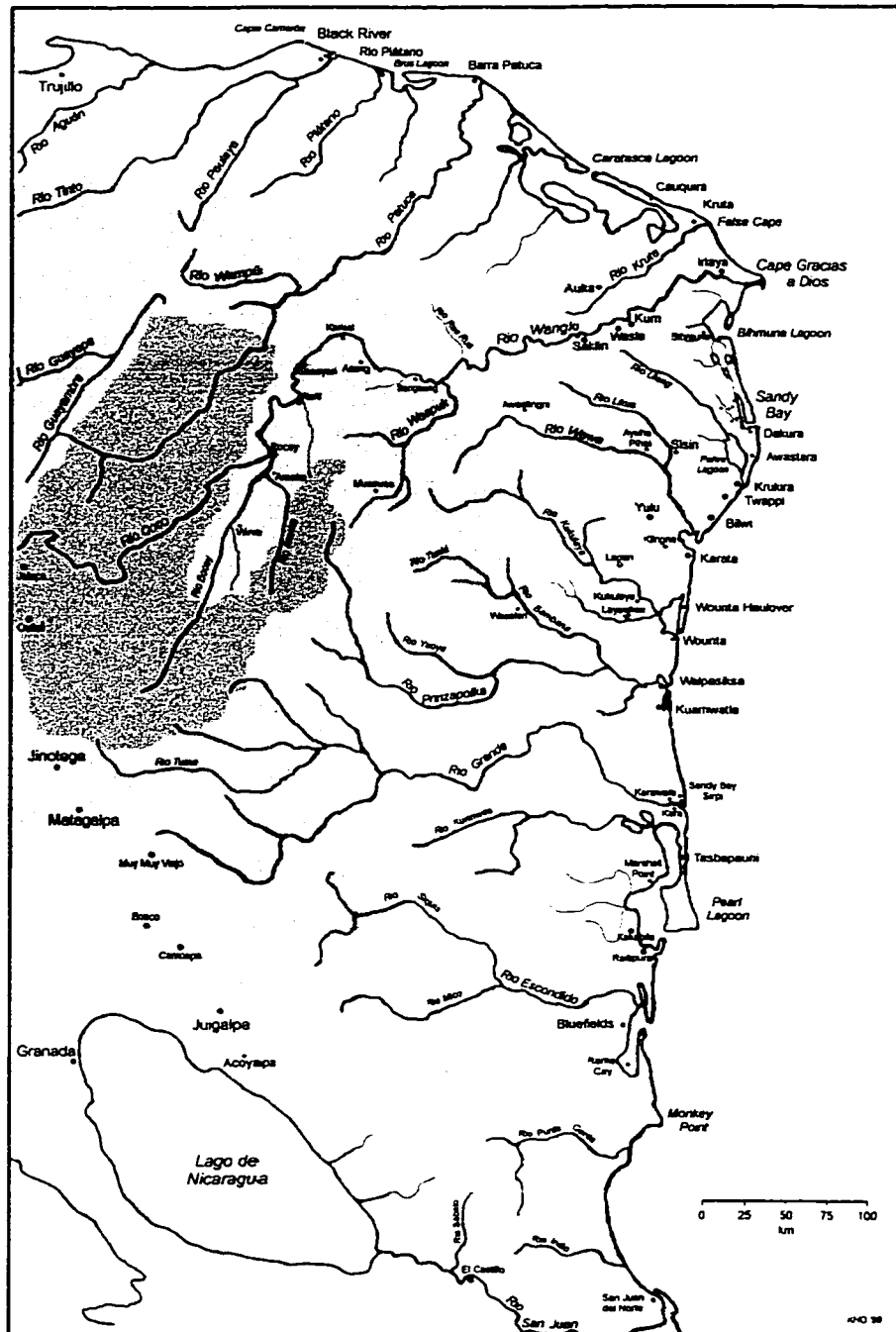


Figure 1.2 The Mosquitia.



Today all Miskitu speakers refer to themselves as Miskitu Indians and consider themselves a single ethnic group within Nicaragua and Honduras. As with many emerging ethnic groups in Latin America, a good deal of speculation has focused on the origins of Miskitu identity, and in particular the ways in which colonial processes amalgamated disparate identities. In the case of the above passage, for example, Uring hints that a shared Miskitu identity may not have always been the norm among all Miskitu-language speakers.

During the colonial period, Spanish and English writers typically distinguished between two Miskitu groups, or nations. Those Uring referred to as a 'Race of Mulattoes' were called 'Sambo' Miskitu, while his 'Native Muscheto People' often retained this same sort of indigenous qualifier. Later, the Miskitu adjective *tawira*, meaning straight or heavy hair, referred to Miskitu perceived as more 'racially Indian.' When authors mentioned the two groups collectively during the 1700s, they often used the Miskitu-invoked term 'Mosquito-men.' This label suggests that the Sambo and Tawira began to see themselves collectively as Miskitumen in relational terms with the Englishmen, Scotchmen, Dutchmen, and Frenchmen with whom they were continually interacting. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century virtually all distinguishing labels disappear from the historical record and all Miskitu-language speakers were simply known as the Miskitu Indians.<sup>2</sup>

The varied vocabulary of the colonial period raises two questions. To what extent did these differentiating labels reflect or create an actual self-referential distinction between the 'Sambo' and 'Tawira' during the colonial period? And conversely, how and under what circumstances did a shared 'Miskitu' ethnic identity develop? I will argue that a shared Miskitu identity emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century around two dissimilar processes: commonplace and cultural-ecological sensibilities of Miskituness that are literally and figuratively inscribed in the landscape, and Sambo-Tawira elite notions of a spatially configured Miskitu Kingdom generated through Anglo-Spanish colonial interactions.

By way of introduction to the significance of Sambo-Tawira differentiation, I submit the narrative of a Sambo Miskitu elder as it was recorded by the Moravian missionary Heinrich Ziock in 1893. The elder chronicles events surrounding the time when the Sambo Miskitu King Rigby, also known as King George II in historical sources and *Ibihna* (paca) among the Miskitu today, killed the Tawira Miskitu Governor named don Carlos, also known as Governor Colvil Briton. Although Ziock prefaces the narrative by stating that the events occurred during the 1830s, the elder was in fact reworking historical circumstances that took place in 1790-91, less than five years after 500 British settlers and their 1,700 African slaves formally evacuated the coastal regions of eastern Nicaragua and northeastern Honduras, also known as the Mosquito Shore. The outbreak of Sambo and Tawira warfare so soon after the British evacuation was not coincidental. Simmering disputes between the Sambo and Tawira had been ongoing since Englishmen at Jamaica began commissioning regional Miskitu leaders with titles such as king, governor, general, and admiral in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The geographic division among these leaders intensified after a small-pox epidemic swept through Miskitu villages in 1727-29 and shifted the balance of political power within the territorial entity known as the Miskitu Kingdom to the king and the Sambo Miskitu. Finally, within the context of increasing Spanish-Tawira friendship, Sambo-Tawira tensions came to head after the British evacuation, and the rest is history and memory.

As Ziock transcribed the elder's narrative, "king Rigby belonged to the numerous sambu tribe" of the Miskitu, while don Carlos belonged to the "tribe" of Tawira Miskitu. Don Carlos, it is told, had recently gone to Cartagena where the Spaniards had hailed him as the legitimate Miskitu King. When Don Carlos returned to his home at Twappi he brought with him many gifts and several Spanish people, including two priests. Irate at being overlooked and deceived, King Rigby invited don Carlos to his home on the Rio Wangki where he executed his rival on the spot. This outrage prompted two of don Carlos' relatives, Admiral Alparis and Sulliar, to exact revenge on the Sambo.

Sulliará went “immediately to the tribes of the Tawira Indians which live around Twappi and further inland” on the Nicaraguan savannas. As a group, the Tawira set upon the Sambo village of Awastara, “which had a different location than today,” where they tied all the men to the largest house and put the structure aflame. The Tawira next went to the Sambo village of Para, where this time they also killed the women and children. By time the revenging Tawira reached the Rio Wangki, King Rigby and his most feared warrior Swapni had already escaped to Cape Gracias a Dios. With the element of surprise gone, Tawira motivation waned and the troops dissipated.

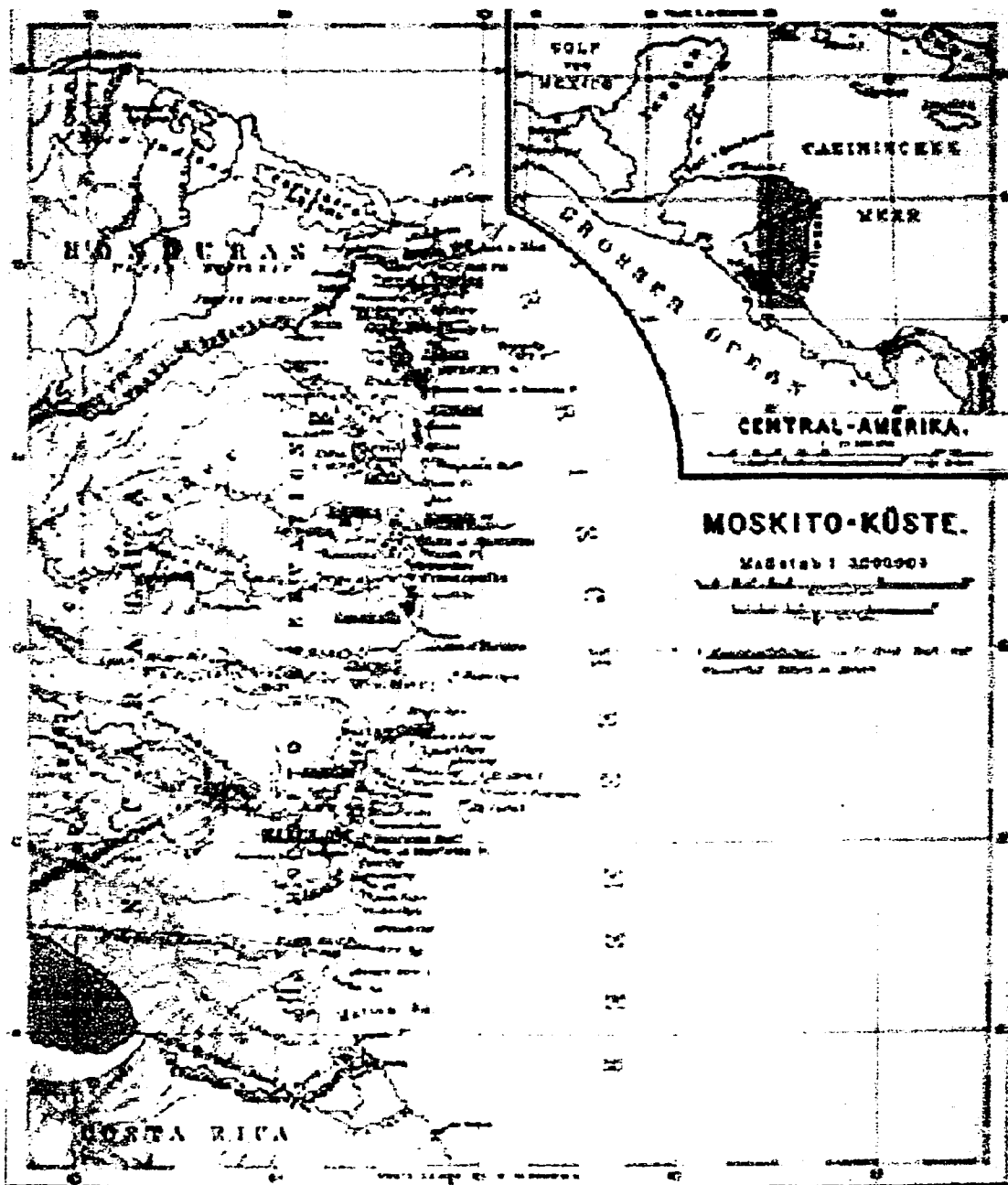
Meanwhile, the king called together “the tribes of the Sambu Indians” to which he and Swapni belonged. War raged between the Tawira and the Sambo, and “everywhere the Tawira were defeated.” Surrounded at his house by Sambo troops, Admiral Alparis killed himself and his wife. The Sambo then set upon the remaining Tawira at Pearl Lagoon, where Swapni killed Sulliará. With most of the Tawira leaders dead, King Rigby at first “gave the order to destroy all Tawira villages as well as all the Tawira people whether or not they had taken part in the mutiny.” Later, however, Rigby “followed the advice of a top wita [chief] and kept part of the tribe alive to act as tributaries and slaves.” According to Ziöck, many Sambo Miskitu felt the king’s punishment had been mild: “many lament [Rigby’s leniency] even today.”<sup>3</sup>

Although the elder’s narrative deviates several details from the historical record, an 1804 observer corroborates the effect of Sambo-Tawira warfare:

The Indian race of Mosquito men inhabited the coast from Blue Fields to Tibuppy [Twappi], under the orders of two of their own chiefs, called the Admiral and Governor. They were ever considered the best class of Mosquito men, from their industry and orderly disposition; but they were not liked by the Samboes, who some years ago, . . . nearly extirpated the whole of them, burnt their dwellings, and hung their chiefs; by which this tribe has become almost extinct.<sup>4</sup>

Although one would think that researchers have discussed the causes and effects of such intra-Miskitu warfare, especially since the Miskitu themselves have considered it important, Miskitu ethnohistorians have shown no interest in Sambo-Tawira relations nor in problematizing the early origins of a Miskitu identity more generally. For the most part, scholars have viewed the driving forces behind political and ethnic processes along the eastern coast of Nicaragua and northeastern Honduras—the Mosquitia—as externally generated and relatively recent. In contrast, I find that Sambo-Tawira differentiation underscores the emergence of a Miskitu ethnic identity during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and continued to organize Miskitu political activities into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The historical dimension of Miskitu identity formation should be viewed in its geographic context. To appreciate fully the elder's narrative we need to understand why his story revolves around 'Sambo' places and 'Tawira' places. That is we need to discern the Mosquitia's human geography, and how this spatiality constitutes and reflects Sambo and Tawira identities, as well as the unity of a Miskitu Kingdom and a shared Miskitu identity. Although rarely appreciated, it is not a coincidence that the northern boundary of the so-called Mosquito Reserve, a territorial entity inscribed along the coast of Nicaragua after the 1860 Anglo-Nicaraguan Treaty of Managua (Illustration 1.1), coincided with the traditional boundary dividing the Sambo in northeastern Nicaragua and Honduras, ruled by the king and general respectively, from the Tawira Miskitu, ruled by the governor and admiral. Indeed, these titled commissions reflected but also reinforced a spatial distinction between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. They also helped shape the idea of a federated Miskitu Kingdom and its spatial extent. The competing and bipolar nature of the Anglo-Spanish colonial context, in addition to a regionally diverse British agenda, further reinforced the geographic dimension of Sambo-Tawira differentiation within a broader configuration of an emerging and shared Miskitu ethnic identity.



**Illustration 1.1** Moravian Map showing the Mosquito Reserve, 1899; source Hermann G. Schneider, *Moskito. Zur Erinnerung an die Feier des Fünfzigjährigen Bestehens der Mission der Brüdergemeine in Mittel-Amerika* (Herrnhut: 1899).

Sambo and Tawira differentiation during the colonial period is significant in its own right, but this identity variance also continued to affect coastal history and organize Miskitu political activities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following the elder's testimony, Ziock contrasts the inter-Miskitu tensions of the past with the political situation two years prior to Nicaraguan incorporation of the Mosquito Reserve in 1894:

The above is one leaf of the bloody history of the Moskito during the heathen period. . . . [Yet] the seeds of hatred and hostilities have not entirely disappeared. . . . between the Sambu-Indians, living at Sandy Bay, Dakura, Karata, Great River, and the Tawira-Indians, living in Para, Awastara, Twappi, Kukallaya and Yulu, there still exist small spats in reference to their Moskito dialects. These are a harmless reminder of the old tribal opposition. However, in 1892 earlier enmities revealed themselves more fully. . . .

The present chief of Moskito [the Mosquito Reserve], a very young man, who attained his position in January 1891, derives from Tawiras on his father's side. His mother is a Rama-Indian . . . His origin from two lesser valued, in fact despised tribes of the land, made a part of the Indian population disinclined to recognize his position, but finally they submitted. But decidedly bitter over his appointment were the Sambus who mainly lived in the Nicaraguan region of [the Mosquitia].

Actually, it was not their business who ruled in [the Mosquito Reserve], but since this region did belong to the Moskito in earlier times, since Moskito is still held as their spiritual home, since they care little about the Nicaragua-Moskito border, and finally since some Sambus actually lived in Moskito, they believe they have a right to exercise a decisive opinion. They also knew what to do in order to be successful. They turned to Nicaragua where every complaint about Moskito, however unjust, will get a sympathetic hearing. A delegation . . . sent to Managua . . . vented its anger about the new Moskito chief, and hence received predictable Nicaraguan advice: that is to nominate an opposition king. Such a measure, it was speculated in Managua, would cause civil war in Moskito. Thus would occur the situation in the Treaty of Managua . . . which would give Catholic Nicaragua the right to restore order in Moskito and annex it to Nicaragua.

In fact, a Sambu man, living in Krukira (which is a village in Mosquito land) and a descendant of the old royal family on the Wangs river [Andrew Hendy], was chosen as chief and baptized by the bishop in . . . Managua . . . This rival made preparations to assume his proper rights. In his name came Wislat, the superior wita of the Sambus from Sandy Bay in Nicaragua to Twappi in [the Mosquito Reserve]. There he called together the Tawira witas from Twappi, Krukira, Bilwi, and Yulu and requested that they rise against the Mosquito Chief and no longer pay taxes, otherwise he would lead a war against them and cut their hair, a shameful reference to the long, smooth Tawira hair.

The mood in northern Mosquito I learned of personally and heard the remark: ‘Why did Rigby ever listen to that wita! If he had killed all the Tawiras, we would not have this problem now.’ . . . Wislat’s plan received much sympathy. Many of our people joined the mutinous movement, refused to pay taxes and recognized the rival king [Hendy]. Thus it looked in the spring of 1892 very precarious; peace was seriously in question, civil war was at the door, even the very existence of the Mosquito state was threatened.<sup>5</sup>

Following Nicaraguan incorporation of the Mosquito Reserve, the Managua government recognized the Wangki (Sambo) leader, Andrew Hendy, as ‘Chief of the Miskitu.’ A Tawira movement to oust Hendy and reinstate the former Tawira king, Robert Henry Clarence, was led by Sam Pitts from the Tawira community of Yulu (Illustration 1.2). This unrest lasted several years until Pitts was killed by Nicaraguan troops in 1907. Existing interpretations of Nicaraguan incorporation of the Mosquito Reserve and the Mosquito Convention, in which Miskitu delegates signed over their land to Nicaragua, have failed to consider how animosity between the Sambo Miskitu of the Rio Wangki and the Tawira Miskitu of the northern savannas underscored and divided Miskitu political behavior during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As one case in point, several Miskitu told me that factional Miskitu resistance to the Sandinistas during the 1980s reflected long-standing Wangki-Tawira tensions more than political-ideological differences between the two predominant Miskitu leaders Stedman Fagoth (a Sambo Miskitu from the Rio Wangki) and Brooklyn Rivera (a Tawira Miskitu from Krukira). In sum, the

opening statements by the pirate Uring, the historical consciousness of the Sambo elder, the recorded experiences of the Moravian missionary Ziock, as well as the Sam Pitts uprising and Wangki-Tawira tensions during the Sandinista-Contra War, all suggest that significant and geographically constituted identity differentiation characterized 'Tawira' and 'Sambo' relationships for the last 300 years. This straightforward, yet entirely overlooked, fact provides the organizational dynamism for an examination of the emergence of a shared Miskitu ethnic identity during the colonial period.



**Illustration 1.2** Miskitu King Robert Henry Clarence, with sword, and his court in 1893; photo courtesy of the Centro de Documentación y Investigación de la Costa Atlántica (CIDCA), Managua.



## **Landscape and Miskitu Identity**

The project does three things. First, within the context of geographical variation and Anglo-Spanish colonialism, I outline the importance of a self-referential identity variance between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. Second, I investigate the complementary role of commonplace and ideational landscapes in constituting and reflecting a Miskitu identity. Third, I scrutinize the colonial exchanges under which a shared Miskitu ethnic identity emerges. Motivating the scope of the present study was my conviction that prevailing interpretations of Miskitu identity had not adequately dealt with the colonial period prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nor escaped the shadows of Miskitu-Sandinista conflicts of the 1980s, nor addressed my experiences that the Miskitu characterize themselves and their history by referring to a broadly conceived notion of landscape. Although the peculiarities of a competing Anglo-Spanish colonial context configured broad conceptual categories that the Miskitu use to define themselves, the essence of what it means to be Miskitu resides in commonplace identity markers that are literally and figuratively impressed in the landscape.

As one of the most persistent ethnic groups in the circum-Caribbean basin, the Miskitu exemplify an emerging and mixed-race indigenous people who have successfully challenged colonial and state authority through claims of historical and ethnic sovereignty. Shortly after the 1979 Sandinista Revolution many of Nicaragua's approximately 100,000 Miskitu Indians became disillusioned with the new government and participated in armed resistance supported by the United States. In an attempt to understand the underlying causes of Miskitu resistance, scholars began questioning the origins of Miskitu identity. In these studies authors often invoked what they called a 'historical perspective,' yet this rarely implied more than using secondary sources to support convictions achieved through other means. By privileging the Miskitu-Sandinista conflict, many of these analysts have underestimated who the Miskitu were when they entered the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by

extension how Miskitu ethnic formation during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries nurtured 20<sup>th</sup> century Miskitu identity politics. At the same time, historical monographs discussing the Miskitu in particular, or eastern Central America more generally, have not, in my view, read colonial texts sufficiently ‘against the grain,’ nor challenged colonialist representations with fieldwork or local voices. Many of these historians reproduced the same misconceptions Europeans held or accepted colonialist polemics at face value. In my view there has been very little attempt to understand the origins of Miskitu ethnicity from a Miskitu and place-based perspective. As a consequence, a majority of both political and historical scholarship has implicitly assumed that the Miskitu must have felt inferior to Europeans simply because Europeans thought that way; or that colonialists simply imprinted local people with exogenous ideas which completely subsumed domestic world views. By examining the formation of a Miskitu ethnicity from a Miskitu and local-geographic perspective I hope to dispel these myths and open a fresh space to reconsider the Mosquitia’s colonial past in general, and the origins of Miskitu identity in particular.

Indigenous and/or Afro-Caribbean resistance to state authority has long been the hallmark of Latin American political culture and civil society. Recently, anthropologists have begun examining how indigenous resistance acts as a constitutive process of ethnic identity formation. Most of these scholars, however, tend to view indigenous ethnic formations as an outcome of nation-state formation beginning in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, not as a long-term process of accommodation, appropriation, and resistance that originated before and after contact with Europeans.<sup>6</sup> Like many emerging ethnic groups around the circum-Caribbean, the Miskitu forged their identity within a competing colonial context involving more than one European power. However, and in contrast to conventional wisdom, the Miskitu were never the subjects of direct colonial rule prior to 1800. In my view, the Mosquitia characterized an atypical colonial space in which no single power established political authority. As a result, Anglo-European respect for, and

dependence on, the Miskitu, as well as a relative Miskitu equality within the varied colonial settings of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, allowed the Miskitu to solidly syncretize many colonial symbols into the inner sanctums of a Miskitu identity. Although signs representing a Miskitu ethnic identity do reflect several Anglo conventions, in my view it makes a difference that the local process of weaving ideological suppositions and cultural forms into the fabric of a Miskitu social identity was filtered through a symbolic landscape of the Miskitu's own making. It was not until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the forces of Moravian evangelism, capitalist political economies, the increasing effects of Anglo-American hegemony, and Nicaraguan nation building placed the Miskitu in a subordinate position vis-à-vis Anglo and Hispanic power.

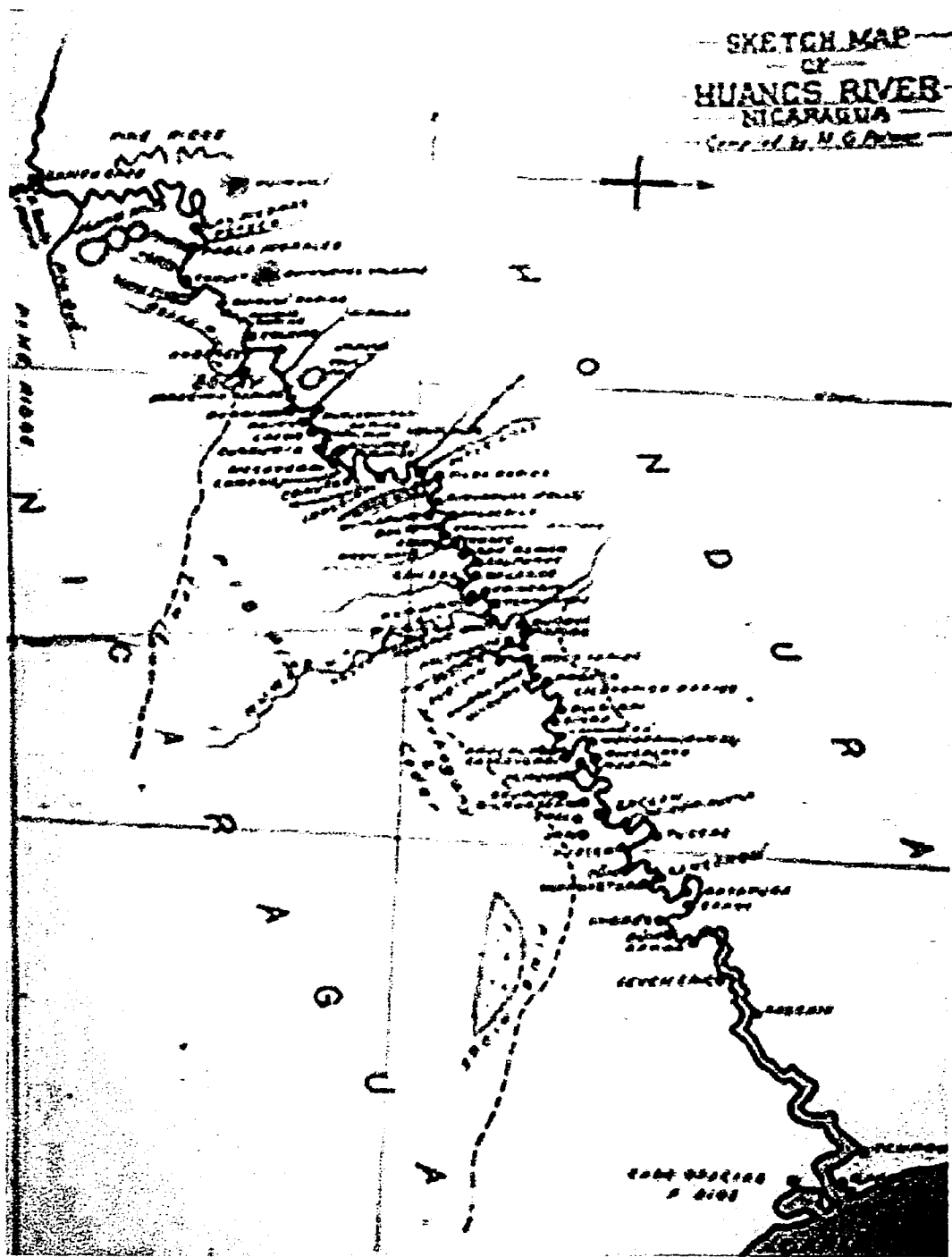
Located in the cul-de-sac of the Caribbean basin, the Mosquitia was almost destined to become a crucible for Anglo-Spanish conflicts during the colonial and early national period. The Spanish called the Mosquitia region Taguzgalpa and Tologalpa, two Nahuatl placenames of complex origin but possibly originating from a corruption of a 1547 reference to 'Atuasgalpa,' from the Miskitu (*awas*) and Nahuatl (*galpa*), or 'the place of pines' (see also Chapter Three).<sup>7</sup> While Spain claimed sovereignty over the Mosquitia after Columbus sailed along the Central American coast in 1502, Spanish settlers never established a durable physical presence between Trujillo, Honduras and Matina, Costa Rica along the eastern coast of Central America until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, buccaneers from northern Europe and eventually settlers from the British Isles formed small yet impervious communities along the coast they termed the Mosquito Shore.

Most authors would agree that the formative developments shaping the Mosquitia as a place and the Miskitu as a people during the colonial and early national period involved the commercial activities and political influence of British settlers and traders. Beginning with the settlement of nearby Providence Island by English colonists (1629-1641) and the formation of a British Superintendency for the Mosquito Shore (1749-1786), to the establishment of a British Protectorate

(1837-1860) and Anglo-support for the Creole dominated Mosquito Reserve (1860-1894), Anglo-interventions combined with an isthmus geography to effectively divide Nicaragua's mestizo, Hispanic, and Catholic west coast from its indigenous, Creole, and Anglo-Protestant east coast.

The national identity of Nicaraguan—to the extent that a single vision is shared by all social groups—and recent expressions of Miskitu political behavior have formed in relation to one another. A Nicaraguan national identity is built upon the legacy of Spanish institutions but also a vivid historiography of territorial transgressions carried out by pirates, *zambos*, Englishmen, and later North Americans such as William Walker and U. S. Marines. Viewed as a corroborative element of foreign invasions, many mestizo and Western Nicaraguans have come to disdain the Miskitu, as well as coastal Afro-Caribbeans known as Creoles. In Nicaragua, for example, the Spanish noun *etnia* (ethnicity) has been constructed to connote a racial, cultural, and religious deviation from the mestizo-Hispanic-Catholic majority, *the* Nicaraguans, who do not have an *etnia* but instead possess a nationality. In this sense, the words 'Nicaraguan' and 'ethnic' signify the antithesis of one another. Indians and Creoles are not simply categorized as 'ethnic minorities' within Nicaragua, but have the basal meaning of their citizenship questioned and subordinated at every level of political society. The ongoing desire of the Miskitu to express and elevate their own ethnic identity, often in quite nationalistic and territorial terms, has its roots in the colonial past, but is currently nurtured by a nationalist politics of exclusion and arrogance.

Although the United States government directed the circumstances of the Contra War in Nicaragua, and predictably supported Miskitu resistance to the Sandinistas, the catalyst for sustained Miskitu dissatisfaction with Sandinista policies originated with the forced evacuation from the Rio Wangki in January of 1982 (Illustration 1.3).



**Illustration 1.3** Map of Miskitu Communities along the Rio Wangki, 1905; source Meryvn Palmer, *Through Unknown Nicaragua. The Adventures of a Naturalist on a Wild-Goose Chase* (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1945).

Exiled from the heartland of the Mosquitia and pining for the Rio Wangki, several thousand Miskitu fled to Honduras or moved to resettlement areas in Nicaragua. Here, charismatic Miskitu leaders mobilized a long-standing Miskitu discontent with ‘the Spanish’ (the Nicaraguans) by summoning an imagery of commonplace Miskitu landscapes that embody Miskituness. At the same time, and often in the same sentence, leaders employed these landscapes to animate creative interpretations of a glorious Miskitu past symbolized by the Miskitu Kingdom. Figuratively, the Miskitu Kingdom refers to the period ‘before the Nicaraguans’ when a Miskitu king presided with the help of a governor, general, and admiral, as the principal sovereign of the Mosquitia region. Elite constructions of the autonomous past, however, resonate with lay people precisely because they are presented in the Miskitu language in a way that activates commonplace sensibilities that the Miskitu accept as self-evident emblems of their identity. Indeed, for several centuries, influential leaders have filtered and melded exogenously derived symbols and ideologies with homespun conceptions of an implicit Miskituness. It is my contention that a Miskitu ethnic identity came together in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through these same two distinct but interrelated processes: an internally generated set of social practices and beliefs that have developed over centuries of deep-rooted cultural-ecological relationships, and an externally introduced and Miskitu-elite disseminated set of ideologies and their representational forms derived from British and Spanish colonial interactions.<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of a shared Miskitu ethnic identity that bridged Sambo and Tawira distinctions developed around commonplace environmental relations and a colonial sense of spatiality. As Jones has written in reference to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus: “cultural practices and representations that become objectified as symbols of ethnicity are derived from, and resonate with, the habitual practices and experiences of the people involved, as well as reflecting the instrumental contingencies and meaningful cultural idioms of a particular situation.”<sup>9</sup> Likewise, it is now generally recognized across disciplines that spatial representations and

their material forms have played a considerable role in shaping ethnic and national identities.<sup>10</sup>

Habitual practice and spatial constructions have played a dialectical role in shaping Miskitu identity. On the one hand, everyday human-environmental strategies to produce, acquire, and prepare necessary foods and resources have generated a mundane awareness of what it means to be Miskitu. Everyday cultural-ecological relationships, which changed relatively little during the colonial period, inscribed the local landscape with self-referential and culturally coded symbols of Miskituness. These signs unite everyday experiences with a cosmological realm that includes several supernatural ‘beings’ and ‘spirits,’ and impress Miskitu beliefs and values onto the landscape. These commonplace landscapes, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, necessarily establish “the major building blocks of autochthonous cosmologies and world views.”<sup>11</sup> This somewhat forgotten and pre-postmodern premise draws support from the Marxist axiom that ideas arise from and reflect the material conditions and circumstances in which they are generated. By providing the metaphorical base and cultural link between signs and their meanings, the Miskitu language insures that commonplace landscapes act as an important sociolinguistic ‘filter’ through which new ideas necessarily arrive and take shape. As one author expresses it: “Metaphors grounded in landscape guide how humans think and act.”<sup>12</sup> While we can debate the mechanisms underscoring how the Miskitu ascribe meaning to their commonplace landscapes, that commonplace landscapes act as an anchor of Miskitu identity should be beyond controversy.

On the other hand, Miskitu political processes initiated through colonial exchanges often generated new categories that both reconstituted the significance of commonplace landscapes at the same time they placed them in a larger regional context of ethnic and colonial conflict. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sambo and Tawira elite continually interacted with contemporaneous and Western constructions of space such as nation, country, and kingdom, as well as related spatial-political ideas such as tax districts, private property, and resource

concessions. Miskitu elites appropriated and deployed these concepts within colonial contexts, and inculcated Miskitu society with the idea that the Mosquitia spatially represented the Miskitu Kingdom, and therefore bounded the nation of Miskitu people. Whether explicit or not, ideological constructions of space and European notions of territorial sovereignty constituted the essence of Miskitu interactions with British and Spanish officials. Miskitu elites incorporated these ideological constructs into their own discourses and behaviors, and helped reify the abstract notion of a Miskitu Kingdom: the polity of the Miskitu nation. In the process, Miskitu society upheld flags, swords, uniforms, and scepter-like canes, as representational symbols of an emerging Miskitu identity that bridged internally recognized Sambo-Tawira differentiation. In this way, colonial constructions of space, wholly inseparable from the political contexts in which they were generated, interacted with and reinforced commonplace notions of Miskituness, inherently built upon mundane cultural-ecological relations, in a manner that anchored Miskitu ethnic identity to the landscape.

### *Theoretical Perspectives*

In developing this study, I have worked with three bodies of literature: cultural-political ecology, cultural geography, and historical anthropology—to use the most basic conceptual labels these bodies of literature encompass. The choice of these three literature collections reflects my doctoral training but also my own personal convictions that theoretical perspectives working at the level of ideology must be mollified by the specificity of place and presented in terms that reflect people's own understanding of themselves.

Cultural or political ecology asks how local social organization reflects the nexus of cultural-environmental relationships that have developed processually over sustained periods of socioeconomic, political, and/or ecological change. For cultural ecologists, people negotiate decisions about resource use within a context of



beliefs and values that were themselves shaped by environmental relationships.<sup>13</sup> Political ecologists broaden the scope of this same perspective to examine how political economies shape social values and the ways in which resource priorities get established especially as local places get integrated into the global economy.<sup>14</sup>

Both these perspectives speak directly to Miskitu history and processes of Miskitu identity formation. For example, during the colonial period the Miskitu modified their household economies to support the market production of turtle shell, mahogany, sarsaparilla, cacao, and Indian slaves. Prior to the European market economies, men hunted and fished, while women grew tubers, maize, fruits, condiments, and, no later than 1600, bananas and plantains under a variety of ecological conditions. At this time, the Miskitu visited the coast during the dry season (February-May) where men hunted the green sea turtles for food at the Miskitu Cays, and women made salt and fished in coastal lagoons. At the end of the turtle season, families would head back to upland dwelling sites in advance of the July-August floods. This annual rhythm embedded Miskitu lifeways in a seasonal round that market economies modified but did not fundamentally change. By the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Miskitu turtlers began hunting the hawksbill turtle, which was not eaten but taken only for its valued shell at its feeding banks and nesting sites off Costa Rica and Panamá from May through September. The thoroughly changed turtle season encouraged year round coastal settlement and caused women to periodically visit inland farms. Meanwhile, a decline in the population of the hawksbill turtles motivated the Tawira Miskitu to initiate contacts with Spanish officials in Costa Rica. Therefore, integration of the turtle shell economy into the global market interacted dialectically with increasing Tawira marginalization within the Sambo-dominated Miskitu Kingdom. This inspired the Tawira to seek out an alliance with the Spanish to secure privileged access to the hawksbill mating grounds. This, in turn, shifted geopolitical alliances in ways that strongly affected regional developments, Sambo-Tawira inter-relations, and the formation of a Miskitu ethnic identity.

The literature of cultural geography examines the ways in which societies impress and respond to the cultural beliefs and ideological values embedded in the local landscape.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, landscape embodies much more than a visual field of the physical environment; it establishes an image of reality that achieves its social meaning through lived experiences and cultural processes that reproduce their meaning. As Mitchell puts it, landscape acts as a medium, like a language “embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values.”<sup>16</sup> As a signifying arena in which social processes take place, landscape provides a central element of a cultural system. Indeed, as Duncan puts it, landscapes are not simply an expression of cultural and social processes but rather are “constitutive of them.”<sup>17</sup> Landscape, therefore, communicates to us our implicit understanding of who we are and what we are about.

In the case of the Miskitu, I suggest that the tacit parameters constituting a Miskitu identity reside in symbols literally and figuratively rooted in commonplace landscapes. Miskitu mothers, as the principal agents of Miskitu socialization, transmit the meaning of these symbols to children in ways that inscribe commonplace landscapes such as the village, the farm, and the river with a certain sensibility and a language that constitutes Miskituness. In this way, commonplace and spiritual, landscapes form a symbolic reservoir of self-ascribing markers that both reflect and organize Miskitu identity. While these landscape symbols achieve their meaning on several different social levels, and interact with one another and external systems in complex ways, they provide a reservoir of self-referential signs which the Miskitu use to characterize their identity to themselves and others.

Historical anthropology examines, among other things, the formation of a historical consciousness in light of expanding colonial systems. According to the Comaroffs, the formation of a historical consciousness is constituted by “the active process—sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit—in which human actors deploy historically salient cultural categories to construct their self-awareness.”<sup>18</sup> For

colonial peoples, such as the Miskitu, many scholars suggest that in order to derive ‘salient cultural categories’ people borrow and refashion symbols from colonial institutions and discourses. Understanding how such borrowing and refashioning, or transculturation, actually occurs requires that we pay close attention to how new practices subsume and/or redefine older practices.

In his study of Miskitu historical consciousness and identity, Charles Hale uses what he calls a Gramscian bridge to span actor-oriented and structural accounts of Miskitu identity. In the process, he cogently argues that the Miskitu forged a “contradictory consciousness” that fused an “ethnic militancy,” which resisted the Nicaraguan state, with an “Anglo-Affinity,” that incorporated hegemonic premises that had historically emanated from dominant Anglo actors and institutions. Hale concludes that while the “Miskitu people were subordinate to both the Nicaraguan state and the institutions of Anglo-American neocolonialism. They resisted the former, while largely accepting the hegemonic premises of the latter.” Although Hale’s view provides a succinct portrait of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, much of his framework rests on the conviction that the Miskitu were also subordinated to institutions of Anglo-domination during the colonial period: a premise strongly challenged by the current study. Moreover, Hale provides little discussion of what might constitute a Miskitu identity outside of historical consciousness or political discourse. Nevertheless, the work of historical anthropologists such as Hale force us to reconsider identity formation in light of ideologies, strategies, and differentiating categories that colonial, neo-colonial, and state systems imparted to their subjects.<sup>19</sup>

### *Landscape and Identity in Practice: A Personal Narrative*

In April of 1996, I passed the Easter holiday in the Miskitu village of San Jerónimo along the upper-middle Rio Wangki. On the morning of my departure, I found all the passing boats full of school children returning to the regional capitals

of Waspam and Puerto Cabezas (Bilwi). Regardless of where they were born, family members typically send children to the family village during the holidays, as one young father put it, “so they know where they came from.” Among the Miskitu I spoke with, one’s maternal village shines like a beacon in life’s wayward journeys; its where people say they ‘are from,’ regardless of where they actually live. Home villages act as a proud emblem of personal identity. To be sure, the Miskitu affix numerous and overlapping identity ascribers to themselves depending on the context, each containing a constellation of implicit meanings. For example, a Wangki Miskitu from San Jerónimo might describe herself as: Miskitu Indian, a Wangki Miskitu, a Miskitu from the village of San Jerónimo, a Christian, the mother the of so-and-so, the wife of so-and-so, and so on. Among the Miskitu of the Rio Wangki, the self-ascripitor ‘Nicaraguan’ would rarely be mentioned. To be ethnically Miskitu is to understand the implicit meaning of all these markers and to know how they interrelate with one another hierarchically and horizontally under different circumstances and in different social contexts. While some identity markers are relatively new, such as Christian, or have changed their meaning, such as Miskitu, the sociocultural dynamics establishing one’s village within the configuration of identity markers extends back dozens of generations. In this way the Miskitu have maintained a strong sense of where they come from.

With all the morning boats full, I ended up catching a ride with a man and his son taking the family *pitpan*, or flat bottomed canoe hewn from a single tree trunk, down to Leimus. Being near the end of the dry season, the water was low so we drifted out to the middle of the impressive 300 mile long Rio Wangki, the umbilical cord of the Miskitu nation. Patches of tobacco, maize, and watermelons covered the receding banks. All would be harvested before the June floods and replanted the following January, embedding Miskitu lives in a seasonal round conditioned by the local environment. Bananas and plantains stretched along the higher banks. Butting up to the plantations, and extending down to the river on occasion, was the evergreen rainforest. Peeking out of the canopy I could see the

brilliant yellow blossoms of the *auka* tree, a distinctive April sight. Auka also names an ancient village along the Rio Kruta (Honduras) that is thought to be the origin of the mythical Ra people, the ancestors of the Miskitu. Along the Wangki's northern banks hung branches of the willowy *sangsang siakikit*. A boatload of women and girls gathered the downy white flowers which they will use to stuff pillows. As we approached Leimus, two dogs chased an otter into the water. A man paddling up river at the time followed in pursuit and deftly clubbed the otter to death with his paddle. According to Miskitu tradition still widely adhered to, the successful hunter must share his prize with the dogs' owner, in this case a small boy who waited eagerly and knowingly as the man paddled toward him.

At Leimus Miskitu men were drying red beans on a large cement slab that once supported a gigantic mahogany mill owned by the Robinson family of New Orleans. Like much of the Mosquitia's material landscape, time, climate, and political conflict, have eroded all but the upper-most layer of the historical strata. This has caused some observers to regard the Mosquitia's landscape as one would an iceberg from the deck of a passing ship, superficially. The Miskitu, however, use expressions of time to inscribe local landscapes with memories of the past. When describing the scene when Standard Fruit banana plantations ran up both sides of the Rio Wangki in the 1930s, a speaker would refer to *bakaru taim*, *standard taim*, or *lain taim*.<sup>20</sup> These idioms connote a period in time, but also the landscape of that time. Past times are inscribed, or memorialized, in the landscape through memories and stories which fix events and narratives to a specific place. Other space-times include *traslado taim* (the time when the Miskitu had to move their villages from the northern banks of the Rio Wangki in 1961 after the World Court granted those lands to Honduras), *sandino taim* (the period in the late 1920s when the Nicaraguan patriot attracted hundreds of U. S. Marines to Miskitu villages), and *king taim* (the time of the Miskitu King before the Nicaraguans took Miskitu lands). To consider these expressions in solely temporal terms would be to miss the ways in which commonplace landscapes act as a reservoir of social memory in Miskitu culture and

society. The Miskitu encounter and live amongst their recent and more remote pasts in daily activities, as well as through the constant circulation of stories, parables, and idioms that locate their life-world in a space-time continuum literally and figuratively inscribed in the landscape.

At Leimus I was told that the next Soviet-style IFA transport truck would not depart for Waspam until the afternoon, but an energetic twenty-something Miskitu named Paco convinced me to walk with him through the pine savanna. Like everyone else during this *Semana Santa* holiday, Paco had been visiting family on the upper Rio Wangki and was returning home to his native Bihmuna, still some 100 miles to the east near Cape Gracias a Dios. After several hours of walking, we arrived tired and thirsty at the Miskitu community of Kisalaya. Paco had only one thing on his mind: *wahbul*. Wahbul is a pap-like gruel made from cooked bananas, plantains, and occasionally sweet potatoes. Seventeenth century pirates tell us what the Miskitu already knew, that wahbul provides a nourishing breakfast drink and a prized afternoon elixir. For many Miskitu, the melodic tap-tap, whisk-whisk rhythm of the *tuskaia*, the special wooden beater used to cream and aerate wahbul in calabash halves, embodies the pleasantries of village life. Wahbul also symbolizes something purely Miskitu: “the Spanish [Nicaraguans] hate it, and even the *miriki nani* [Anglos] don’t like it.” Some say that traditionally a girl’s qualification for marriage was her ability to make a lumpless wahbul, just as a boy had to prove himself in hunting and boat-making. In one village I was told a story meant to serve as an anecdote about the relationship between Miskituness and wahbul. During the revolution a Miskitu boy had received a scholarship to study in Mexico. When he returned with his new wife, “a Spanish girl,” they visited his village. Upon arrival his mother whipped up some wahbul, but the new bride became upset and threatened her husband if he ate “that Indian food.” The young man hesitated only briefly and drank down the wahbul in a single gulp. The moral was clear: you can take the boy out of the Mosquitia, but you cannot take the Miskitu out of the boy.

Our reception in Kisalaya was nothing short of a kindred embrace. We were feted at one house after another. Villagers sent boys up coconut trees so we could enjoy the refreshing *agua de coco* with our plates of beans, corn on the cob, yuca, and wahbul. In return for their hospitality, people expected only one thing: to hear the latest Miskitu ‘gossip’ from the far reaches of the Mosquitia that our travels had taken us. People listened intensely as Paco reported on everything from bags of cocaine found along the beach at Bihmuna to the depravities of Miskitu politicians in Puerto Cabezas. I can still remember sitting there wondering if gossip about coastal events and Miskitu politicians in 1996 would really have been that different from ‘gossip’ concerning the latest arrival of foreign ships, or the political intrigues of the Miskitu Kingdom in 1896, 1796, or 1696. While the contexts were certainly different, how Miskitu travelers exchanged gossip in a way that built their horizontal and spatial sense of community amid worldly interaction probably was not.

In making gestures to depart Kisalaya, an old *kuka*, or grandmother, threatened us with her broom if we did not come greet her before we left. She continued to sweep, but paused to hear Paco’s stories from Bihmuna, a place she confessed she had never been. In turn, she told us about her war-time experiences in the refugee camps in Honduras, exclaiming “I was proud to see we Miskitu were so many.”

\* \* \*

Many Miskitu analysts have failed to fully appreciate the depth of Miskitu ethnocentrism, and by extension the nature of Miskitu identity politics, because they have tended to view exalted Miskitu interpretations of the past as somehow ‘un-Indian,’ or as an otherwise inauthentic expression of a ‘false consciousness.’ As I see it at least two issues come into play in such reactions and provide this study with its *raison d’être*. First, any commentary on the so-called ‘invented traditions’ of indigenous or other peoples implicitly accepts some ‘standard’ or ‘official’

interpretation of the past by which invented traditions can be measured. Second, ethnic identities that have integrated externally derived cultural forms into their public discourses are for some reason viewed as less genuine than ethnic groups relying on cultural symbols perceived to have been self-generated.

The first issue confronts a growing realization in the social sciences and humanities that the writing of history is more about an interpretation of the past than the past itself. To conclude that a specific historical narrative is invented or false assumes the existence of some unmediated and benchmark history from which others should be judged. While I believe there are degrees of accuracy in historical interpretation, I also believe that we have not yet produced sufficiently critical histories from which we can pass judgement on those deemed ‘invented.’

The second issue confronts an ongoing discussion about the nature of ethnic identity and authenticity. Central to the debate about emerging ethnic groups in post-colonial societies in general, and Latin America in particular, is the disjuncture between a so-called ‘traditional period’ before Europeans arrived and the post-contact period in which indigenous peoples accommodated, accepted, or resisted colonial systems and, later, nation-states. Through the many centuries of negotiation, scholars have implicitly viewed ethnic groups said to have retained more autochthonous cultural characteristics as somehow more authentic than those pronounced otherwise. Although the Miskitu have unquestionably incorporated and appropriated several exogenous cultural forms and symbolic representations into their own identity within colonial and neo-colonial systems actively seeking their assimilation, it seems ironic and colonialist to suggest that Miskitu survival and ethnic persistence corroborates its own un-genuineness.



## **The Mosquitia: a Historical-Geographical Background**

Despite a good deal of ambiguity in the historical record, the Mosquitia signifies a coherent geographic region in eastern Central America. Closely tracing the outline of a lowland pine savanna, the Mosquitia is bounded in the north by Cape Camerón and in the south by the Rio San Juan. The Mosquitia's western boundary traces the eastern foothills of the Isthmus' Cordillera Central (Figure 1.2). Modern geopolitical developments linked to European expansion and the global economy have tended to obscure the fact that the Mosquitia has always served as a *loci* for hemispheric and, eventually, global encounters and exchanges. Well before 1500, the Mosquitia acted as a confluence for plant domesticates, material productions, and technology exchanges, as well as a place of ethnic, cultural, and religious interactions, between people from South America and Mesoamerica. For many scholars the Mosquitia sits at the southeastern periphery of the Mesoamerican cultural sphere, and at the northern extreme of an 'Intermediate' zone, characterized by complex social groups in Panamá and Costa Rica, which developed apart from the Andean cultures of South America. This geographical construction, primarily based on the absence of monumental architecture, extensive pantheons, large centralized polities, and a reliance on maize agriculture, locates the Mosquitia at the peripheral cross-roads of both South and Mesoamerican spheres of influence.<sup>21</sup>

While many conventional views of the Mosquitia's pre-Hispanic human geography appear self evident, new research presents a much more culturally and politically dynamic situation than previously thought. In general, scholars have depicted the Mosquitia as a politically isolated and sparsely populated region of nomadic peoples organized around kinship. New evidence, however, suggests that inter-American cultural exchange and social organization were much more complicated. For example, maize cultivation by archaic peoples throughout the Caribbean lowlands was more wide-spread and began earlier than ceramic data alone would reveal.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the earliest ceramic complexes from eastern

Central America suggest a significant degree of Mesoamerican cultural influences, although the lowland inhabitants are thought to have arrived from South America.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, anthropogenic mounds of the so-called 'White cities' in the upper Rio Plátano watershed appear to show some evidence for pre-Columbian urbanization in the Mosquitia. Finally, the long-standing temporal and spatial models representing indigenous settlement and distributions in western Nicaragua, including the Mosquitia borderland departments of Chontales and Matagalpa, appear to be giving way to a picture of more complex ethnic mosaics. Frederic Lange and his fellow researchers have found that:

South of the modern Honduran border, our survey revealed a much more fragmented and regionalized political, economic, and religious landscape. The distinctive contents of ceramic and lithic assemblages . . . often changed significantly over distances of only 20-50 km. There appears to have been no general, over-arching . . . organization uniting these groups; they are better conceived of as smaller, independent polities functioning in a multi-ethnic setting.<sup>24</sup>

Although physically divided from the 'independent polities' stretching along the volcanic highlands and lowlands of western Central America, it would be a mistake to assume that the peoples of the Caribbean lowlands remained culturally isolated from their more complexly organized neighbors.

On the eve of their encounter with Europeans, the indigenous peoples of eastern Nicaragua and northeastern Honduras had a well defined settlement geography that changed relatively little over the next 300 years (Figures 1.3 & 1.4). Based on ethnohistorical and linguistic evidence, I would argue that the indigenous peoples of the Mosquitia organized loosely around some form of ethnic-based territorialization coinciding with drainage basins both before and after the contact period. Although most Mosquitia indigenes likely share a common root language, the extent of linguistic divergence suggests that relative physical isolation began several hundred years before 1500.

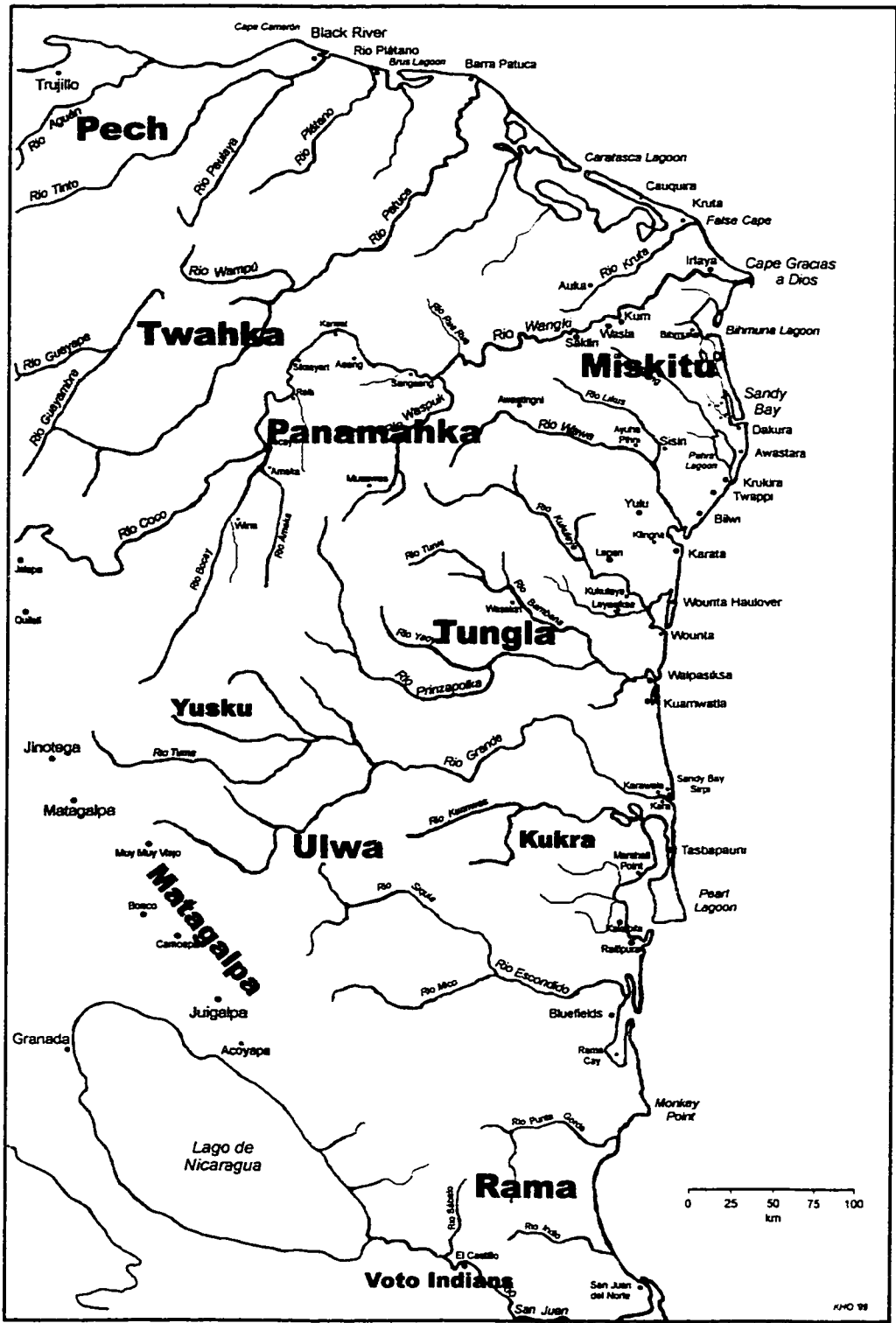


Figure 1.3 Mosquitia Ethnic Mosaic circa 1500.

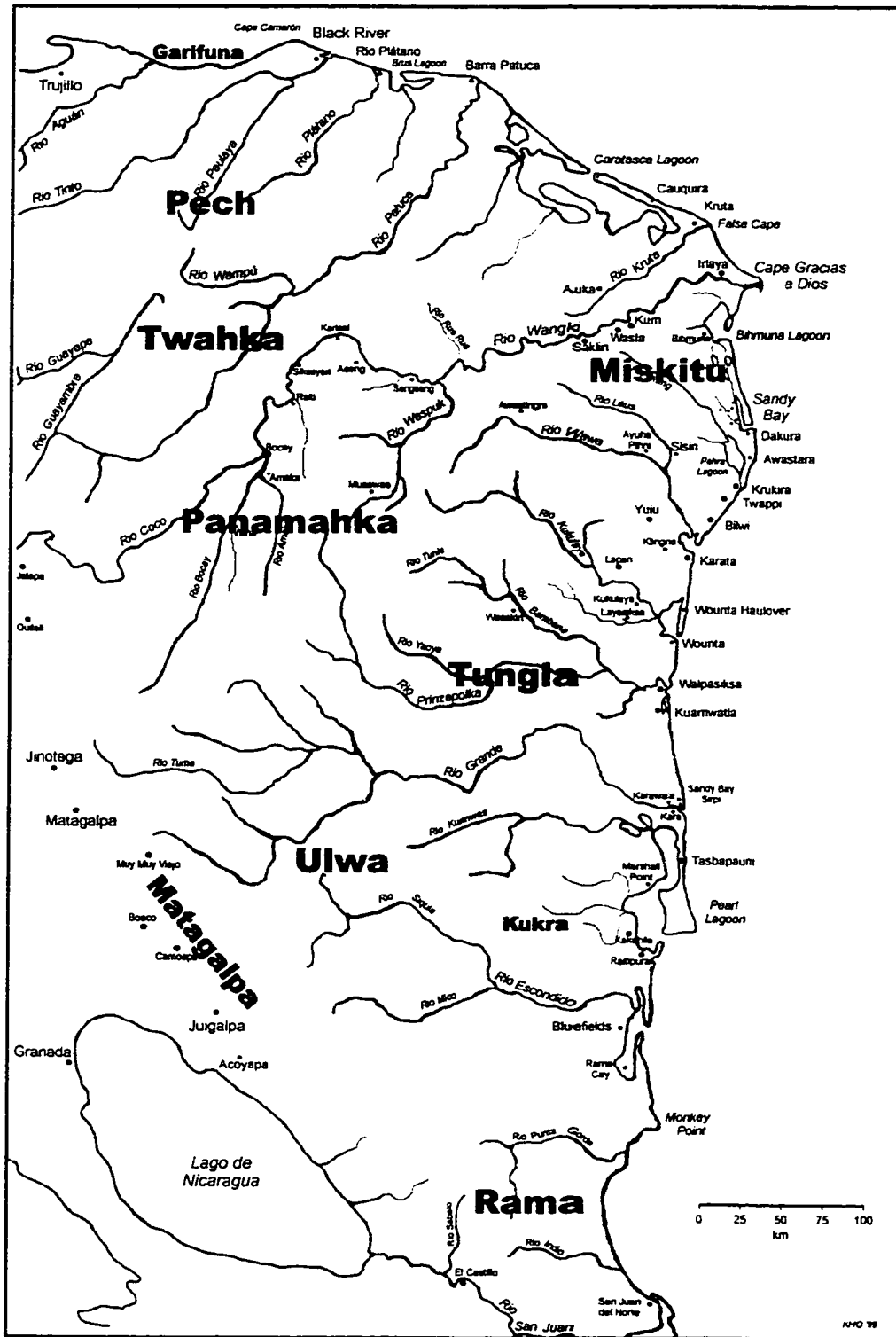


Figure 1.4 Mosquitia Ethnic Mosaic circa 1800.

Geographic separation, in turn, led to slightly varied cultural ecologies and identities. We know, for example, that the Kukra, Rama, Pech, Tunjla, and Miskitu Indians lived closer to the Caribbean, relied more substantially on sea resources and manioc cultivation, and probably lived under less politically complex societies than the upland Mayangna (Ulwa, Twahka, and Panamahka) or Matagalpa Indians, who relied on maize, participated in far-ranging trade that included cacao, feathers and possibly gold, while developing relatively complex polities.

A linguistic relationship among Mosquitia indigenes was first noted in the late 1800s and formalized by the German linguist Walter Lehmann in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Carl Berendt and Daniel Brinton argued that a strong linguistic affinity existed between the highland Indians of north-central Nicaragua—subsequently classified as Matagalpa Indians—and the various Mayangna speakers of the eastern foothills, especially the Yusku.<sup>25</sup> Today, as in the colonial period, there were two main Mayangna families: the Ulwa (which include the Kukra and Yusku), and the Twahka-Panamahka who remain linguistically close to one another.<sup>26</sup> Building on this work and his own research, Lehmann put forth two hypotheses that most linguists accept to this day. First, the Miskitu, Mayangna, and Matagalpa-Cacaopera<sup>27</sup> tongues derive from a single language: and can be classified within a language family called Misumalpa. Second, the Misumalpa family and the Chibcha language families that stretch through Colombia, Panamá, Costa Rica, eastern Nicaragua, and possibly including the Pech in Honduras, can be classified together within a Macro-Chibcha phylum. This hypothesis suggests that the indigenous people of the Mosquitia arrived from South America in punctuated waves, possibly with the Pech arriving first and the Rama last. While most linguists accept the first of these hypotheses, they caution that the a Misumalpa-Chibcha connection has not been readily confirmed.<sup>28</sup>

The idea of linguistically bounded, but porous ethnic spaces, is supported by evidence that the south-central Ulwa remained spatially isolated from the north-central Twahka-Panamahka for at least a few hundred years prior to European

contact. The linguist Ken Hale has stated that Ulwa is not simply a Mayangna dialect, but “a separate language within the Sumu group.”<sup>29</sup> Provided that subsistence activities such as shifting cultivation, fishing, and hunting, including seasonal visits to the coast, occurred spatially-temporally within a single drainage basin, it is likely that neighboring groups established inter-riverine ‘buffer zones,’ as work from the Amazon basin suggests.<sup>30</sup> Such buffers, however, did not restrict trade nor ritual gatherings. For example, the periodic Sumu fiesta *Asang Lawana*, which might translate roughly as ‘spirit song of the mountain,’ brought together Mayangna from far and wide to drink chicha and perform religious ceremonies.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the Miskitu and upland Twahka traded peacefully once a year “between both their homes” along the Rio Wangki.<sup>32</sup>

Work by Eduard Conzemius and others suggest that numerous sub-families with names like Bawihka, Prinsu, Boa, Silam and Ku, in addition to historically verifiable Twahka, Panamahka, Ulwa, Yusku, and Kukra comprised the Sumu family.<sup>33</sup> My own readings suggest that many of these groups should be thought of as people inhabiting certain river systems, and in some cases represent nothing more than transcription errors. For example, the Ulwa call the Rio Escondido ‘Woolwa,’ which sounds like the Miskitu word for the snake boa, *waula*, suggesting that the Boa are simply Ulwa residing along the Rio Escondido. The Prinsu are thought to be Mayangna from the Rio Prinzapolka, but the Rio was termed Tungla in the colonial period, suggesting the Prinsu were the enigmatic Tungla Indians, who were probably closely related to the Tawira Miskitu. Finally, the Yusku of the upper Rio Tuma were almost certainly Ulwa.<sup>34</sup>

Historical evidence suggests that, except for gradual southern movement by the Twahka, a constriction in Ulwa distributions, and expansion by the Miskitu, the human landscape of 1800 reflects the pre-Hispanic indigenous distributions—but not population densities—quite closely (Figures 1.3 & 1.4). Throughout the colonial period, the Rama Indians, part of the large Voto linguistic family that includes Indians from northeastern Costa Rica as well as the enigmatic Melchorca

and Guatuso (Maleku) along the Rio San Juan and its tributaries, resided at the Mosquitia's southern extreme. The Rama, probably late arrivers to the Mosquitia, always lived south of Bluefields. At the northern extreme of the Mosquitia in Honduras lived the Pech Indians along the Rios Tinto (Black River), Paulaya, and Plátano. The Kukra-Mayangna once lived at the back of Pearl Lagoon, along the Rio Kuringwas, along the lower Rio Escondido, at Bluefields, and also appear to have settled the Corn Islands. Although most authors consider the Kukra 'extinct,' survivors probably assimilated with the Ulwa by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Among surviving Mayangna groups, the Ulwa dwelled along the middle portions of the Rio Escondido and its upper tributaries, as well as along the Rio Grande and its upper tributaries, the Rios Tumu and Matagalpa.<sup>35</sup> There is also some evidence suggesting that the Ulwa lived at the headwaters of the Rio Prinzapolka or even further north and west.<sup>36</sup> The smallest of the surviving Mayangna groups, the Panamahka lived along the Rios Bocay, Amaka, and Lakus (Walakwas), including the upper Rio Wangki.<sup>37</sup> Although the Twahka core area corresponds with the Rios Patuca and Rio Wampú drainage areas in Honduras, they likely dwelled along the upper Rio Wangki and had crossed into Nicaragua via the Rio Waspuk in the 1500s. They formed communities at Umbra and the lower Waspuk early in the colonial period, and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century they continued to move into the watersheds of the upper Rios Wawa, Kukalaya, Bambana, and Tunki in Nicaragua.<sup>38</sup> Three of the most prominent Mayangna communities of today, Musawas, Awastingni (formerly Tuburus), and Karawala, considered Panamahka, Panamahka, and Ulwa respectively in contemporary literature, were formed with a significant number of Twahka from the lower Waspuk and upper Rio Bambana-Tunki region in the early part of this century.<sup>39</sup> Based on an estimated carrying capacity of the Caribbean lowlands Newson's aboriginal population estimates suggest that some 40,000 Indians resided in the Mosquitia at the time of European contact, a number which seems reasonable considering later estimates and a rapid de-population among the Mayangna associated with Old World diseases.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Miskitu*

On the eve of the European encounter, Miskitu-speaking Indians lived in about 10-15 communities behind coastal lagoons and along pine savanna margins between the Rio Wawa in northeastern Nicaragua and the Caratasca Lagoon in northeastern Honduras. Communities appear to have concentrated around the Caratasca Lagoon, along the Rio Kruta, the lower Rio Wangki as high as Saklin, at Bihmuna or Wani Lagoon, clustered around Sandy Bay, and along the savannas bounded by Twappi, Yulu, and Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas) (Figure 1.2). The ancient Miskitu domains follow the outline of the pine savanna quite closely. In sharp contrast to many other indigenous populations surviving the Columbian Encounter, the Miskitu steadily increased their population during the colonial period. A development helped by a relative resistance to Old World diseases and a military superiority over neighboring indigenes. Today, depending on who is counting, some 110,000 Miskitu live in Nicaragua, while 35,000 reside in Honduras. These Miskitu are distributed among some 300 communities ranging in size from less than 100 people to several thousand, with one quarter of all Miskitu residing along the Rio Wangki (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Miskitu Population Estimates.<sup>41</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Mosquitia</b>	<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>Honduras</b>
1670	1,700		
1700	2,000		
1740	4,500		
1760	7,000		
1800	8,000		
1860	10,000		
1920	25,000	20,000	5,000
1950	50,000	40,000	10,000
1980	85,000	65,000	20,000
1985	95,000	70,000	25,000
1995	145,000	110,000	35,000



Analysis of the origins of the term ‘mosquito,’ or any of its variant spellings, suggests that Europeans first ascribed the Miskitu label to the mixed-race ‘Sambo.’ The term was then retroactively applied to the ‘native’ or Tawira Indians, whom authors assumed must have been ‘the original’ Miskitu Indians. We do not know the name of the Miskitu-speaking Indians prior to 1670: records of the Providence Island Company (PIC), for example, only refer to the ‘Indians of the Cape’ and used the term Mosquitoes only in reference to the Miskitu Cays. Meanwhile, although no scholar has ever taken notice of this, the Spanish of the 17<sup>th</sup> century referred to the Miskitu by their Mayangna name, *guaian* (today spelled *wayanh*), without realizing this term referred to the people whom they later called *indios mosquitos* and *zambos mosquitos* (see Chapter Three). Self-referential identity distinctions between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu trace their origin to the limited integration of African shipwreck victims among extended families along the Rio Kruta and the lower Rio Wangki. By 1730, Sambo communities had spread along the northeastern coast of Honduras and to Sandy Bay in Nicaragua. Although Enlightenment conceptions of race do not appear to have played a role in self-referential differentiation between the Sambo and Tawira, European labels that distinguished between ‘mixed race’ Miskitu and ‘unmixed’ Miskitu do classify the two different groups.

Evidence from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century suggests that the Sambo looked down upon, or as Ziock stated, ‘despised,’ the Tawira whom they considered ‘a lesser tribe.’ Following the civil conflict recorded by Ziock, the Tawira became tributary to the Sambo and lost control of the southern realm of the Miskitu Kingdom. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists and missionaries heard the Sambo Miskitu calling themselves the ‘true Miskitu’ while reserving derisive comments for the Tawira whom they saw as backward and rustic. Be that as it may, the Sambo Miskitu did not consider themselves to be ‘part-African’ in any sense of the word. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Sambo Miskitu resented Creole ascension within coastal politics and contemptuously referred to Creoles as ‘my grandparent’s children.’ There can be no question that the Sambo Miskitu considered themselves indigenous

to the Mosquitia and the 'true Miskitu.' Although I have organized the study around internal Miskitu differentiation, I use the dichotomy more as a signpost to analyze regional processes and Miskitu ethnohistory more generally: it is not realistic or necessary to recover the details of what constituted Sambo-Tawira identity variance, although I do make some suggestions. Indeed, what is more significant is that identity variance was maintained despite profound and, what would appear to be, almost equal integration of Occidental cultural forms and symbolic representations into a common set of Miskitu ethnic ascriptors.

Today, several other ethnic groups consider eastern Nicaragua their home. About a thousand Rama Indians continue to reside south of Bluefields, mostly at Rama Cay. Still residing over large portions of north-central Nicaragua are 6,000 or so Mayangna Indians, predominantly Twahka and Panamahka, while the Ulwa reside only at Karawala. Descendents of African slaves brought by British settlers were called Creoles after their emancipation in 1841. Initially residing at Bluefields, southern Pearl Lagoon, and the Corn Islands, Creoles acculturated several thousand Afro-Caribbean immigrants between 1900-1950, and today up to 30,000 Creoles live in eastern, but predominantly southeastern, Nicaragua. About a century after they had been brought to the Bay Islands by the British in 1797, Garífuna from Honduras began to settle the two communities of La Fé and Orinoco in Pearl Lagoon. Although many Garífuna have left or become acculturated into the larger Miskitu-Creole culture of the area, up to 1,000 Garífuna reside in Nicaragua.<sup>42</sup> Mestizos originating from western Nicaragua, predominantly during this century, comprise no less than 60 percent of the east coast's present population of 400,000. Most mestizos live in urban centers around the mining regions of the northeast, collectively termed Las Minas (Siuna, Bonanza, Rosita), as well as in regional centers such as Puerto Cabezas, Waspam, and Bluefields. Increasingly since the war, mestizos have begun settling along the colonization front moving east from Matagalpa. Lying at the cross-roads of a Hispanic west and an Anglophile east, ethnic tensions continue to characterize Mosquitia events and processes.

## A Word on Sources

The present study makes use of numerous written sources which can be grouped into eight categories. The first body of sources consists of five pirate accounts: the Dutchman John Esquemelin (on the coast in 1671); the former indentured servant turned logwood cutter turned buccaneer Englishman William Dampier (1679-81); the Frenchman Raveneau de Lussan who, along with almost 200 English and French pirates, crossed the Pacific highlands of Nicaragua and descended the Rio Wangki in 1688-89; the Englishman known only by his initials M. W. (1699); and the English adventurer Nathaniel Uring who shipwrecked on the Honduran coast (1711-12). Although all these authors can be considered reliable in that they likely observed what they reported, albeit imaginatively, M. W.'s account stands out and remains the benchmark against which other insights can be judged. In his short piece, published in 1732, M. W. manages to demonstrate a remarkable understanding of the Mosquitia's physical and ethnic geography, perhaps unmatched in detail by another author for the next century. Although he speaks about the entire Mosquitia, and he definitely visited Sandy Bay and traveled far up the Rio Wangki, he likely did not travel west of Caratasca Lagoon or south of Sandy Bay. His writing makes wide use of information gained from native informants and often acknowledges the speaker personally—a rhetorical procedure that all but vanishes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century literature and re-emerges in the 19<sup>th</sup> century primarily as a device of irony.

A second body of literature includes the numerous published compilations of Spanish documents. I made substantial use of three separate collections: the four volumes edited by Manuel M. de Peralta *Costa Rica, Nicaragua y Panama en el siglo XVI* (1883) (CRNP), *Costa Rica y Colombia* (1889) (CRC), *Límites de Costa-Rica y Colombia* (1890) (LCRC), *Costa Rica y Costa de Mosquitos* (1898) (CRCM); volumes IX and X in the ten volume *Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Costa Rica* (CDHCR); and volumes IV-VI of the *Boletín del Archivo*

*General del Gobierno de Guatemala* (BAGG). I also made use of several transcribed Spanish documents reprinted in the CIDCA-published magazine, *Wani*. Although a historical monograph, the third of Tomás Ayón's a three volume work, *Historia de Nicaragua*, first published over the span 1882-89, contains large unedited sections of several rare and significant Spanish writings concerning the immediate period after the British evacuation 1787-1790. With all Spanish references I have tended to rely exclusively on people who had first-hand experiences in the Mosquitia, such as former slaves, frigate Captains, priests, and touring officials, or had personal encounters with the Miskitu elsewhere, as in the case several Costa Rican Governors at Cartago and, during the 1780s, the Governor of Nicaragua. For Miskitu-Spanish encounters during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, I have relied a good deal on Fray Francisco Vázquez's four volume *Crónica de la Provincia del Santísimo nombre de Jesus de Guatemala*, first published in 1714.

A third body of sources comprise the unpublished Colonial Office (CO) and Foreign Office (FO) materials held in the British Public Record Office (PRO) of London, and partially available on microfilm at CIDCA in Managua.<sup>43</sup> As a body, this collection provides the most significant insights into British and Miskitu thoughts and activities during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For the most part, the documents consist of un-transcribed correspondence between the Mosquito Shore Superintendent and officials in Jamaica. Also found, however, are several interesting maps and letters written by settlers, as well as documents allegedly written by the Miskitu. Several other 18<sup>th</sup> century British documents have also been reprinted in later publications as appendices. The 39 volumes of the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, and the 14 volumes of the *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations* were less useful than direct correspondence, but provided relevant context in several instances. Although the volume of British archival materials concerning the Mosquitia grows exponentially during the Victorian era, that is after the British re-occupied the Mosquitia at Bluefields and Greytown during the 1830s and 1840s, the writers are much less

informed about Miskitu activities. This second set of mostly Foreign Office documents shows the Imperial nature of British ambitions and suggests a good deal of Miskitu subordination, a misleading combination that overshadowed British bumbling and relative Miskitu autonomy during the previous two centuries.

A fourth body of sources comprises unpublished and published accounts of Moravian missionary experiences. Although the Moravians arrived in the Mosquitia only in 1849, after the period considered in this study, many of their insights suggest how changes might have occurred during earlier times. The Archives of the Moravian Church (AMC) in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania contain numerous unpublished diaries, letters, and reports written by missionaries, many of whom were Jamaicans or Creoles. In my view, these documents provide the best opportunity to understand cultural and political processes taking place inside Miskitu villages during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the Mosquitia in general up through World War II. Before World War I, many Moravian documents were held in Herrnhut, Saxony. Fortunately, three German scholars have republished a select number of these reports in the invaluable collection *The Nicaraguan Mosquitia in Historical Documents 1844-1927* (NMHD). Several Moravian missionaries published accounts of their own experiences. Among the most useful for this study, and the least well known, was the 200 page memoir of Christian Martin entitled “Dreissig Jahre praktische Misionarbeit in Mosquito von 1859-90,” published oddly in the back of H. G. Schneider’s 1899 book *Moskito*, the official history of the Moravian Mission in the Mosquitia. In addition, I made substantial use of all the Moravian published journals, including *Periodical Accounts of the Moravian Missions* (PA), *Proceedings of the Society for Propagating the Gospel* (PSPG), *The Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen* (SUB), and *The Moravian*.

A fifth body of sources consists of historical monographs. The most important of these would be Romero Vargas’ 1995 *Las Sociedades del Atlántico de Nicaragua en Los Siglos XVII Y XVIII* and William Sorsby’s classic 1969

dissertation entitled “The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore, 1749-1787.” Although I disagree with many of Romero’s interpretations, his study provided invaluable clues for my own research and led me straight to several Spanish archival materials held at CIDCA that I would not have found otherwise. Robert Naylor’s 1989 *Penny Ante Imperialism. The Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1600 – 1914* was also useful but concentrated on the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Troy Floyd’s 1967 *Anglo-Spanish Struggle for the Mosquitia* and Linda Newson’s 1987 *Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua* relied heavily on Spanish documents and, although both perpetuated many Spanish misconceptions, proved effective. Unfortunately, I was only superficially able to consult Barbara Potthast’s well researched 1988 book, *Die Mosquito-Küste im Spannungsfeld Britischer und Spanischer Politik 1502–1821*. The collective body of ethnohistorical articles by Michael Olien opened the door for re-interpretations of the Miskitu Kingdom. For understanding the Providence Island Company and settler relations to the Miskitu I relied heavily on Karen Ordahl Kupperman’s excellent 1993 *Providence Island, 1630-1641: the other Puritan Colony*, as well as several republished period pieces.

A sixth body of sources could be termed traveler accounts. Although I made use of dozens of these adventurous tales, several stand out for their specific insights. Charles Bell’s memoir of his upbringing and mahogany cutting with the Tawira, Twahka, and Ulwa Indians (1841-1856) is chock full in knowledgeable details, but the book was written more than 30 years after Bell had left the coast and contains several inconsistencies. The New York trader Jacob Dunham (1816-1819) and the British trader Orlando Roberts (1819-1823) provide substantial clues to how the Miskitu civil conflict of the 1790s instituted Tawira subordination to the Sambo Miskitu during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The account of a tripartite German commission, *Bericht über die im Höchsten Auftrage*, based on a stay at Cape Gracias a Dios in 1841-1842 proved insightful because they clearly relied on the knowledge of long-term residents such as the Scotchman Stanislaus Thomas Haly who had married a Miskitu woman and probably spoke Miskitu. Thomas Young

(1839-1842), who like Bell learned Miskitu, provides unique details of ethnic differences along the Honduran coast.

A seventh body of sources that I consulted consists of ethnographic and/or ethnohistorical monographs produced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Luxembourg lumberman, Eduard Conzemius (1917-1922), knew Miskitu and spent substantial time among local peoples and took great pains to classify indigenous culture. His numerous publications, which received a great deal of insight from Moravian scholars such as George Heath, contain substantial information that otherwise may never have been recorded. Still, Conzemius rarely elaborates how or where he attained his information, and in several circumstances his generalizations obscure the geographic and cultural variations his works examined. My own thoughts have been inestimably affected and improved by the collective writings of Mary Helms and Bernard Nietschmann. Works by Claudia Garcia, including her 1996 *Making of the Miskitu People*, helped me sort through my own notes on Miskitu spiritual beliefs and Moravian conversion. More recent field-based monographs such as Charlie Hale's 1994 *Resistance and Contradiction*, Jeffery Gould's 1998 *To Die in this Way*, and Ted Gordon's 1998 *Disparate Diasporas* inspired me to locate Miskitu identity formation within the racial-cultural discourses bracing Nicaraguan historiography in general, and Costeño and indigenous discursive constructions in particular.

The final body of sources could be called indigenous texts. Since the late 1970s, and especially since the Sandinista Revolution, a small but significant volume of indigenous writings have come forth. The Miskitu scholar and politician Avelino Cox Molina produced an interesting history that I use to generalize about contemporary Miskitu identity discourse in Chapter Two. Other sources include the five-part study of two Miskitu and three Mayangna regions comprising the Bosawas Reserve in north-central Nicaragua carried out under the auspices of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) but compiled or co-written by indigenous people. The Mayangna works in particular offer a rare glimpse into an oral history produced by

the Mayangna themselves. Several other indigenous texts, including my own interviews with, and the collected writings of, the late Twahka elder Ronas Dolores Green, greatly shaped the direction of this study. Finally, I found the numerous linguistic and oral traditions recorded by Costeños and Costeño sympathizers in the CIDCA journal *Wani* to be essential.

Although more substantial comments on sources can be found in the study, I must emphasize two more points that apply to the entire primary record. First, narratives reveal as much about the preoccupations of the author as they do about their subject of inquiry. How British and Spanish authors chose to jot down their ‘impressions’ was clearly shaped by political imperatives. The authors were entirely men and, more often than not, official state representatives who wrote for very specific audiences. In most cases the audience comprised the writer’s superiors who judged the writer’s performance by the contents of his communiqué. Moreover, acknowledging that immediate political forces shaped text production does not even begin to address questions of underlying ideological conventions. Most Spanish writers wrote with a presupposition of Spanish sovereignty. They viewed any British presence in the Mosquitia as illegal, and often felt that the British more or less controlled Miskitu thoughts and actions: a position reflected in later Nicaraguan assessments. British writers, of course, had their own underlying conventions and ideological foundations, but their empathy and respect for the Miskitu tended to go beyond the simple tactic of legitimating their own presence.

Second, most authors, whether they admit it or not, and many do, had their writings informed by the representations of previous authors. British correspondence was apparently ‘on file’ in Jamaica, and many colonial authorities had access to what their predecessors had written, especially the well trodden reports by the first Superintendent Robert Hodgson Sr. and his son, also a Superintendent, Robert Hodgson Jr. For example, the influential consul-general for the Mosquito Shore in 1844-48, Patrick Walker, appears to have digested reams of colonial documents in an attempt to establish a precedent for British governing



procedures. Almost all of the major 19<sup>th</sup> century travelers refer to one or more of the above pirate accounts: even Uring had read Dampier's accounts of the Miskitu. Several 18<sup>th</sup> century British 'histories' of the Mosquito Shore lifted liberally from other accounts, imaginatively reworking them into a political position supporting a British presence. As conflict engulfed Nicaragua and the Mosquitia throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, focusing political ambitions from around the globe upon the region, plagiarism masked as personal observation in several prominent accounts, particularly those of Bedford Pim and Ephraim George Squier. Any notion that written texts are unmediated reflection on an observed reality needs to be strongly dispelled and judged on its own terms on a case by case basis.

### *Looking Ahead*

In the next chapter I introduce the ways in which the Miskitu have interacted with and culturally constructed their landscape. Although I use recent and ethnographic examples to illustrate my points, my argument reflects the belief that social processes shaping Miskitu identity and grounding it in commonplace landscapes also held sway during the colonial period. In Chapter Three I focus on the origins of the bi-polar Anglo-Spanish colonial context. Although the Spanish interacted with the Miskitu first, and likely intermarried with the Miskitu in the 1620s, it was English settlers from the Providence Island colony who formed lasting relationship with the Mosquitia. Chapter Four is devoted to understanding and decoding the racial lexicon and the varied Miskitu labels appearing in the historical record after 1670. Although African intermarriage generated internal Miskitu differences along Sambo and Tawira lines, there is little evidence that the Miskitu differentiated themselves in terms of race.

Chapter Five begins my discussion of the Miskitu Kingdom by examining the geographic and sociopolitical effects of African integration. I also trace the origins of British motivations for institutionalizing and expanding commissions to

Miskitu leaders. Chapter Six examines Miskitu land use. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I show that Miskitu society relied greatly upon indigenous food crops cultivated and harvested by women. Geographic variation in the ability to produce or procure foods underscored regional diversity in larger socioeconomic issues, including relationships to foreigners and neighboring Indians. Chapter Seven describes the origins, nature, and geographic variation of British settlement and economic activities in the Mosquitia. I also describe evangelical efforts of the Society for Propagating the Gospel (SPG) among the Sambo Miskitu, the context of African slavery, and the degree of Miskitu participation in settler economic activities. Chapter Eight characterizes the development of the three most significant Miskitu economic activities before 1800: hawksbill turtling, Indian slaving, and mercenary fighting. All three Miskitu activities have been poorly understood because scholars have generalized over substantial geographic, ecological, and Sambo-Tawira variations.

Chapter Nine examines how the Miskitu transcultured Western cultural forms and symbolic representations, especially regalia symbolizing the Miskitu Kingdom. I suggest that Miskitu transculturation of colonial objects took place in the absence of force or coercion. The final chapter details the inner-workings of Sambo-Tawira relations by focusing on three political conjunctures precipitated by Tawira overtures to the Spanish. I show that while a common Miskitu ethnic identity could bridge Sambo-Tawira differentiation in times of regional crisis, during times of Anglo-Spanish peace the Miskitu Kingdom would often fracture along geographic and/or Sambo-Tawira lines.

## Notes to Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel L. Uring, *The Voyages and Travels of Nathaniel Uring*, ed. Alfred Dewar (1726; reprint, London: Cassell, 1928), 154-155.

<sup>2</sup> Various spellings from Muscheto and Musketoe to Mosquito and Moustique have speckled the historical record. I have chosen to use the 'Miskitu' spelling over the common English 'Miskito' because that is how the Miskitu spell it.

<sup>3</sup> Born in St. Croix in 1846, and having worked among the Miskitu since 1876, the 48 year-old Ziock cannot be easily accused of naïveté; Heinrich Ziock, "Sambo vs. Tawira," in *The Nicaraguan Mosquitia in Historical Documents 1844-1927. The Dynamics of Ethnic and Regional History*, ed. Eleonore von Oertzen, Lioba Rossbach, and Volker Wünderrich (hereafter NMHD) (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1893), 232-238. The title of Ziock's excerpt was created by the book's editors in English. Most Moravian entries in this collection are reprinted in their original German. My father, Henry Offen, translated the current selection as well as several other German texts excerpted in this study.

<sup>4</sup> John Wright, *Memoir of the Mosquito Territory, as Respecting the Voluntary Cession of it to the Crown of Great Britain* (London: J. Hatchard, 1808), 25-26.

<sup>5</sup> Ziock possibly erred in his geography; in the elder's account, Para and Awastara were Sambo villages. Certainly, many of the villages Ziock names as Sambo reflect post-1790 and 1860 migrations (see below); Ziock, "Sambo vs. Tawira," NMHD, 238-240.

<sup>6</sup> Examples of studies dealing with indigenous and emerging ethnic groups in Latin America that privilege the process of state-formation can be found in Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer, eds., *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Brackette F. Williams, *Stains on My Name, War in My Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Charles R. Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894-1987* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1994); David Nugent, *Modernity at the Edge of Empire. State, Individual, and Nation in the Northern Peruvian Andes, 1885-1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Jeffery L. Gould, *To Die in This Way. Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Edmund T. Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas. Identity and Politics in an African-Nicaraguan Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998). Examples of scholarship taking a more diachronic perspective, reflecting the scope of the current study, include Nancie Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean. Ethnogenesis and*

*Ethnohistory of the Garifuna* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Neil L. Whitehead, *Lords of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498-1820* (Dordrecht, Holland: 1988); Carol A. Smith, ed., *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris, eds., *Ethnicity, Markets and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995); Jonathan D. Hill, ed., *History, Power, and Identity. Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1996); William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Thomas A. Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History among an Andean People* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Grant D. Jones, *The Conquest of the Last Maya Kingdom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Real Cédula a la Audiencia de los Confines (Guatemala) sobre la conquista de la Taguzgalpa, 30 Oct. 1547, in *Costa Rica y Costa de Mosquitos. Documentos para la Historia de la Jurisdicción territorial de Costa Rica y Colombia*, ed. Manuel M. de Peralta (hereafter CRCM) (Paris: 1898), 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> This viewpoint would be supported by Richard Adams' notion that ethnic identity forms through the interaction of self-referential ideas among a social aggregate with externally imposed categories which can derive internal meaning; Richard N. Adams, "Internal and External Ethnicities: With Special Reference to Central America," *Texas Papers on Latin American*, 279 (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1989); see also Gregory W. Knapp, "Potential Ethnic Territories: Mapping Linguistic Data from Modern Andean Censuses," *Texas Papers on Latin America*, 89-13 (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 90; see also Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London: Allen & Unwin Press, 1969); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Second ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Martin W. Lewis, "Elusive Societies: A Regional-Cartographical Approach to the Study of Human Relatedness," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81, no. 4 (1991): 605-626; Liisa H. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44; Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); Ana Maria Alonso, "The Politics of Space, Time and Substance:

State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 379-405; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994); Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1996); Dennis Crow, ed., *Geography and Identity: Living and Exploring Geopolitics of Identity* (Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 1996); Malcolm G. Lewis, ed., *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 246.

<sup>12</sup> Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 19.

<sup>13</sup> On cultural ecology see for example Karl W. Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt. A Study in Cultural Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Karl W. Butzer, “Cultural Ecology,” in *Geography in America*, ed. Gary L. Gaile and Cort J. Willmott (Columbus: Merrill Publishing Company, 1989), 192-208; Karl W. Butzer, “The Realm of Cultural Ecology: Adaptation and Change in Historical Perspective,” in *The Earth as Transformed by Human Action*, ed. B. L. Turner II et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 685-702; Gregory W. Knapp, *Andean Ecology. Adaptive Dynamics in Ecuador* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> On political ecology see Piers Blakie and Harold Brookfield, *Land Degradation and Society* (London: Methuen, 1987); Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest* (London: Verso, 1989); Karl Zimmerer, “Wetland Production and Smallholder Persistence: Agricultural Change in a Highland Peruvian Region,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (1991): 443-463; Nancy Lee Peluso, *Rich Forests, Poor People. Resource Control and Resistance in Java* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Richard Peet and Michael Watts, eds., *Liberation Ecologies. environment, development, social movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Raymond Bryant and Sinéad Bailey, *Third World Political Ecology* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Denis E. Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, “(Re)reading the Landscape,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6 (1988): 117-126; Kenneth E. Foote, and et al., *Re-Reading Cultural Geography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Don Mitchell, *The*

*Lie of the Land: migrant workers and the California landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Richard H. Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 4 (1997): 660-680; Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi, eds., *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 14.

<sup>17</sup> James Duncan, "Representing Power: The Politics and Poetics of Urban Form in the Kandyian Kingdom," in *Place/Culture/Representation*, ed. James Duncan and David Ley (New York: Routledge, 1993), 232.

<sup>18</sup> John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 176. On historical-anthropological approaches see also Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man. A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Nicholas B. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Hale's analysis is much more nuanced and empirically complex than the short summary I have presented here. A proper critique of his work would require an analysis of historical contexts in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century that lie beyond the scope of the present study. Although Hale's perspective has inestimably informed my own opinions, this study's findings suggest that Miskitu-Nicaraguan relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries varied substantially over space and remain poorly understood; Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction*, 24-28; see also Charles R. Hale, "Wan Tasbaya Dukiara: Contested Notions of Land Rights in Miskitu History," in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 67-98.

<sup>20</sup> Many Miskitu words are phonetic transcriptions of their English equivalents. Miskitu *taim* comes from the English 'time,' while *bakaru* refers to the Vaccaro family, owners of Standard Fruit, hence *standard taim*. *Lain taim* refers to the railroad (line) network Standard established among their farms.

<sup>21</sup> Doris Stone, *Pre-Columbian Man Finds Central America. The Archaeological Bridge* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum Press, 1972); H. N. Abrams, ed., *Between Continents/Between Seas: pre-Columbian Art of Costa Rica* (New York: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1981); Frederick Lange and Doris Stone, eds., *The Archaeology of Lower Central America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984);

Frederick Lange et al., eds., *The Archaeology of Pacific Nicaragua* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); Mark Graham, ed., *Reinterpreting Prehistory of Central America* (Niwot: The University of Colorado Press, 1993); Anthony G. Coates, ed., *Central America. A Natural and Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> J. Platt Bradbury, "Holocene Chronostratigraphy of Mexico and Central America," *Striae* 16 (1982): 46-48; David J. Rue, "Archaic Middle American Agriculture and Settlement: Recent Pollen Data from Honduras," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 16 (1989): 178-184; Dolores R. Piperno and Deborah M. Pearsall, *The Origins of Agriculture in the Lowland Neotropics* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Richard W. Magnus, "The Prehistory of the Miskito Coast of Nicaragua" (Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1974); Paul F. Healy, "Excavations at Rio Claro, Northeast Honduras: Preliminary Report," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 5 (1978): 15-28; Michael J. Snarkis, "Central America: The Lower Caribbean. In The Archaeology of Lower Central America," *Archaeology of Lower Central America*, 195-232; Catherine Clark, F. G. Dawson, and J. C. Drake, *Archaeology on the Mosquito Coast: A Reconnaissance of the Pre-Columbian and Historic Settlement along the Río Tinto* (Cambridge: Centre for Latin American Studies, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Lange et al., *Archaeology of Pacific Nicaragua*, 270; see also Paul F. Healy, *Archaeology of the Rivas Region, Nicaragua* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1980); William R. Fowler, jr., *The Cultural Evolution of the Ancient Nahua Civilization. The Pipil-Nicaró of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Carl Hermann Berendt, "Zur Ethnologie von Nicaragua," *Correspondenz-Blatt de deutschen Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* 9 (1874): 70-72; Carl Hermann Berendt, "Zur Ethnologie von Nicaragua," *Correspondenz-Blatt de deutschen Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* 6 (1875): 46-47; Daniel G. Brinton, "The Matagalpan Linguistic Stock of Central America," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 34 (1895): 403-415.

<sup>26</sup> Until the 1980s, most authors used the name 'Sumu' to describe the various Mayangna peoples. Sumu is a Miskitu word roughly meaning 'dumb one,' whereas the self-ascriptor Mayangna means 'us' or 'we (people)' in Mayangna.

<sup>27</sup> Both of these indigenous languages are extinct. Matagalpa was spoken in the northern highlands of Nicaragua, while the related Cacaopera was spoken in southwestern Honduras and El Salvador, see Eugenia Ibarra R., "Los Matagalpas a Principios del Siglo XVI: Aproximación a las Relaciones interétnicas en Nicaragua

(1522-1581),” *Vínculos* 18-19 (1992-93): 229-243. Gould has recently shown, however, that the extinction of the Matagalpan language should not be correlated with the extinction of an indigenous identity in Matagalpa; Jeffery Gould, *To Die in This Way*; see also Les Field, “Post-Sandinista Ethnic Identities in Western Nicaragua,” *American Anthropologist* 100, no. 2 (1998): 431-443.

<sup>28</sup> Lehmann, “Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise,” 717-720; Walter Lehmann, *Zentral-Amerika*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1920), I: 461-485; Lyle Campbell, “Middle American Languages,” in *The Languages of Native America: Historical and Comparative Assessment*, ed. L. Campbell and M. Mithun (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979): 902-1000; Colette Craig, “Current Knowledge of Amerindian Languages in Nicaragua,” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 51, no. 4 (1985): 381-384; Ken Hale, “La Naturaleza de la Lengua Miskita y Las Principales Dificultades para Aprenderla,” *Wani* 6 (1987): 23-30; Colette Craig and Ken Hale, “A Possible Macro-Chibchan Etymon,” (Cambridge: Department of Linguistics, MIT, 1990). Gregorio Smutko, on the other hand, argues that a Misumalpa-Chibcha connection suggests that Misumalpa speakers ‘stopped off’ on their southward migration through Central America to South America, and that the Chibcha peoples are descendents of the Miskitu, Rama, and Mayangna, not the other way around; Gregorio Smutko, “Los Miskitos, Sumos y Ramas de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua,” *Boletín Nicaragüense de Bibliografía y Documentación* 51 (1983): 1-14; Gregorio Smutko, *La Mosquitia. Historia y Cultura de La Costa Atlántica* (Managua: Editorial Ocarina, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> Ken Hale, “El Ulwa, Sumo Meridional: Un Idioma Distinto?,” *Wani* 11 (1991), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Warren R. DeBoer, “Buffer Zones in the Cultural Ecology of Aboriginal Amazonia: An Ethnohistorical Approach,” *American Antiquity* 46, no. 2 (1981): 364-377; William M. Denevan, “A Bluff Model of Riverine Settlement in Prehistoric Amazonia,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 4 (1996): 654-681.

<sup>31</sup> John Roach, *The Surprising Adventures and Sufferings of John Roach, a mariner, of Whitehaven*, Second ed. (Whitehaven: F. Briscoe, 1784), 33-43; Francisco Rener, “Asang Lawana. Voz de Los Sumus,” (Managua: Sukawala, 1992); Baudillo Miguel Lino, Mollins Erans, and Fidencio Davis, “Mayangna Sauni As. Tradición Oral de la Historia Mayangna,” (Managua: The Nature Conservancy (hereafter TNC), 1994); Francisco Zolano and Anthony Stocks, “Mayangna Sauni Bu. Documentación del Reclamo Histórico de Tierras de las Comunidades Mayangna Sauni Bu,” (Managua: TNC, 1995), 2-5.



<sup>32</sup> M. W., "The Mosquito Indian and his Golden River. A familiar Description of the Mosquito Kingdom in America, with a Relation of the Strange Customs, Religion, Wars, &c. of those heathenish People," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, ed. Awnsham Churchill, 7 vols. (London: J. Walthoe, 1732), 6: 290.

<sup>33</sup> Eduard Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 14-15; see also Mary W. Helms, *Asang. Adaptions to Culture Contact in a Miskito Community* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971), 17-18; Linda Newson, *Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 34-38.

<sup>34</sup> Fluent in Miskitu, the mahogany cutter turned ethnologist Conzemius, relied heavily on Miskitu informants as well as his own experiences. On the life and work of Conzemius see Eduard Conzemius to Bureau of American Ethnology, Mertzig, 6 Oct. 1930, Box: Bureau of American Ethnology Correspondence 1909-1950, Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives, Washington, D.C., and a short biography by his nephew; Victor Conzemius, "Eduard Conzemius (1892-1931)," *Indiana (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin)* 1 (1973): 127-128. On the Boa and the Yusku Sumu being Ulwa see Berendt, "Ethnologie von Nicaragua," (1875): 46-47; Lehmann, "Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise," 717, 719; Karl A. Mueller, *Among Creoles, Miskitos and Sumos. Eastern Nicaragua and its Moravian Missions* (Bethlehem, PA: The Comenius Press, 1931), 32; Götz von Houwald, "El Sumu y Sus Dialectos," *Nicarúac* 8 (1982), 121; Zolano and Stocks, "Mayangna Sauni Bu," 3.

<sup>35</sup> Berendt, "Ethnologie von Nicaragua," (1875): 46-47; George R. Heath, "Notes on Miskito Grammar and Other Indian Languages of Eastern Nicaragua," *American Anthropologist* 15 (1913): 48-62; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 14-15; Anon., "Los Primeros Pobladores de Karawala," *Wani* 11 (1991): 51-61; Thomas Green, "Perspectivas Demográficas e Históricas del Idioma y el Pueblo Ulwa," *Wani* 20 (1996): 22-37.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Napier Bell, *Tangweera. Life and Adventures among Gentle Savages* (1899; reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 3, 158, 168, 180, 210; M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 292; Zolano and Stocks, "Mayangna Sauni Bu," 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Sapper, "Reise Auf dem Rio Coco (Nordliches Nicaragua): Besuch Der Sumos Und Mosquitos," *Globus* 78, no. 16 & 17 (1900): 249-252; 271-276; George R. Heath, "Bocay," *Periodical Accounts of the Moravian Missions* (hereafter PA) 9, no. 104 & 105 (1915): 373-378; 416-425; Lehmann, "Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise in Mittelamerika," 714; Götz von Houwald, "Mayangna=Wir. Zur

Geschichte der Sumu Indianer in Mettelamerika” (Ph. D. diss., University of Hamburg, 1990); Lino et al., “Mayangna Sauni As.”

<sup>38</sup> In addition to the specific historical sources cited through the study, several 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century sources support this interpretation, see for example Jacob Dunham, *Journal of Voyages* (New York, 1851), 57, 65; Bell, *Tangweera*; Gottfried D. Carlsson, “The Sumu Indians,” NMHD, 245-247; “Quamwatla and the Sumus,” PA 2, no. 20 (1894): 418-419; Daniel G. Brinton, “Vocabularies from the Musquito Coast,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 29 (1891): 1-4; Heath, “Bocay,” 418; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 14-15; Francisco Martinez Landero, “Los Taoajkas ó Sumos del Patuca y Wampú,” *Anthropos* 30 (1935): 33-50; William V. Davidson and Cruz S. Fernando, “Delimitacion de la Region Habitada por Los Sumos Taguacas de Honduras 1600-1990,” *Yaxkin* 11, no. 1 (1988): 123-136.

<sup>39</sup> On Twahka in the formation of Musawas and Tuburus (Awastingni) see J. Taylor Hamilton, “Report of the Mission for 1917,” PA 10, no. 110 (1918), 239; “Nicaragua,” PA 10, no. 118 (1919), 348; Franz Schramm, “Report about a Journey to Musawas, February 1922,” NMHD, 307-311; Fr. E. E. Schramm, “The Story of Musawas,” *Proceedings of the Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen* (hereafter PSPG) (1929): 107-111; J. Taylor Hamilton, “Up the Wanks River,” PA 11, no. 9 (1925), 370-71; Comunidad Sikilta, “Sikilta. Censo y Estudio Socioeconómico,” (Managua: TNC, 1996). On Twahka in the formation of Sharon (Karawala) see George R. Heath, “Karawala, A Christian Sumu Settlement,” PA 5, no. 58 (1904): 503-505; Mueller, *Among Creoles, Miskitos and Sumos*, 117.

<sup>40</sup> Newson, *Indian Survival*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> The table was compiled from the following sources: John Esquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (1678; reprint, London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1951), 234; M. W., “Mosquito Indian,” 6: 285-298; Hodgson to Lordships, Mosquito Shore, 4 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 67-68; Robert Hodgson Jr., *Some Account of the Mosquito Territory, contained in a memoir written in 1757* (Edinburgh, 1822), 49; José del Río, “Disertación del viaje hecho de orden del Rey, Trujillo, 23 Aug. 1793,” CRC, 158; George Henderson, *An Account of the British Settlement of Honduras* (London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1809), 190; Bell, *Tangweera*, 10; Nicaragua, *Censo Nacional de 1920* (Managua, 1921); V. Wolfgang von Hagen, “The Mosquito Coast of Honduras and its Inhabitants,” *Geographical Review* 30 (1940), 258; Nicaragua, Director General de Estadísticas, *Censo Nacional de Población* (Managua, 1950); CIDCA, *Demografía Costeña. Notas Sobre la Historia Demográfica y Población Actual de Los Grupos Etnicos de La Costa Atlántica Nicaragüense* (Managua: CIDCA, 1982), 30; William V. Davidson and M. Counce,

“Mapping the Distribution of Indians in Central America,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1989), 38; Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC), “Censos Nacionales 1995,” (Managua: INEC, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> On the Garífuna of Nicaragua see William V. Davidson, “The Garífuna of Pearl Lagoon,” *Ethnohistory* 27, no. 1 (1980): 271-297; José Idiáquez, *El Culto a Los Ancestros en la Cosmovisión Religiosa de los Garífunas de Nicaragua* (Managua: Instituto Histórico Centroamericano, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Between 1987 and 1991 CIDCA amassed a large international collection of historical documents on microfilm from Guatemala, Jamaica, Belize, Spain, and Britain concerning eastern Nicaragua, see Germán Romero V., “Fuentes para la Historia de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua,” *Wani* 7 (1990): 82-103.

## Chapter Two

### Miskitu Landscapes

The native American ethic with respect to the physical world is a matter of reciprocal appropriation: appropriations in which man invests himself in the landscape, and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience.

— Momaday, “Native American Attitudes to the Environment,” 80.

Affinities of place and people imbue the resulting sense of identity with the moral force intrinsic to the conventions that convey it.

— Watanabe, *Maya Saints & Souls in a Changing World*, 16.

Since the Sandinista Revolution, a good many commentators discussing Miskitu identity, culture, or politics have often located the Miskitu in ‘no place’ in particular. In the process of discussing material and ideological forces shaping Miskitu society, commentators have de-contextualized the Miskitu from the environment in which they dwell and make their living. This environment, however, is much more than a physical space, it provides people with a set of sensory and emotive resources that they use to narrate their lives and locate their past in a specific place. From my experiences, a discussion of Miskitu identity makes little sense without acknowledging that the Miskitu articulate their own identity by way of referencing the landscape, the physical and culturally constructed place that contours and perpetually interacts with Miskitu sensibilities. By expressing my convictions in this way, I do not mean to essentialize Miskitu identity nor do I wish to propose that the physical environment somehow determines

Miskitu culture or identity, but rather, I suggest that Miskitu conceptualizations of themselves are undecipherable without investigating the spiritual and discursive bonds between landscape and identity.

Many of my views on the relationship between Miskitu identity and Miskitu landscapes are explored in Keith Basso's work among the Western Apache of the American Southwest. Basso argues that people who work with Native Americans need to pay close attention to the "narrative art" of 'place-making,' that is the naming systems and stories which spatially anchor native peoples to their landscape. Basso suggests that, "what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society." According to Basso, "Western Apache conceptions of the land work in specific ways to influence Apaches' conceptions of themselves, and vice versa, and that the two together work to influence patterns of social action." Unfortunately, scholarship which once essentialized indigenous culture has now swung the other way and tends to overlook "the ideational resources with which [indigenous people] constitute their surroundings and invest them with value and significance." Such ideational resources also help compose the past: "If place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of *doing* human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities."<sup>1</sup> Although Basso's work provides an interesting comparison for the Miskitu, he tends to downplay the ways in which political processes, or the wider dimensions of ethnic formation more generally, can and do interact with place-making, and vice versa. As I hope to show in this chapter, while place-bound resources buttress identities, ethnic politics can inscribe the landscape with new meanings.

Like all people, the Miskitu interact with and establish a relationship to their landscape on several cultural levels. For the purposes of this study I place these relationships in two domains. The first domain comprises the ordinary, everyday world of the earthly environment. On this level the Miskitu establish commonplace landscape relations around emotive bonds associated with dwelling and livelihood

activities tempered by seasonal change. The second domain contains the socially constructed and culturally perceived landscape. In this domain the Miskitu share their landscape with several ‘spirits’ who govern, among other things, Miskitu well being. These spirits, of which there are four classes, only impress the Miskitu and help locate the Miskitu within a distinct cultural cosmos that reinforces the ethnic boundary between themselves and Anglos, Nicaraguans, and Creoles. My use of ‘two environmental domains’ represents an artificial division for the purposes of organizing the present chapter. It should be noted that the Miskitu would not necessarily recognize this arrangement, and indeed, they would probably share a greater affinity with Rina Swentzell’s characterization of her own Pueblo people: “Pueblo people believe that the primary and most important relationship for humans is with the land, the natural environment, and the cosmos, which in the pueblo world are synonymous.”<sup>2</sup>

Through naming systems, Miskitu landscapes provide a kind of topographical reservoir, or set of metaphorical *mina nani*, ‘footprints,’ that spatially ground and constitute key aspects of the Miskitu historical consciousness. The Miskitu language, the most salient of all self-ascribing identity markers, connects the commonplace landscape of the everyday world to the landscape of the past and the landscape cosmos by utilizing place-names and stories about places in everyday life. This ongoing dialog with the landscape makes culturally constructed landscapes effectively real, interconnected with the physical world, and proudly Miskitu. As a flexible medium of social reproduction that incorporates and authenticates new symbols by ascribing them meaning, the Miskitu language insures that Miskitu landscapes must fundamentally underscore the reproduction of a Miskitu ethnic identity.

This chapter introduces the Mosquitia’s landscapes and the ways in which the Miskitu invest these landscapes with significant meaning. In the first section, I briefly present the Mosquitia’s regional ecology, or the landscape as classified by science. In the second section I outline how the Miskitu codify these same

landscapes through cultural activities and naming systems, particularly as they relate to seasonal change and provisioning strategies. In the third section I introduce what I have called the Miskitu landscapes of the cosmos. These landscapes contain three mutually supporting and intersecting dimensions comprised of (a) the Miskitu belief system; (b) significant places and their social reproduction; and (c) political discourses. Although I employ contemporary examples to illustrate my points, I am suggesting that these same social processes buttressed an emerging Miskitu ethnicity during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. For the Miskitu, the environment, the regularity of seasonal change, and a relatively stable spiritual cosmos provide an important dimension of sociocultural continuity that anchors Miskitu identity to its landscape.

### **Mosquitia Physical Geography**

The Mosquitia rests upon an uplifted Pleistocene marine shelf originating from Tertiary volcanic sediments and coastal limestone. Dissected by contiguous drainage systems originating in the east-west protrusions of the isthmus' Cordillera Central, the heavily scoured lowland plain of the Mosquitia deposits some 30 million cubic meters of sediment into the western Caribbean each year. The high volume of sediments produces the 128,000 km<sup>2</sup> Miskitu platform that extends off Nicaragua's Atlantic coast and supports numerous shoals and cays, and some of the richest green turtle feeding grounds in the world. Year-round river deposits combined with seasonal hurricanes and strong currents continually modify the relationship between land and water. Mosquitia maps as well as historical descriptions, show a dramatic coastal change since the beginning of the 1700s, as barrier spits, levees, bars, shoals, lagoons, estuaries, and river mouths move, become re-routed, or disappear altogether.<sup>3</sup>

Regional climatic variations are responsible for the Mosquitia's physical landscape and regional ecologies. Annual patterns of rain, wind, and temperature

vary from place to place and from year to year within the Mosquitia, but precipitation gradients increase as one moves north to south and west to east throughout eastern Nicaragua, with annual rainfall reaching 110-180 inches. The southeastern coast of Nicaragua is noticeably wetter than the pine savannas and gold mining regions of the north. Still, all areas exhibit two well defined dry seasons, each initiating distinct human activities. The first of these drier periods, termed *mani*, which also means year in Miskitu, extends from roughly mid-February to late-May. The second drier period (*mani lupia*) covers a distinctive two to three week span at the beginning of September. For three months from June through August heavy rains drench the Mosquitia. At this time, lagoon levels rise precariously and coastal swamps become small lakes, in Bernard Nietschmann's words, "the whole relationship of water to land is thereby rearranged."<sup>4</sup>

Annual climatic patterns produce several distinctive ecosystems. Near the coast, behind distinctive sand berm ridges, salt-water tolerant *Raphia* palm and mangrove swamps extend inland for several miles. Crabs, oysters, and innumerable species of fish and fowl abound at this fresh and saltwater interface. Moving upland within the flood plain, one typically finds clay banks covered with coarse cutting-grasses and towering *guadua* canes, the New World bamboos. As the coastal plain rises in the northeast, a 2.5 million acre pine savanna adjoins the coastal ecosystems. Roughly coinciding with sandy and quick draining latosols, the mixed palmeto and hardwood pine savanna contains the lowest latitudinal and natural expanse of *Pinus* in the Western Hemisphere. The unusually placed savanna is likely an edaphically conditioned remnant biome from a cooler Holocene period, augmented further by anthropogenic fires. Rising up behind the savannas, at distances between 30 and 90 miles from the coast, begins the seasonal evergreen rainforest (*unta tara*) which can have up to 200 plant species per hectare. Due to human activities over the last several centuries and micro-climatic variations, the seasonal evergreen rainforest is actually a mosaic of interacting ecological communities that change in direct proportion to sunlight, rainfall, and soil drainage.<sup>5</sup>



The Miskitu share these varied ecosystems with several animals. Among the large land mammals are the jaguar (*limi*), panther (*limi siksa*), puma (*limi pauni*), ocelot (*kruhbu*), margay (*limwaita*), tapir (*tilba*), deer (*sula*), nutria (*mamu*), white-lipped peccary (*wari*), collared peccary (*buksa*), bush dog (*arari*), possum (*kiski*), anteater (*wingku*), skunk (*piskrawat*), paca (*ibihna*), agouti (*kiaki*), raccoon (*suksuk*), coati (*wistiting*), and armadillo (*tahira*). Each finds its habitat shrinking on a yearly basis. Smaller land mammals, such as the howler monkey (*kungkung*), white-faced monkey (*wakling*), spider monkey (*urus*), sloth (*siwaiku*), kinkajou (*uyuk*), bat (*sakanki*), and squirrel (*pikwa*, *butsun*) spend most of their time in the trees.

Among regional fowl are wild turkey (*kalil tara*), pheasant (*pusal*), quail (*suhar*), dove (*butku*), muscovy duck (*klukum*), crested guan (*kwamu*), mountain hen (*unkuj*, *wangkar*), great curassow (*kusu*), and the tinamou (*ungkwia*). A myriad of other birds grace the sky including the numerous macaws (*apu pauni*, *auhsa*, *apawa*), parrots (*taksu*), toucan (*yamukla*, *piakus*, *manukla*), herons (*yami*), oropendula (*tulu*), hawks (*istapla*, *kuskus piram*), owls (*wauya*), and vultures (*upum*, *usus*).

Freshwater fish from the large tarpon (*tapam*), trout-sized guapote (*sasing*, *mulala*), snook (*kalwa*, *mupi*), mojarra (*tuba*), small and big catfish (*tunkgi*, *batsi*), to drummers (*pis pis*, *bilapau*) and tiny minnows (*blim*, *pupu*) fill the many waterways, but their numbers have been greatly affected by regional gold mining since the turn of the century. Streams and swamps are also filled with reptiles such as the yellow beard snake (*piuta lal pauni*), coral snake (*silbiara*), tommygoff snake (*piuta ainghwa*), boa (*waula*), caiman (*tura*), alligator (*karas*), iguana (*kakamuk*), hicatee turtle (*kuswa*), swamp turtle (*siakwa*), black turtle (*kwiwi*), wide-rimmed turtle (*sahwring*), tortoise (*ahtak muhta*), and amphibians such as the bull frog (*burhka*), toad (*suklin*), and frog (*pikpik*).

Insects also abound and many remain the bane of the hunter and livestock alike. These include mosquitos (*tairi*), bees (*nasma*, *slaha*, *sitsit*, *amaksa*), flies (*kukas*, *dildil*, *walmu*), ticks (*traka*), termites (*itikmuk*, *usra*), and the ever-present

leaf-cutter ants (*wiwi*). Such an inventory would not be complete without mentioning the lagoon manatee (*palpa*), now almost extinct, and the green sea turtle (*lih* or *wlih*).

As in the past, the Mosquitia's physical landscapes comprise an interlocking patchwork of seasonally conditioned ecosystems. Coastal estuaries, swamps, savannas, riparian forests, and mountain foothills remain interconnected by extensive drainage basins which have always supported the majority of human activities, including travel, fishing, agriculture, and as sites of residence. Many authors suggest that large 'primary' or 'virgin' forest tracts still remain in northeastern Nicaragua, a feeling suggested by a quick flight over apparently unbroken verdure. My own experiences and historical readings suggest otherwise. Through a mix of silviculture, horticulture, transplanting, swidden agriculture, hunting, gathering, and burning, indigenous peoples have modified forest compositions for millennia. Present forest compositions, to say nothing of rivers and lagoons, have been dramatically modified by commercial logging since the late 1700s. By the mid-1800s, for example, loggers employed oxen and produced trail networks up to eight kilometers back along all major rivers and their tributaries. One can assume that virtually all mahogany trees having a diameter 15 feet or greater were cleared within two kilometers of every major river by 1915. People have always modified their environment to suit their needs and cultural values.

### **Miskitu Landscapes in Season**

In contrast to social or economic changes instigated by historical processes, day-to-day human-environmental relationships have changed relatively little, and help ground Miskitu society to a nexus of environmental associations. For all Costeños, the Mosquitia's year divides into two unequal parts: the three month drier season, called summer, and the nine month rainier season, termed winter. All human activities, including foreign directed resource economies, adjust to this

annual cycle, what Charles Bell calls “the almanac of the Indians.”<sup>6</sup> One way the Miskitu and Mayangna conceptualize seasonal change can be seen in their calendrical traditions (Table 2.1). Annual calendars provide one dimension of how traditional culture encodes landscape and how past social activities embody seasonal and environmental change. Among Miskitu and Mayangna traditions, the 13 moon calendar has been modified over the years to comply with the twelve month system, and now includes many Christian influences and monthly overlaps. In this section I follow the calendar through the various seasons and describe Miskitu activities. The sheer regularity of seasonal variation combined with a *relatively* unchanged indigenous land use system—certainly during the colonial period—worked together to bound and contour the ways in which new cultural forms embodied and communicated meaning within broader social and ideological developments.

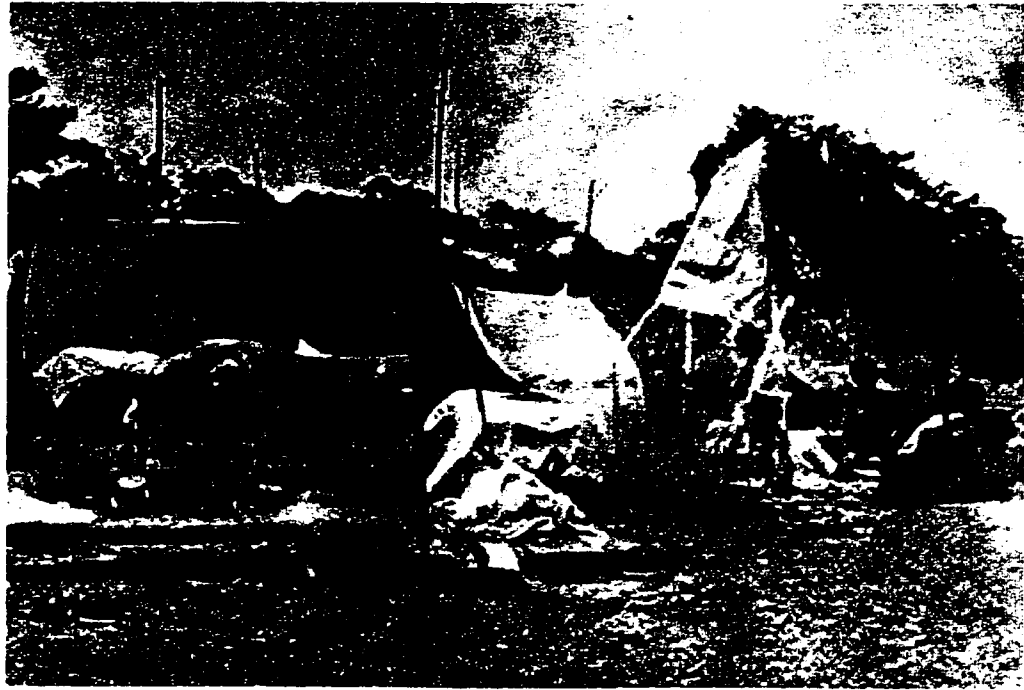
**Table 2.1 Miskitu, Tuahka, and Panamahka Annual Calendars.<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Miskitu</b>	<b>Twahka and Panamahka</b>	<b>translation and gloss kati = wainiku = moon</b>
Jan.	mani raya kati inupu kati siakua kati aladi kati	kurih wisam wainiku  kuskus wainiku	New Year time guácimo colorado tree flowers when swamp turtle lays her eggs 'aladi' corruption of English 'holiday'
Feb.	kuswa kati islu kati	kuah wainiku	hicatee river turtle lays her eggs green lizard lays her eggs
March	kakamuk kati	kama wainiku	female iguana lays her eggs
April	li waintka kati kut praidi kati	wili almuk wainiku	male green sea turtle looks for mate Good Friday
May	li mairin kati pisba kati	wiliwana wainiku pisbah wainiku	female green sea turtle heads to nesting site breadnut, ojoche, seeds rippen
June	li kati	was tatuna wainiku	time when first rains arrive
July	pastara kati yahurus kati	dapa wainiku	high-winds caña brava, or wild cane, blossoms
August	siklala kati	siklala wainiku	migratory oriole species arrives
Sept.	wis kati	supa wainiku	migratory warbler, or finch, arrives pejibaye fruit ripens
Oct.	prari kati saut kati	saut wainiku wahsa wainiku	time of hurricane strong south-winds vine wahsa flowers
Nov.	yahbra kati	wing wainiku	north winds, 'northers'
Dec.	krismis kati silma kati trisu kati	krismis wainiku	Christmas time time of many visible stars the Caribbean trisu fish comes up river

### *Dry Season*

Beginning with the first moon of the new year and extending well into the dry season, river turtles, iguanas, lizards, and alligators lay their eggs in the muddy banks of receding rivers in anticipation of the coming floods. The Miskitu and Mayangna mark these events by naming their January through March moons in their honor. The moons also provide an indicator of traditional human activities. In the past, the Mayangna and upland Miskitu moved their residence during the dry season (Illustration 2.1). Although such activities varied substantially, temporary summer homes (*mani watla*) were typically constructed upon sand point bars, or islands that formed in the course of shrinking rivers. Here, in addition to abundant reptilian eggs, the Indians found crayfish (*wasi, wadau*) and small river clams (*klistu*) and snails (*suti*). As rivers meandered and dried up, women used wicker baskets to catch fish in newly formed oxbow lakes.

Many forest and garden products flourish during the dry season. In April wild honey, considered a great delicacy by all Mosquitia inhabitants, can be located by following bees to their nests. Past observers noted that the Mayangna and the Miskitu often courted the numerous species of stingless bees by placing bamboo sections under their eaves.<sup>8</sup> Despite pronounced regional variations, in some cases from one village to the next, many native fruits such as pineapple, *marañon* (cashew), papaya, sapote, annatto, guava, and mombin, as well as the introduced citrus, carob, and mammey, all rippen toward the end of the dry season. In general, other natives such as avocado, pejibaye, and *guanábana*, as well as introduced trees such as *caimito*, rose apple, tamarind, and mangos ripen well after the first rains, often as late as August or September. The ripening of summer fruits characterize Miskitu villages in the same way that deciduous trees characterize New England in Autumn.



**Illustration 2.1** Miskitu summer home on the Rio Ulang, source PSPG 1925.

In addition to summer's effects on the land, green sea turtles begin heading south from their feeding shoals off the Miskitu Banks in May to their nesting sites at Tortuguero, Costa Rica (see Chapter Eight). In the past, this often signaled the end of the turtling season, as temporary coastal dwellers headed upland before the winter rains and ensuing floods. For many upland Mosquitians, the ripening of the *pisba* (*tisba*), or breadnuts, distinguish the fifth moon. The Twahka of Wasakin recall that their ancestors once made a pozole-like gruel from the abundant breadnuts; but this labor intensive tradition has since disappeared. The nuts fall again in late November and in former times attracted droves of *wari*, or white-lipped peccary, down from their mountain hide-aways. The Miskitu often refer to this time of the year as *wari piua* because the wari are fat and sought out to provide holiday meat.

The dry season also marks the peak of regional labor demands. Today, as in the past, many men leave their homes to work for lumber or mining companies.

Charles Bell describes how male absences during the summer affected Tawira women in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century:

In January, at the commencement of the dry season, the Mosquito men of the coast fell and burn off their small plantations, and, leaving the women behind, take their departure for the [green] turtle fishery, or to engage in the mahogany works. By the end of May they begin to languish for their wives and children, and turn their canoes homeward. The women lead a sort of picnic life while their men are absent. They stray away in parties to visit their neighbours at the mouths of adjacent rivers, camp out in the bush gathering oil seeds, wander for days among the mangroves catching blue crabs, or go to some distant lagoon to feed on cockles and oysters. Generally they devote a month to camping on the beach, where they keep an immense pot boiling night and day, making salt from sea water, and they are generally living on the beach when the men are expected to return.<sup>9</sup>

As we will see, such dry-season activities generally only applied to the Mayangna and Tawira Miskitu who lived upland or at the back of lagoons and came seasonally to the coast. Moreover, although Bell's narrative depicts a 19<sup>th</sup> century scene quite admirably, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century men generally headed off at the end of the dry season to pursue hawksbill turtles from which the valuable 'tortoise shell' or carey derived.

At the end of the dry season, the Miskitu say the savannas are ready to 'take fire.' Indeed, as Charles Bell observed:

At this time the Indians set fire to the savannahs; and if the wind happens to be from the north, the whole country is obscured with smoke, the sun becomes as red as in an eclipse, and the smell of the fire is perceived for hundreds of miles.<sup>10</sup>

What Bell wrote in the 1850s in all likelihood could have been written about the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and, for the most part, applies equally well today. To walk or drive through the savannas in late May is to see smoldering fires on all sides. When asked, people say the yearly scrub is ugly, that fires control ticks and chiggers, and that new grasses attract deer. According to one observer, deer commence "'walking,' as the natives term it, from the interior to the sea coast" when the rains rejuvenate the

savannas.<sup>11</sup> Driving in the back of a pickup while passing through one smoldering pine forest in 1996, an elderly Miskitu pulled me aside and exclaimed:

The government is to blame for this. In the past we Miskitu lit fires only when the winds were high. The fires passed quickly below the trees, cleaning the brush each year. This helped the trees grow tall. Company and government come; they don't respect Miskitu fire, they say fire bad, they say we must stop fire. Now trees everywhere too thick. Now, when the fires pass they too hot, make heat too much, and the trees get damaged. The government people blame us, say we are ignorant, but I tell you they are to blame, they are ignorant.<sup>12</sup>

Most Miskitu produce their own food from household farming and the dry season marks a new year of agricultural activities. At the beginning of the dry season new upland fields (*insla*) or secondary fields (*prata*) are chopped down and left to dry. The fields are burned and sown just before the June rains. Miskitu agriculturalists typically maintain a geographically dispersed set of farming plots within three or more distinct ecological zones. For example, along much of the Rios Wangki and Prinzapolka, receding river banks are planted with runners such as watermelon and beans, but also maize, tobacco, and tubers. High banks outside the normal flood zone are planted in bananas and plantains (*Musa spp.*). Upland, among cleared forest plots one can find all of the above including sugar cane, but especially rice and beans, the region's principal staple and market crops. In contrast, near the coast, the Miskitu plant rice in swampy areas, occasionally without fire. The planting and harvesting of seed crops requires a set schedule, however, the stem propagated cassava and the sucker propagated tubers and *Musa spp.* can be planted and harvested year-round. Indeed, when harvesting cassava the Miskitu simply cut the stem into six inch sticks and replant them on the spot.

### *Rainy Season*

The rains arrive in June, *li kati*. Heavy squalls fill the creeks and rivers with churning mud and bobbing tree trunks. In anticipation of these annual events, river



settlements perch on high banks, typically where a feeder creeks enter so that clean water can be collected year-round. For the next several months, hunting and farming activities are reduced as travel becomes dangerous, if not impossible. In the past the Miskitu and Mayangna prepared several soured foods from bananas, pejibaye, or tubers in anticipation of flood-induced scarcity. As pastes these foods could last up to 6 months and would be baked, mixed with soups, or taken on trips to be mixed with water. The most common of these pastes, *bisbaya*, which literally means ‘smells bad,’ is made by wrapping bananas in *wawa* leaves and burying them in the ground. The Twahka make a paste from fermented bananas known as *kuruhna* used in soups, especially with *wari* meat. Traditionally, when a *sukia*, or shaman, predicted severe weather, people would harvest maize, pejibaye, plantains, and bananas and bury them in well-lined earthen pits upon a nearby hill that served the village as a flood refuge.<sup>13</sup>

For many, the beginning of the rainy season marks a shift in daily activities. The wild cane, or *caña brava*, marks the July moon and signals just one home activity that traditionally occupied the men. In the past, cane stalks would be hardened and straightened with fire for arrow shafts and harpoons. Presumably other labor intensive tasks such as cotton spinning, bark cloth pounding, canoe and mortar construction, and bow-making from the pejibaye palm were also undertaken during this time. For those hunters brave enough to enter a canoe, the hunting is often excellent as flood waters often trap animals on elevated grounds.

August marks the first arrival of migratory birds to the Mosquitia, some species number in the thousands.<sup>14</sup> For both the Miskitu and the Mayangna, the most prominent August visitor is the bright yellow *siklala* (*Icterus spp.*). By late September the migratory *wis* birds are plump and ripe for hunting, and are common along the Rio Wangki. For the Mayangna of the lower montane forests, the ripening of the pejibaye palm is a more telling feature of September’s landscape. Surrounding all Mayangna villages, past and present, are the ubiquitous 2-3 tree clusters of pejibaye palm. Easily spotted by their symmetrical thorny bands, the

pejibaye clusters also stand as monuments to past river bank settlements throughout the Mosquitia. The pejibaye palm, a native of South America, is only found in a cultivated state in eastern Nicaragua. It likely traveled with the Mayangna during their ancient migration from South America.

### *Prari Kati*

October brings strong south winds and often hurricanes. The diary entries of the Reverend John Fischer recorded during the monumental hurricane of October 1908 attest to the impact on human life and the commonplace landscape alike:

17<sup>th</sup>, all night and day heavy squalls, big flood arrives, by sunset three houses blown down, then the wind changed direction and became more violent, people shifted things from place to place to prevent their getting wet, at 9 pm. our orange tree blew down, zinc sheets tore from the kitchen roof.  
18<sup>th</sup>, eight houses and several trees go down, water rose very high, it stands three feet in the yard, plantations all destroyed by the wind and some of them standing two or three feet under water, several tables etc. were broken in pieces. Thank God no lives were lost.  
20<sup>th</sup>, at Layasiksa 12 cows perished in the storm. People on the river fear the worst; starvation looks many in the face.  
25<sup>th</sup>, reports come in from Akawas Creek that plantations are all destroyed, creeks remain blocked from fallen trees.  
26<sup>th</sup>, while cleaning up town, all the women work hard and fast on getting up their spoiled casadas and making from it what they call *Seena*.  
29<sup>th</sup>, at Layasiksa church attendance high, fruit trees all destroyed, worst destruction higher up on the river, complete destruction of all plantations.<sup>15</sup>

This same hurricane wrecked havoc along the Rio Grande. Reverend Schramm reported that Sandy Bay Sirpi was leveled: “The beach has changed considerably, more than 10 yards of land have been taken away.” The mixed Ulwa-Miskitu community of Wonklua found itself surrounded on three sides by water. Up river, on a bend 90 feet high, the Ulwa village Kru had water above their roofs: “It was a flood such as the Sumu Indians had never seen before.”<sup>16</sup> A few years earlier, floods associated with the hurricane of 1905 had brought starvation to

Twappi, Dakura, and Sandy Bay. The tornado and tidal wave that struck the southcoast on October 9-10, 1906 destroyed the Corn Islands, Tasbapauni, and Pearl Lagoon, bringing an end to local rubber plantations.<sup>17</sup> All told, between 1865 and 1988 some 30 hurricanes or tropical storms have struck the east coast of Nicaragua.<sup>18</sup> These statistics and the harrowing images generated by Hurricane Mitch during October of 1998, which affected Miskitu communities along the Rio Wangki, suggest that such storms have been a part of the Miskitu's commonplace landscapes and cosmological milieu for millennia.

Traditionally in Miskitu society the *sukia*, or shaman, mediated between the everyday world and the celestial world that controlled things like hurricanes. Later, Moravian missionaries came and informed the Miskitu that the *sukias* had deceived them. *Sukia* failures to ward off the hurricanes of November 4, 1865 and October 2, 1876, which leveled all but 12 houses in Bluefields, facilitated Moravian successes. Describing the 1865 destruction, Sister Lundberg wrote, "The beautiful bread-fruit trees and cocoanuts were twisted off or torn up by the roots. The forest behind our station was so completely blown down, that we saw a hill which had never before been visible from that point."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Moravian sermons about the nature of hurricanes worked in tandem with *sukia* failures to inspire Miskitu and Creole acceptance of the Moravians as the 'new' diviners of God's will and possibly played a role in the mass conversions, or the so-called 'Great Awakening,' which occurred between 1881-1884.<sup>20</sup> By 1925, the figurative Moravian ascension over *sukias* can be denoted by the fact that the European tradition of Autumn Thanksgiving, held on the first Sunday of November throughout the Mosquitia, symbolized a communal gratitude that *prari kati*, or the hurricane moon, had safely passed.<sup>21</sup>

The Moravians, however, were no better than *sukias* at warding off the force of hurricanes, and hurricanes remain a potent dynamism in shaping the Mosquitia as a unique place in Miskitu experience and memory. Miskitu space-time lexicon inscribes the landscape with the collective memory of hurricanes past. The successive hurricanes of 1861 and 1865, for example, laid such thorough waste to

the northeast coast, that many living Miskitu still recall the stories of their great grandparents who referred to this period as *plunwa wan taim*, the time of hunger. Coinciding with the creation of the Mosquito Reserve, these natural events inspired a transformative Sambo Miskitu migration from communities at Kruta and Sandy Bay to places like Karata, Wounta Haulover, Prinzapolka, the Rio Grande (Sandy Bay Sirpi), and Tasbapauni. The famous hurricanes of 1935 and 1941, termed *prari tara* and *prari sirpi*, big and small respectively, leveled American-owned banana plantations along the Escondido, Prinzapolka, and Wangki rivers, dramatically ending eastern Nicaragua's relatively short banana company period.

### *Lunar Cycles*

Lunar changes structure several specific provisioning and labor activities: as Nietschmann and I both heard, the “moon controls all.”<sup>22</sup> For example, timber gangs do not cut trees for 3 days prior nor 3 days after a new moon (*kati apu*). The experience of local knowledge shows that any vegetable material cut during a new moon will crack, be of lesser quality, rot faster, and/or be subject to greater insect attacks. Thus, needed plant materials such as the roofing palm *suita*, bamboos, barks, or crops will not be cut or harvested during a new moon. Understandings vary, but one explanation that I heard was that the absence of “the moon's rays,” likely akin to gravity in this context, allow plant capillaries to expand.<sup>23</sup> In the case of timber, protective resins drain upon cutting, causing premature splintering or cracking. Grubs, lay their eggs in the expanded and unprotected crevices, furthering deterioration and rot. Traditionally, Mosquitians procured barks from the *tunu* and *yakuta* trees for clothing, hammocks, and blankets, but these would only be cut during the vernal and autumn equinox in March and September (Illustration 2.2).<sup>24</sup>



**Illustration 2.2** Mayangna woman making bark cloth, Musawas 1953; photo courtesy of Kenneth Nowack.

The moon also affects tidal activities, and as Nietschmann tells it, the “Miskito feel that ‘all animals work with the tide.’”<sup>25</sup> Reflecting Miskitu knowledge, one 19<sup>th</sup> century traveler reported that deer come to graze on the savannas, “just a little above high watermark,” between the last quarter’s ebb and first quarter’s flood tied to the lunar cycle.<sup>26</sup> With outgoing tides, animals rest and fish remain hidden, while rising tides make animals restless and fish come to the surface more erratically. Tidal movements, as well as the likelihood of rain, can also be determined up country by watching the behavior of birds, as well as cattle

who lay down when tides rise and graze when tides falls, the opposite of wild animals.

Although tides rise and fall daily, lunar cycles influence the relative strength of tidal movements. With a full moon, rising tides can affect river flows for up to 60 miles upland. The coastal plain ascends so gradually that incoming tides often make rivers appear to flow backwards. The Miskitu take advantage of a rising tide to travel up rivers when initiating hunting trips or for other purposes. As for missionary Martin, rising tides determined when he would visit his upland 'out-stations' of Kukalaya, Layasiksa, and Tapumlaya that lay inland from his coastal Wounta Haulover.<sup>27</sup> According to missionary Hamilton, to explain the effects of tidal movements on river flows Indians tell their children that giant boa constrictors live at river headwaters and, when hungry, sucks up the water, and indeed many rivers are called *waula*, or boa.<sup>28</sup>

The seasonality of landscape change and Miskitu adjustment to this change has configured Miskitu society, gendered activities, social relations, colonial enterprises, military campaigns, religious beliefs, evangelical practices, land ethics, and Miskitu identity in innumerable ways. By way of introduction to how this configuration may have worked in the past, I have loosely employed native calendrical traditions to illustrate how some Miskitu attitudes about local geography affect and organize Miskitu beliefs and practices.

### **Miskitu Landscapes of the Cosmos**

The Miskitu spend a lot of their time telling stories to one another, and I spent a good many nights propped in a hammock or sitting on a wooden bench listening to them. Some narrators directed their stories specifically to me, others spoke to a group. No matter how fantastic the tale, the audience never interrupted and rarely questioned any details. When a speaker finished another would start; everyone told stories. Indeed, few practices characterize the Miskitu as a people in

my mind more than their habitual way of talking in narrative forms that make significant use of figurative expressions and metaphoric imagery derived from the local landscape. Many of the stories that I heard, and those that I would like to highlight here, involved an encounter with one of the many spirit-like beings or mystical places speckling the Miskitu landscape. Often, before telling me one of these stories, the speaker would inevitably direct a qualifier my way: ‘you probably won’t believe this,’ or ‘our grandparents tell us,’ or ‘we Miskitu believe.’ Such caveats express the implicit knowledge that although we occupy the same space, we inhabit two different places. Miskitu landscapes are uniquely Miskitu. Miskitu landscapes, as a linguistic reservoir and lived-in place, constitute and reproduce the importance of ancestral beliefs in Miskitu thought and behavior. Miskitu ‘Indianness,’ or as one Miskitu pair put it “*indianidad*,”<sup>29</sup> provides a set of horizontal bonds to other Miskitu that are inextricably tied to landscape signifiers unique to the Mosquitia. These landscapes help fortify an ethnic boundary separating ‘that which is Miskitu’ from that which is not Miskitu. To briefly outline how this works in Miskitu identity I consider how traditional beliefs, social narrations, and ethnic politics utilize landscape in ways that constitute and reproduce Miskitu identity.

### *Landscape and Traditional Beliefs*

Various kinds of super-natural beings dwell in the Mosquitia’s landscape and can effect such things as Miskitu well-being, crop failures, bad hunting, capsized boats, and so on. Although variations persist in how this cosmos works, the people I spoke with generally support the major tenets offered by scholarly or missionary interpretations. In general, four semi-hierarchical classes of different beings populate the Miskitu cosmos: great spirits (benevolent almighty powers of the higher world, currently associated with the Christian God and heaven); *lasa nani* (‘owners’ of the forest, water, wind, and swamp); *yumuh nani* (spirits or shadows of

animals); and *insingni nani* (souls or ghosts of the recently departed).<sup>30</sup> Only the *sukia* can mediate between these ‘spirits’ and their earthly manifestations.

Today, of course, Christian influences modify how the Miskitu people understand and respond to the traditional cosmos, however, in my opinion new ideas have fit into existing arrangements rather than created new categories. In a forthcoming project, I discuss Miskitu conversion to Moravian Christianity and deal with how inherited beliefs accommodated newer ones, but one central theme can be presented here. Despite obvious differences, the Miskitu and the Christian belief systems contain several parallels that were exploited by the Moravians when translating unfamiliar concepts to the Miskitu. This not only facilitated the Miskitu’s acceptance of Christianity, but obligated only limited modification of many pre-existing beliefs, and produced a religious synergy that allowed substantial sociocultural continuity.

The role of the Reverend (*parsin*) as interpreter and mediator of God’s will correlates with the role of the Miskitu *sukia*, a relationship infinitely reinforced when missionaries became healers (see also Chapter Nine). Illustrating that the Miskitu considered missionaries in the same light as *sukia*-healers in 1918, one missionary wrote that “the public almost appears to think that every Moravian missionary must be *ipso facto* a medical man.”<sup>31</sup> The missionaries knew that without medicinal assistance the Miskitu would continue to seek out services of the *sukia*. In 1923, one missionary found that in times “of trouble most Indians . . . will eventually go back to the belief in ‘Yumu,’ unless the missionary can give medical help.”<sup>32</sup> While it might seem obvious that missionaries symbolically ‘replaced’ *sukias* in Miskitu society, I argue that the exact manner in which this occurred produced only nominal change among many traditional beliefs, and more to the point, *sukias* continue to practice. The syncretism of the two belief systems linked Miskitu identity to a wider Christian diaspora, but it also created a place-based and uniquely Miskitu variant of Christianity that provides a central pillar of contemporary Miskitu identity.



The highest order of spirits have been the most modified by Moravian evangelism. In the past there may have been four great spirits, *won aisa* (great father), *dama alwani* (grandfather thunder), *kuka* (grandmother), and *yapti misri* (great mother scorpion).<sup>33</sup> Today, however, both *won aisa* and *dama alwani* denote the Christian ‘God.’ The Miskitu word *dawan*, or ‘owner,’ or *dawan tara* (great owner) also refers to the Christian God. The Miskitu now associate the great mother scorpion, *yapti misri*, with *pura yapti*, or heaven, the place of the great mother—said by some Miskitu to be near the constellation of Orion’s Belt. When the Miskitu die, they travel to *pura yapti* by crossing a great river in a pitpan propelled by bull frogs, or toads (*butku nani*). For this reason, the Miskitu never harm toads, a matter of sharp distinction between them and the Mayangna who, according to the Miskitu, formerly ate toads.<sup>34</sup>

The next class of spirits are termed *lasa nani*, written ‘ulassa’ by the Moravians and typically ‘woolesaw’ in early English sources. Unlike the four great spirits who are benevolent, lasas can only do harm. Early writers typically equated lasas with the Christian devil because the Miskitu feared them. There are four main lasas, *unta dukia*, also called *aubia* (the owner of the forest), *liwa* (the water’s owner), *prahaku* or *waihwan* (the owner of the wind), and *uhra* (the owner of swamps). In addition several other beings fall into the lasa category such as *wakambai*, a man-like creature with a single eye, but with feet turned sideways or backwards, *ulak*, a hairy big-foot creature who unlike *wakambai* can be killed, *duhindu nani*, forest dwarfs, and *swinta*, the owner of the deer, typically a short man with a lasso. *Aubia* can appear as a jaguar, but most often looks like a multi-colored, white, or black man. He makes his home in between tree buttresses where he bangs his elbows making a distinctive *au* sound said to be heard in the forest. There are four *liwas*, female, male, black, and white. The most commonly narrated is *liwa mairin*, the female owner of the water, now generally equated with the Spanish *sirena*, or mermaid. *Liwas* live in underwater cities, below water falls and some rapids where they can cause boats to capsize and people to drown.

*Yumuh nani*, or the spirits of animals, are the most commonly encountered or invoked spirits in everyday life. They often appear to hunters and foretell success or warn against excessive bounty. Crossing the ‘shadow’ of a yumuh can cause sickness, with certain animals causing specific ailments. Yumuhs can also act as messengers for the lasas. For example, if the owner of the wind wished to send a message to unta dukia, the yumuh of a certain bird would deliver the missive. Animal spirits generally pertain to the domain of the lasa who ‘owns’ their habitat. Yumuhs can also be good, and one could evoke a certain yumuh to achieve a goal, such as winning the heart of a lover, or to have a good harvest.

The insingni, soul or ghost of the deceased, accounts for the final spirit call inhabiting the Miskitu landscape. Nine days after one dies the spirit of a corpse must be ‘caught’ and sent to pura yapti by the sukia. If this fails, the soul of the departed can bother relatives by mounting their backs, or the insingni can haunt its former dwelling place. In the past, the Miskitu often abandoned homes due to mischievous insingnis. Great drinking festivals using fermented cassava, maize, plantains, and pineapples, called *mishla* (signifying the drink and the festival) often accompanied insingni death rites. Wakes, often held the following year, called *sikhru*, complete family vigils. The Moravians often lamented that whole fields of cassava would be cleared for these two festivals. In addition—despite complete denial among people I spoke with—historical sources universally insist that a deceased man’s trees would be cut down to avoid the ‘dead being robbed.’<sup>35</sup> Thus, death brings about a landscape reorientation in at least three distinct ways, spirit occupation, house movement, and field and/or orchard clearing.

Spirits dwelling in the landscapes of the cosmos govern Miskitu well-being. The Miskitu have no word for ‘sickness,’ although now *siknis* can be commonly heard. To be in bad health would be *sarra taka*, that is to be out of balance with nature (*wan kaina kulkaia*). Revealing one’s bad feeling implies noting a possessing spirit: *lasa prukan* (seized by a lasa), *yumuh alkan* (held by a yumuh). These spirits take a person’s *lilka*, literally photo or figure, but used in this sense as

vigor or drive.<sup>36</sup> In addition to having one's lilka removed, a person can become ill by encountering or passing by buried 'poison' in the landscape.<sup>37</sup> To have an illness or poison driven out (*kangbaia saika*) a healer must deal with the possessing spirit, the force that is upsetting one's balance with nature. Healing ceremonies typically evoke this possessing spirit through incantation and massage. The sukia assesses the effected body parts and, in the case a yumuh is suspected, would call or sing to several yumuhs in their language until one provides a sign. Specific animal yumuhs create certain symptoms, the snake affects the stomach, the deer the kidney, and so on. Other healers such as the *yapi kakaira* (dreamer) or *yumuh yabakra* (whistler) might be called upon instead of a sukia, but these individuals overlap with sukia abilities. Today, given Christian suppression, many 'sukia-type' healers go by the Spanish word *curandero*, healer, or more commonly by corruptions of Christian terms such as *pirit*, spirit person (typically older church women), or *prapit*, prophet (typically church men).<sup>38</sup>

The powerful beings inhabiting the Miskitu landscape effect only the Miskitu. Several stories I heard referred to *gul yapti*, the mother of gold, or *gul dawan*, gold's owner. One story I heard more than once noted how a Miskitu and a white man were looking for gold; the Miskitu became sick during the excavation, but the white man did not. The white man's indifference to the power of *gul dawan* not only enhanced his own special powers, but demonstrated the Miskitu's unique relation to their landscape vis-à-vis *gul dawan*.<sup>39</sup> Not only are white men apparently adverse to the possessing effects of the Miskitu landscape of the cosmos, but the Miskitu believe that missionaries harbor the protection of their particular 'owner,' God:

That buried or wafted poison cannot hurt a missionary is always conceded [by the Miskitu] . . . in the first place, the missionary is under God's special protection; in the second place, poisons never hurt their masters, and the fact that most missionaries in this country . . . have a fairly good knowledge of drugs, constitutes them 'poison masters' of a superior order!<sup>40</sup>

Although the Miskitu believe that foreign doctors can cure common sicknesses and do seek Western treatments, ailments caused by a *lasa* or a *yumuh* must be treated by a *sukia* via *Miskitu laka* (Miskitu way or custom).<sup>41</sup> These beliefs and practices help sustain Miskitu identity, at the same time they reinforce cultural continuity within periods of substantial change and provide a conceptual ethnic boundary between them and others, especially Anglos who operate under an entirely different set of spiritual agents.

### *Landscape and Narrations*

Constant social narrations reproduce the cultural and ethnic significance of commonplace landscapes and the landscapes of the cosmos on a daily basis across generations. This codification occurs in two distinct but interrelated ways: through the ‘formal’ social circulation of traditional stories (*kisu nani*), and informally through story telling about personal experiences and/or significant places within the Miskitu landscape. Missionary Heath believes that the Miskitu custom of *kisus* derive from the West Indian and Creole Anancy traditions, that is social parables told through the adventures of the spider Anancy. While *kisus* have been influenced by Anancy narratives, *kisus* differ in that mythical Miskitu ancestors often play a central role. In every case the stories make good use of landscape signifiers and work to socialize children into cultural understandings, social mores, and Miskitu identity.<sup>42</sup> In this section I focus on how people incorporate landscape into social and ethnic narratives.

Most all landscapes have a cultural significance for their inhabitants. Landscapes record memories, and many societies erect monuments, shrines, or plaques, to mark significant sites or events. The Mosquitia’s landscape has few built monuments or shrines, yet the Miskitu imbue several places with significant social meaning through their association with historical events. Once, traveling by bicycle from Puerto Cabezas to Krukira to view the *King Pulanka*, an annual

reenactment of a famous meeting between two competing Miskitu kings, one of my companions indicated a clump of trees near Twappi and whispered sheepishly, “Carlos *Watla*.” The bunch of trees honored the former house of don Carlos, the Tawira governor who was killed during the Miskitu civil conflict of 1790 and was noted in the opening narrative of Chapter One (Illustration 2.3). When I asked if we could visit the site, my companion scrutinized me as if I were mad and said “we don’t go there.” For my companion, the clump of trees inscribed the life and times of a Tawira king, gone now yet forever memorialized in landscape and memory, and protected by possessing spirits.



**Illustration 2.3** The Miskitu King and Queen at the *king pulanka*, Krukira, January 1996. Note the U. S. money pinned to the king’s label indicating his mastery of esoteric knowledge and power.

To be sure, the Mosquitia's landscape contains innumerable places akin to Carlos Watla. For the Miskitu of the Rio Wangki, Mokoron Hill, the forest of Wiswis, the community of Auka, and the whirlpools of Lahlakapisa hold special prominence. Many ethereal encounters occur at Mokoron, a place known for its ancient artifacts and numerous caves said to contain "the king's gold." Despite the obvious attraction, people rarely visit these caves because "it is too dangerous." Wiswis, on the other hand, is an untouched forest clump near Saklin thought to be inhabited by invisible people who once used the *darh* vine. This same vine was said to have made Miskitu rebels invisible to Sandinista soldiers when they successfully attacked La Tronquera in the early 1980s.<sup>43</sup> Auka, a community along the nearby Rio Kruta, is said to be the center of the Ra people, "who were here before Columbus," and whom some consider the Miskitu's ancestors. Lahlakapisa (whirlpools where money sank) contains an important liwa city at its depth. In addition, a giant boa constrictor, who's head extends to the Yahuk Falls on the Rio Waspuk, is said to inhabit an underground tunnel connecting the two cataracts.

The frequency with which social tales circulate can be ascertained from my paraphrasing of stories heard during a single evening in San Jerónimo on the Rio Wangki in April, 1996. The narrator of these stories either experienced them directly or spoke with the person who did. I recorded the stories from memory the next morning.

A young man is making a pipante; a white man in black appears telling the man to stop working; the man says no; the white man says give me your son, the man says no; a wind gust comes and the man in black disappears; the young man is scared and runs off. He comes back the next day with his father and brother; they find the pipante expertly finished with a white flower growing in the middle; the man picks up the flower; it trembles and then disappears.

A man's uncle rides up to a hill to hunt deer; there he meets a small white man in all black with a hat and a rope; the stranger says that the hill is full of gold and he will give it to the uncle if the uncle would give him his favorite child; the uncle says no and returns to his village; he remains incapacitated and speechless for three days before recounting the story.

A man is shooting a deer with his gun, but the deer does not die; with each shot the deer grew bigger; this happened on Sunday morning; he used up 12 bullets; finally, fearing *swinta*, he gave up and went home.

Cows and horses were once sucked into the river as they bent down to take water; people too drowned; the people suspect *liwa mairin*; later *evangelicos* came and baptized people in the river; since then these things have not happened.

A boy is given medallions to wear by a Catholic priest for good work in the church; one day the boy leaves the church and is swept up by a large bird that carries him across the river; the people saw this. While in flight, the boy recalls his medallions; he clasps them and says an oration; the bird is forced to set the boy down; he is found next day several miles from his village.

All these stories remain open to several interpretations (which I will resist), but they illustrate how commonplace landscapes interact with and reinforce the landscapes of the cosmos.

The manner of blending Christian and traditional themes into social narrations is common among the Mayangna as well. The Sumu's deluge story is typical. In 1878, missionary Sieboerger recorded a Twahka legend about a man who made a canoe to escape a coming flood. It was said that the people laughed at the man, but that only he and his wife survived. The ancestors of the Sumu were borne from these two people.<sup>44</sup> Miskitu ancestors also survived a great flood, but here the survivors climbed the highest tree. Tales concerning *waira piurara*, 'the time at the beginning,' however, adjust their meaning to accommodate new understandings about the past and the present.

### *Landscape and Identity Politics*

The past remains a key site in contemporary identity struggles. Interpreting the past requires a dialog with memory and foreign texts, a process inseparable from the present. Miskitu political discourses make prominent use of landscape signifiers

through a creative re-presentation of oral and written histories. They do this in two distinct but mutually supporting ways. On the one hand, Miskitu intellectuals sanction and authenticate select European-produced Miskitu ‘origin stories.’ These stories inform and strengthen Miskitu discourses about their territorial claims and serve to legitimate their expanding notion of indigenous rights. The origin stories also serve to substantiate a paralleling set of discourses that employ landscape toponymies, or Miskitu *mina nani*, Miskitu ‘footprints.’ A wide-ranging distribution of Miskitu ‘footprints’ attests to the physical longevity of the Miskitu language, and hence the Miskitu people. In this section I present the historicity of the two origin stories and show how one Miskitu author combines them with landscape signifiers to generate a representative Miskitu political discourse. I suggest that processes activating Miskitu interpretations of themselves have always interacted with and appropriated outside terms of reference.

Many Miskitu intellectuals have reclaimed two European-recorded origin stories within their own narrations about the past. The first origin story tells that the Miskitu came to eastern Nicaragua from the isthmus of Rivas in western Nicaragua, near Lago Nicaragua, then called Kiribi. After many years of fighting with invaders from the north the Miskitu fled east in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of chief Wakna and his son Lakiatara. The Miskitu people eventually reached the coast and forced the Mayangna inland. The story was first published by the English Moravian missionary George Heath who heard it from a Mexican-Portuguese man named Eduardo Pereira who had allegedly married into the Miskitu royal family.<sup>45</sup> Heath’s 1913 publication became the standard ‘Miskitu legend’ among early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists and Nicaraguan intellectuals alike. The archaeologist Joyce repeated the story without referencing its context or Heath in 1916. The canonized works of Walter Lehmann, who met with both Heath and Pereira, gave the account an aura of academic legitimacy by 1920, and it was further institutionalized in the first printing of the *Handbook of South American Indians*. Through Bishop Wilson’s influential *Obra Morava* and the Spanish translation of Reverend



Grossmann's *Land und Luete*, the story became well known in Nicaragua and reached the Miskitu through Moravian pulpits and local publications.<sup>46</sup>

In all probability, the continued reproduction of Heath's text does not deserve the authenticity scholars have lavished upon it. When Lehmann met with Pereira after hearing the story from Heath, Pereira refused to give him any information. Indeed, Lehmann was quite distraught over the possible loss of Pereira's "valuable documents," and even pleaded with President Zelaya to intervene.<sup>47</sup> A few years after Lehmann left the coast, Conzemius found that Pereira had now renounced the version told by Heath and claimed that he alone retained "the correct account."<sup>48</sup> Still, this story continues to inform many Miskitu interpretations about their past because it strengthens Miskitu longevity in Nicaragua and their contention that they have been long-term victims of other people's territorial expansion.

The Twahka of Wasakin take a similar view of their origin in Nicaragua and their subsequent territorial and ethnic oppression. Wasakin's intellectuals told me that a great chief named Pamka led their ancestors over the Bering Strait after fighting many wars in Asia. Like the ancient Hebrews, they overcame many hardships to finally reach their promised land. This land was given its name when Pamka told one Sumu '*man awah*' (you can lead). When the Spaniards arrived, and forced the Sumus to flee again, they allegedly corrupted the name to '*man-agua*,' hence Managua. Based on phonetic similarities, the Mayangna and the Miskitu creatively reformulate prominent Nicaraguan places, a creative cultural process underpinning historical consciousness as it informs ethnic politics.

In contrast to Heath's recorded history, many Wangki (Sambo) Miskitu intellectuals consider the 'story of Miskut,' first published by the Miskitu Capuchin priest Adolfo Vaughan in 1959, to be more in line with their "oral tradition."<sup>49</sup> According to Vaughan, Miskut was a famous warrior who led his people from Honduras to Cape Gracias, then called *Sitawala* (lagoon of oysters) around the time of European contact. These people called themselves *miskut kaimka* and *miskut*

*uplika nani*, the family of Miskut and the people of Miskut respectively. After Miskut's death the people divided into three groups: one moved up the Río Wangki, the second group stayed at Sitawala, and the third group went south.<sup>50</sup> Those going south founded Bihmuna, Li Dakura and Uskirra (Sandy Bay), and Dakura. Those that went up the Río Wangki past the savannas encountered Mayangna peoples. According to Bishop Wilson, it was the Mayangna who named the Miskitu by translating *Miskut uplika nani* as Miskut-u, whereby 'u' connotes 'people.'<sup>51</sup> However, Vaughan adds that it was not until Europeans arrived that the people of Miskut began applying the term Miskitu to themselves.

The history of Miskut was first recorded by 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans. According to Vaughan, a "Norwegian" named Tom shipwrecked at Dakura in 1840, and after speaking with elders, presumably in English, he first recorded the history of Miskut.<sup>52</sup> Twenty years later the Englishman William Vaughan arrived to the Río Wangki, and he too, independently, learned this history and compared it to that of Tom as well as to a similar one recorded by the German Gustavo Schultz. Finally, it was Henry Vaughan, the grandson of William Vaughan on his father's side, and of Tom on his mother's side, who recorded the history presented by Adolfo Vaughan. In Chapter Five, I show that the story of Miskut has a solid foundation in historical evidence delineating Miskitu settlement patterns following the arrival of Africans circa 1641, as well as migrations following a small-pox epidemic in 1727.

Neither the origin story recorded by Heath, nor the history of Miskut mention the presence or arrival of Africans. By contrast, many written histories about the Miskitu often begin with the arrival of Africans. For example, Nicaraguan historian Salvatierra titled his chapter on eastern Nicaragua "*Origen de los Zambos*," and considers the 1641 wreck of a slave ship as the origin of the Miskitu people (see Chapter Four).<sup>53</sup> Miskitu acceptance of the Rivas and/or Miskut narratives, which focus on Miskitu events before the Spanish or Africans arrived, needs to be viewed in this context. Reproduction and authentication of the stories

have a clear political implication and buttress identity politics concerning indigenous rights to land, resources, and political autonomy.

The Spanish enter Miskitu narratives as territorial usurpers, an image symbolically demonstrated through toponym corruptions. For example, when the Spanish arrived they quickly re-labeled the Mosquitia (itself a colonial term) Taguzgalpa and Tologalpa.<sup>54</sup> However, more and more Miskitu intellectuals believe Taguzgalpa and Tologalpa are corruptions of the Miskitu *Tuluwalpa* (Bluffs of the Oropéndula), said to have been a village near the Caratasca Lagoon.<sup>55</sup>

A twelve page essay entitled *Ensayo Sobre el Origen del Pueblo Miskitu* by the Miskitu intellectual and political leader Avelino Cox Molina provides one example of how the Miskitu conceptualize these two origin stories and toponym corruptions in their own way.<sup>56</sup> The essay critically examines published accounts concerning the origin of the Miskitu. In the first few paragraphs, Cox Molina lays out his themes. He begins with the Tuluwalpa corruption, and the imposition of foreign placenames in general. Next he paints an idealistic Mosquitia landscape image at the time before foreign intervention, when the Miskitu lived in harmonious balance with a flora and fauna previously “unknown to the white man.” He moves next to how a government of outsiders encouraged capitalist accumulation and sought out their own gains. Next, he cleverly connects capitalist impositions to the production of Anglo texts (such as this one) which have devalued and misrepresented local traditions. He argues that the true Miskitu history remains safeguarded through a fear that it will be misconstrued.

In the remainder of the essay, Cox Molina makes a case against authors such as Conzemius who consider the Miskitu to be offspring of shipwrecked Africans with native Sumu people. He argues that the Miskitu come from South America and presents several Chibcha words that show an affinity to Miskitu lexicon. The essay also contains a map showing the Miskitu setting off in a canoe from northern Colombia. Cox Molina accepts Heath’s Rivas story as well as Vaughan’s Miskut history, but he considers them mutually supporting, with the Rivas account

preceding Miskut's arrival to sita awala. He argues that the Miskitu had established control over or visited a large territorial extent because Miskitu placenames can be found throughout Central America (Table 2.2). According to Cox Molina, the corruption of identifiable toponymies proves that the Miskitu were among the first people inhabiting Nicaragua:

Miskitu origins, as the first peoples of Nicaragua, is clear and illuminated by many of our place names. It is clear that Miskitus or Tawiras, led by 'Waitna' came from Rivas and not Chinandega, but since this group was originally nomadic, it is certain that before or after they established themselves in Rivas, they visited the place named Kuswa Wina, that was later transformed to Cosigüino. It is logical to assume that a people who migrate for their livelihood would get to know other places before settling in any one spot in particular. . . . Our origins are remote but we want to express that around the fourth century A. D. Nicaragua was already populated by Tawiras who were of Chibcha origin, and that in this period no mixing or contact with other groups or civilizations had yet occurred.<sup>57</sup>

In my experience, Cox Molina's opinions exemplify those of many Miskitu intellectuals and characterize frequent discourses among leadership circles that I interacted with.<sup>58</sup> Since these ideas disseminate from an educated and respected Miskitu elite, they carry a significant amount of cultural weight among those who do not have direct access to, yet hold in high esteem, this type of historical knowledge. At the same time, however, Miskitu intellectuals make their case by sinking their narratives into place-specific events and processes that resonate with ordinary, and generally illiterate people. In this sense, landscape provides a symbolic terrain of 'ethnic footprints,' important beacons guiding the formulation of a historical consciousness, and informs Miskitu strategies for ethnic rights and political autonomy. Yet, as Cox Molina's text suggests, these things are not wholly invented. Miskitu lifeways, their relationship to nature, and their safeguarded traditions do reflect and embody Miskituness. The relationship between landscape and Miskituness buttresses the importance of toponymical corruptions in Miskitu identity politics at the same time identity politics reproduces and fixates the meaning of quotidian landscape relations as authentically empowering Miskituness.

Table 2.2 Central American Placenames Allegedly of Miskitu Origin.

Current Toponym	Actual Miskitu	Meaning in Miskitu	To Whom Attributed	Location
Tologalpa-Taguzgalpa	Tulu Walpa	Bluff of the Oropendula	Nahuas	Nicaragua
Ducuali	Dikua Li	Rio of the Caldron	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Tastali	Tastas Li	Rio of the Squirrel	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Kasnali	Kana Li	Rio of Filth	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Cumali	Kuma Li	Rio of the Chile	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Masaya	Masaya	brother-in-law	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Matagalpa	Mata Walpa	place of ten mountains	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Iguina	Lih Wina	turtle meat	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Quitlali	Kuka Li	Rio of the Grandmother Fish	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Cosigüina	Kuswa Wina	turtle's body	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Wiwili	Isti Li	place of rapids	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Curridabab	Kuri Dadabra	'to eat vulture'	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Talamanca	Tala Manka	price of blood	Matagalpa	Nicaragua
Sixaola	Siksa Awala	Rio of the Banana	Bri Bri	Costa Rica
Matina	Matina	<i>bulico</i> (color)	Guaymi	Costa Rica
Cricamola	Krikan Aula	where gulls come	Guaymi	Costa Rica
Kingbupan	King Aibapan	to pay the King (tribute)	Guaymi	Panama
Gandokan	Gad Daukan	done by God	Guaymi	Panama
Sansan	Sangsang	<i>Ficus spp.</i> (tree)	Guaymi	Panama
Ojacrek	Waha Crik	Rio of the Wawa Leaf	Spanish corruption	Belize

Source: Cox Molina, "Origen del Pueblo Miskitu," 12.

\* \* \*

The Mosquitia contains a set of physical and culturally constructed landscapes. The physical landscape contains numerous overlapping ecosystems that reflect edaphic conditions, annual climatic changes, periodic devastation and regeneration. The environment, as an actor in its own right, provides more than a stage upon which historical processes unfold. The environment, culturally modified by people for thousands of years, spatially and temporally conditions human activities. How sociocultural processes produce a meaningful place-based and identity-structuring relationship with regional landscapes must affect the ways in which subsequent social change shapes local identities. However, there is no essential configuration or pre-ordained trajectory determining the relationship between landscape and identity. For the Miskitu, Mosquitia landscapes embody that which is Miskitu: waterside villages, cashews in May, deer on the savannas in July, wis birds in August, and *prari kati*. Through social narrations that record memories, events, and ethnic parables, the Miskitu establish a dialogue with their landscape in ways that inform their historical consciousness and anchor their identity to a uniquely Miskitu place, the Mosquitia.

## Notes to Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Lies in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 7, 33, 34, 66, 67.

<sup>2</sup> Rina Swentzell, "Conflicting Landscape Values: The Santa Clara Pueblo and Day School," *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, 56; see also Leslie Marmon Silko, "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination," in *On Nature. Nature, Landscape, and Natural History*, ed. Daniel Halpern (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986), 83-94.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffery Radley, "The Physical Geography of the East Coast of Nicaragua" (M. A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1960); Bernard Nietschmann, "Conservación, Autodeterminación y el Area Protegida Costa Miskita, Nicaragua," *Mesoamérica* 29 (1995): 1-55; Guido Grossmann found that river discharge at Cape Gracias extended the cape seaward about 1½ kilometers in 20 years at the beginning of this century, *La Costa Atlántica* (1940; reprint, Managua: Editorial la Ocarina, 1988), 17; see also the discussion of landform change at Cape Gracias in Eduardo Perez-Valle, *Un Laudo con dos Incógnitas: Hara y la Isla de San Pío* (Managua: Talleres de Arte Gráficas, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water. The Subsistence Ecology of the Miskito Indians, East Nicaragua* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), 72.

<sup>5</sup> John Vandermeer and Ivette Perfecto, eds., *Los Bosques de la Costa Caribeña de Nicaragua: Tres Años despues del Huracan Juana* (Managua: CIDCA, 1991); B. W. Taylor, "An Outline of the Vegetation of Nicaragua," *The Journal of Ecology* 51 (1963): 27-54; James J. Parsons, "The Miskito Pine Savanna of Nicaragua and Honduras," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 45 (1955): 36-63; William Denevan, *The Upland Pine Forests of Nicaragua* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); B. W. Taylor, "The Status and Development of the Nicaraguan Pine Savannas," *Caribbean Forester* 23 (1962): 21-26; María Antonia Mallona et al., *Introducción a Los Árboles y Palmas Arborescentes de la Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur de Nicaragua* (Managua: CIDCA, 1993), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Charles N. Bell, *Tangweera*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> The table was compiled from personal fieldnotes; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 110; George R. Heath, "Miskito Glossary, With Ethnographic Commentary," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 16 (1950): 20-34; Various issues of *Tininiska*, a monthly pamphlet produced in Puerto Cabezas by the Proyecto de Rescate Histórico y Cultural de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua. East Coast calendrical markers, especially when Twahka and Miskitu traditions are compared with Ulwa and Rama calendars, also illustrate the importance of regional environmental variations and their assigned cultural significance; see CIDCA et al., "Léxico de la Naturaleza. Ulwa-Español-Miskitu-Inglés," (Managua: CIDCA, 1995), and CIDCA, "Calendario Rama," (Managua: CIDCA, 1996).

<sup>8</sup>F. Edward Grunewald, "A Visit to Prinzipolka in 1858," NMHD, 140; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 58, 95; Helms, *Asang*, 119; Willock, *Journal of a Voyage*, 1842, PRO, FO 15/34, 211.

<sup>9</sup> This narration, like so many of Bell's, refers to the habits of the Tawira Miskitu from the south-central coast of eastern Nicaragua. We know this because he often

refers to the oily nuts of the Eboe or Ibu tree (*Dipteryx panamensis*) whose range does not extend north of the Rio Kukalaya. In February the Ibu's pink blossoms fill the air with the scent of almonds and in April the seeds fall by the thousands: "Soon the bush is filled with women and children gathering eboes;" *Tangweera*, 85-86, 36. Chopped bush would not be dry enough to burn in January; women likely did this much later on their own.

<sup>10</sup> Charles N. Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory its Climate, People, Productions, etc., etc. with a Map," *The Journal of the Royal Geographic Society* 32 (1862), 247.

<sup>11</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 104.

<sup>12</sup> The Miskitu's aesthetic and practical aspiration for a 'cleaner' (*limpio*) savanna landscape is codified in proverbs such as, *nampiará klauí ba dasbaía*, 'your savanna which is now ablaze, will soon be extinguished;' see for example H. Berckenhagen, *Miskitu Dictionary* (Herrnhut, 1894), 79.

<sup>13</sup> Nourishing pastes called *bunya* made from fermented pejibaye, or on occasion cassava or young maize, were also prepared in anticipation of long-distance travel and were generally mixed with water but could also be baked, interviews in Wasakin, 11/95-5/96; see also Martinez Landero, "Taoajkas ó Sumos del Patuca," 41; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 90; Bell, *Tangweera*, 140, 268; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 209.

<sup>14</sup> On birds in northeastern Nicaragua see Thomas R. Howell, "Birds of a Second-Growth Rain Forest Area of Nicaragua," *The Condor* 59 (1957): 73-111, and Thomas R. Howell, "An Ecological Study of the Birds of the Lowland Pine Savanna and Adjacent Rain Forest," *Living Bird* 10 (1971): 185-242.

<sup>15</sup> John Fischer, Kukallaya Diary from Jan. 1908 to Aug. 1910, Kukallaya Diary box, AMC.

<sup>16</sup> For the entire Rio Grande area, more than 100 cattle, goats, pigs and many fowl were lost, plantations were destroyed, and bananas had to be dug out from under the ground; Franz Schramm, "The Tornado on the Moskito Coast," *The Moravian* 53 (1908): 803-805; F. Jung, "Coast Devastated Again by Hurricane," PA 7, no. 76 (1908), 231.

<sup>17</sup> During the 1906 hurricane an estimated 450,000 rubber trees from American-owned plantations near Kukra Hill were laid flat, "Rubber Plantations Injured," *The India Rubber World* 35 (1906), 63; cf. "Nicaragua Wind and Rubber," *The India Rubber World* 35 (1907), 113.



<sup>18</sup> Based on these figures we can estimate that a destructive hurricane strikes somewhere on the east coast once every three to five years; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 75; Guillermo Cortés D. and Roberto Fonseca L., *El Ojo Maldito* (Managua: Nueva Nicaragua, 1988), 201.

<sup>19</sup> "Letter from Sister Lundberg, Bluefields, 5 Nov. 1865," PA March (1866), 570.

<sup>20</sup> Karl A. Mueller, *Among Creoles, Miskitos and Sumos. Eastern Nicaragua and its Moravian Missions* (Bethlehem, PA: The Comenius Press, 1931), 87; Consul Gollan to Early of Derby, Greytown, 13 Dec. 1875, PRO, FO, CP no. 4014, 26-29.

<sup>21</sup> David Haglund, "Harvest Thanksgiving in Nicaragua," PSPG (1925), 73-80.

<sup>22</sup> Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 113.

<sup>23</sup> The rays of the moon are said to affect many things. Reverend Schramm found that fish caught during a full moon and left in the "moonlight" will quickly rot if not covered by protective leaves; Frank Schramm, "The Land of Fear and Wonder. Missionary Nicaragua, 1899-1931," (transcript of radio address, Moravian Church, Puerto Cabezas, 1936), xxxvi, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Ana Rosa Fagoth, Casa Tininiska, Puerto Cabezas, 1996. Tunu (*Castilla fallax*) was also Nicaragua's most prolific gum-producer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Karl H. Offen, "An Historical Geography of Chicle and Tunu Gum Production in Northeastern Nicaragua," *Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers* 24 (1998): 57-74.

<sup>25</sup> Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 127-128.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 52.

<sup>28</sup> Fieldnotes; Kenneth G. Hamilton, *Meet Nicaragua* (Bethlehem: Comenius Press, 1939), 10; Schramm, "Land of Fear and Wonder," xxxvi; see also Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 113; Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory," 254.

<sup>29</sup> I borrow this Miskitu-Spanish expression from an open Miskitu letter to Pope John Paul II during his visit to Nicaragua in February 1996. The Miskitu word for Indian is *indian*; Mateo Collins and Ernesto Scott, "La Carta de los Miskitus al Papa," *El Nuevo Diario*, 10 Feb. 1996, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Miskitu words are pluralized through the use of *nani*. In subsequent use of Miskitu plurals I will add an 's' to Miskitu words, thus *yumuh nani* will be written *yumuhs*.

- <sup>31</sup> J. Taylor Hamilton, "Report of the Mission for 1917," PA 10, no. 110 (1918): 240.
- <sup>32</sup> Lorenzo Taylor, "Medicine and Superstition in Nicaragua," PSPG (1923): 70.
- <sup>33</sup> Warren D. Wenger, "The Culture of the Miskito Indians. Myths and Legends of the Miskito Indians," (manuscript, n. d.), 1.
- <sup>34</sup> Whether the Mayangna once ate toads or not is irrelevant, the Miskitu use this belief to distinguish themselves from their nearest indigenous neighbors; see also Borys Malkin, "Sumu Ethnozoology: Herpetological Knowledge," *Davidson Journal of Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1956), 167.
- <sup>35</sup> See M. W., "The Mosquito Indian," 295; Fellechner et al., *Bericht*, 144; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 30; Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory," 255; Bell, *Tangweera*, 95; Hamilton, *Meet Nicaragua*, 41.
- <sup>36</sup> See for example, Ana Rosa Fagoth M., "Medicina Tradicional como Alternativa," in *Taller para los Técnicos Básicos de Enfermería*, ed. CETERS (Puerto Cabezas: CETERS (Centro de Educación Técnica Regional en Salud, 1997): 42-52; Claudia Garcia, "La Enfermedad entre Los Mískito: Su Causa y Su Curación," *América Indígena* 50, no. 4 (1990): 93-115.
- <sup>37</sup> Moravian authors claim a belief in 'poison' arrived only this century with West Indian immigrants and their 'obeah' practices, but West African-derived obeah influences go back at least two or three centuries in the Mosquitia.
- <sup>38</sup> Ana Rosa Fagoth provided me with a few recordings of melodic and hauntingly beautiful sukia incantations. In addition, she and I spent many hours talking about her understanding of such rituals. Her insights form the basis for understandings on sukia healing, and many other Miskitu beliefs; see also Wenger, "Culture of the Miskito Indians," 13; Martinez Landero, "Taoajkas ó Sumos del Patuca," 47-48; Claudia Garcia, *The Making of the Miskitu People of Nicaragua. The Social Construction of Ethnic Identity* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 1996), 70; Garcia, "Enfermedad entre Los Mískito," 96; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 119-125.
- <sup>39</sup> Claudia Garcia found that many Miskitu sought out the sukia for mining sicknesses, likely tuberculosis in particular. The added failure of white medicines to deal with such sicknesses further encouraged people to seek out the sukia who concluded that even "the depths of the earth have their owners;" Garcia, "Creencias y Actitudes Tradicionales," 37.
- <sup>40</sup> Heath, "Bocay," PA 9, nos. 104 & 105 (1915), 417-418.

<sup>41</sup> See also Garcia, "Creencias y Actitudes Tradicionales," 40-41; Garcia, "Enfermedad entre los Miskito," 99.

<sup>42</sup> Heath, "Notes on Miskito Grammar," 52.

<sup>43</sup> One Wangki Miskitu told me the war ended just in time for the Sandinistas because "the Miskitus were learning too much magic from the old-timers, things the pastors tried to rid us of." Wiswis has several other stories associated with it, as does the darh vine. The darh vine appears in traditional Miskitu kiskus, often demonstrating a parable about hunting. The darh vine also appears in Mayangna traditions where it serves as a vehicle to escape Miskitu oppression; see Garcia, *Making of the Miskitu People*, 60-61; Götz von Houwald, "El Elemento Narrativo en Ornamentos de Los Sumos de Honduras y Nicaragua," *América Indígena* 44 (1984): 553-572; Harriet Rohmer et al., *The Invisible Hunters. A Legend from the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua* (San Francisco: Joe Sam, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> Wilhelm Sieboerger, "Letter from Ephrata, October 1878," NMHD, 176.

<sup>45</sup> George Reinke Heath, "Notes on Miskito Grammar and Other Indian Languages of Eastern Nicaragua," *American Anthropologist* 15 (1913): 48-62; Conzemius writes that "the father of Mr. Pereira was a Mexican; his mother was the daughter of a Scotchman named Haly and an Indian woman of the Miskito royal family;" *Ethnographical Survey*, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas A. Joyce, *Central American and West Indian Archaeology* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1916), 8-9; Walter Lehmann, "Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise in Mittelamerika und Mexico 1907-1909," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 42 (1910): 687-749; Walter Lehmann, *Zentral-Amerika*, 2 vols. (Berlin: 1920); Paul Kirchhoff, "The Caribbean Lowland Tribes: The Mosquito, Sumo, Paya, and Jicaque," in *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. J. Steward (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948), 229; John F. Wilson, *Obra Morava en Nicaragua* (1975; reprint, Managua: Editorial Union, 1990), 40; Guido Grossmann, *Nicaragua, Land und Luete* (Herrnhut: 1940); Grossmann, *Costa Atlántica*, 33. On Nicaraguan intellectual appropriation of this narrative see, Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas*, ch. 5. The story closely parallels the Nahuatl arrival story to Rivas recorded by the Spanish Chronicler Torquemada and confirmed by archaeological discontinuities; see William R. Fowler, jr., *The Cultural Evolution of the Ancient Nahuatl Civilization. The Pipil-Nicarao of Central America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

<sup>47</sup> Lehmann, "Ergebnisse," 715. In his longer treatise, Lehmann claimed that the Miskitu were the offspring of the Sumu and an Indian group called the Antiguos. This, he heard from a 76 year-old man named Dixon. The prominent Dixon family

of Bluefields have a long history of giving information to foreigners. A Mr. Dixon served as boatman and interpreter to the Englishman Henry Willock during an ascent up the Río Escondido in 1841. Along the way Dixon startled Willock with the story that he had once been chased by “a fire and sand breathing serpent” along the same river; Lehmann, *Zentral-Amerika*, I: 462; Willock, *Journal of a Voyage*, PRO, FO 15/34, 206.

<sup>48</sup> Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Adolfo I. Vaughan Warman, *Diccionario Trilingue: Miskitio-Español-Ingles* (Managua: Talleres Nacionales, 1959); Stedman Fagot, *Moskitia. Autonomía Regional* (Tegucigalpa?: n. p., 1980), 11-12; Nietschmann, “Conservación,” 3; Avelino Cox Molina, “Ensayo Sobre el Origen del Pueblo Miskitu,” (manuscript, CIDCA, Puerto Cabezas, 1988), 6.

<sup>50</sup> Although citing Vaughan, Nietschmann’s version of this same story varies slightly. According to Nietschmann, one group goes up the Wangki, another group goes west to Brus Lagoon (Honduras), and the third goes south to Sandy Bay; “Conservación,” 4.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, *Obra Morava*, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Tom is undoubtedly Thomas Holtman, a Swede, who lived many years in the northeast.

<sup>53</sup> Sofonías Salvatierra, *Contribución a la Historia de Centroamérica*, 2 vols. (Managua: 1939), I: 408.

<sup>54</sup> The origin of these Nahuatl names or their exact boundaries vary among the sources. Vázquez situates Taguzgalpa roughly within a triangle formed by the Olancho valley, Trujillo and the Patuca River in Honduras; he considers Tologalpa the region bounded by a line drawn from the middle of the Río San Juan, through Ciudad Segovia in northern Nicaragua, and up and over to the Río Tinto in Honduras. However, he considers the Caratasca Lagoon part of Taguzgalpa, which is contradictory. Later scholarship has often considered Taguzgalpa the Honduran Mosquitia and Tologalpa the Nicaraguan Mosquitia, or those regions that remained outside Spanish control and containing non-Christian Indians. Ecclesiastically, Taguzgalpa fell under the province of Comayagua, Honduras, and Tologalpa remained under Franciscans from León, Nicaragua; Francisco Vázquez, *Crónica de la Provincia del Santísimo nombre de Jesús de Guatemala*, 4 vols. (1714; reprint, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1944), 4: 78-79; Jesús María García Añoveros, “Presencia Franciscana en la Taguzgalpa y la Tologalpa (la Mosquitia),” *Mesoamérica* 15 (1988): 47-78.

<sup>55</sup> Cox Molina, "Origen del Pueblo Miskitu," 4. Although uncited, Cox Molina may have borrowed this knowledge from the well-read monograph by the Moravian Bishop and Creole scholar John F. Wilson, who was citing a dissertation by the Creole lawyer Robert Hooker; see Wilson, *Obra Morava*, 46; Robert Montgomery Hooker, "La Reincorporación de la Mosquitia desde el Punto de Vista del Derecho Internacional," (Leon, Nicaragua, 1945), 34. Hooker's thesis demonstrates that Costeño politics have employed toponym corruptions to contest Hispanic territorial claims for many years.

<sup>56</sup> Cox Molina, "Ensayo Sobre el Origen del Pueblo Miskitu." Mr. Cox Molina was born in Awasbila, Rio Wangki in 1948. He attended high school in Trujillo, Honduras. In 1981 he was named director of the Sandinista-initiated literacy program in Miskitu. He has worked at Radio Caribe in Puerto Cabezas, he co-founded Casa Tininiska, a Miskitu organization dedicated to retrieving and promoting Miskitu cultural traditions and knowledge. Most recently he was elected to the Consejo Regional of the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN).

<sup>57</sup> Cox Molina, "Ensayo Sobre el Origen del Pueblo Miskitu," 10-11. The Nicaraguan volcano Cosigüino is one of the most famous of Nicaraguan landmarks. Its violent 1836 eruption buried a good portion of northwestern Nicaragua.

<sup>58</sup> See for example Martin Diskin, "Ethnic Discourse and Challenge to Anthropology: The Nicaraguan Case," in *Nation-States and Indians*, 156-180.

## Chapter Three

### Encountering the Miskitu, 1500-1670

The Indians of the Cape came presently unto us, and are a very loveinge people; but the poorest Indians that ever I sawe; many of them wer very earnest to goe with us, and some of them wee tooke.

— Butler, “A Diary, from February 10th 1639.”

The ways in which Europeans came to know and interact with the Miskitu was directly related to how they conceptualized the Mosquitia as a place. For the Spanish, the Mosquitia embodied a tropical lowland (*tierra baja*), a wasteland (*terreno baldío*), a region populated by nomadic, barbarous, and non-Christian Indians they collectively called *caribes* or *jicaques*. Although the territory held little value for the Spaniards, divine right and a legal ideology that transcended occupation or use merited Crown sovereignty. In contrast, the Mosquitia provided French, Dutch, and English privateers and buccaneers who began visiting the east coast of Central America by the late 1500s with the sustenance of their existence.<sup>1</sup> Seascapes of low-lying cays offered pirates a safe haven where they could careen ships, acquire provisions, and befriend the Miskitu. By 1650, Anglo and Spanish thinking about the Mosquitia and its inhabitants differed in both ideology and practice in much the same way this thinking differed in 1800. In this context, the Mosquitia emerged as a contested place, a distinguishing and formative characteristic that configures Miskitu identity to this today.

In this chapter I utilize published primary documents and several historical monographs in an effort to contextualize the first 150 years or so of the Miskitu-European encounter. I divide the chapter into two sections. In the first section I outline the known Spanish *entradas* (explorations) to the Mosquitia in an effort to recast early Spanish knowledge formation about the east coast and to present poorly known Miskitu-Spanish contacts. I make special use of Francisco Vázquez' 17<sup>th</sup> century *Crónica* to show that Miskitu-speaking Indians likely incorporated several Spaniards, possibly mulattos, into their society well before Africans shipwrecked near Cape Gracias circa 1641. In the final section I narrate the development of Anglo-Miskitu relations. Although the French or Dutch probably established the first durable relations with the Miskitu, it was the English colonization of Providence Island, 100 miles off the coast of eastern Nicaragua, in 1629 that had the most lasting impact on Miskitu society.

### **A Historical Geography of Spanish *Entradas***

The extent of direct Miskitu-Spanish contacts in the early colonial period remains poorly known. Although limited documentation suggests few if any contacts occurred, linguistic evidence suggests that the Spanish established significant contact with the Miskitu before northern Europeans. The Miskitu words for ax, musket, sword or machete, and hat (*asa*, *rakbus*, *ispara*, and *sumuru*) derive from the Spanish *hacha*, *rakbus*, *espada*, and *sombrero* respectively. In spite of numerous English words that took hold later, these words appear to have entered the Miskitu lexicon before sustained Anglo contacts.

In an effort to contextualize Miskitu-Spanish relations, this section makes four points. First, the origins of Spanish thinking about the Mosquitia and its inhabitants can be traced to Columbus' fourth voyage and, quickly thereafter, expeditions linking the availability of gold to the Caribbean drainage of Lake Nicaragua. Second, without suitable Indian populations and an apparent lack of

mineral wealth, the Spanish did not aspire to colonize Nicaragua outside the fertile volcanic lowlands of the west and a few highland sites until after the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Third, Franciscan missionaries initiated the most significant Spanish entradas to the Mosquitia from the Olancho Valley of Honduras and via Trujillo starting around 1600. And Fourth, Franciscan priests evangelized and settled among the Miskitu briefly in the 1620s, and some evidence suggests that the Miskitu incorporated Hispanic survivors of this encounter.

### *Columbus' Fourth Voyage*

In July of 1502, four ships led by Columbus reached the Bay Islands off the north coast of Honduras. Here, the men encountered a Mayan or Pech trading vessel and took the apparent leader, Guimbre, to act as an interpreter on the mainland.<sup>2</sup> After reaching Cape Honduras, east of Trujillo, the caravels sailed east along the Mosquitia's northern coast, and anchored off the, henceforth named, Rio de la Posesión on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Here, Columbus' son Fernando tells us, the Admiral went ashore "with his banners displayed" and celebrated the first mass on the North American continent. A few days later,

when boats were sent ashore to take formal Possession of the land in the name of the Catholic Sovereigns, more than a hundred Indians bearing food came down to the shore; . . . [Columbus] asked them about the resources of the region by signs and with the aid of the Indian interpreter [Guimbre]. But this interpreter, having been but a short time with us, did not understand the Christians because of the distance—short though it is—separating his country from Española, where many of the ship's people had learned the Indians' language; nor did he understand the Indians of that locality.

According to Fernando, the land about this area "contained nothing worthy of mention. . . . though flat was verdant and lovely, with many pines and evergreen oaks."<sup>3</sup> For navigator Diego de Porras, everywhere to the east of the Rio de la Posesión, the land was low, "of very savage people, and of very little account." In his letter, Columbus provides no description of this mainland at all, indeed he



claims he “did not enter a harbor in all this time nor could [he]” on account of strong head winds.<sup>4</sup>

In all probability, it was Pech Indians who met Columbus’ party. Some scholarship suggests that the pre-Hispanic Pech populations extended all along the north coast from Trujillo to Cape Gracias.<sup>5</sup> However, this range seems problematic if we consider later historical accounts and the rest of Fernando’s narrative.

According to Fernando, the Pech Indians in the vicinity of Cape Honduras dressed nicely in dyed cotton shirts, breechcloths, and jerkins. This was not at all like those Indians who lived further east:

the people who live farther east, as far as Cape Gracias a Dios, are almost black in color, ugly in aspect, wear no clothes, and are very wild in all respects. According to the Indian [Guimbre] who was our prisoner they eat human flesh and raw fish, and pierce holes in their ears large enough to insert a hen’s egg; that is why the Admiral named that country Costa de las Orejas.

The Admiral sailed along the Costa de las Orejas eastward as far as Cape Gracias a Dios, to which he gave that name because it took them seventy days of sailing to make the sixty leagues from Point Caxinas to that cape.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to a single ethnic group along the north coast of Honduras, it would appear the Pech had neighbors to the east, and by my account they were Miskitu, or possibly Twahka.<sup>7</sup> After rounding Cape Gracias, the ships passed among the Miskitu Cays, “perilous shoals that extended out to sea as far the eye could reach.”<sup>8</sup> Although Columbus’ voyage reveals little insight into the Mosquitia, it provides us the only direct historical description of the Mosquitia until the next century.<sup>9</sup>

### *Mosquitia Entradas*

After the founding of a colony at Darién in 1509, the Spanish Monarchy granted two concessions for the settlement of the mainland. Alonso de Ojeda acquired Nueva Andalusia, from the Gulf of Darién to the east, and Diego de

Nicuesa received Castillo del Oro, from Darién northward to Cape Gracias a Dios. In 1510, Nicuesa sailed north along the coast—according to one sailor—120 leagues to a bay they named Nicuesa, “not far south of Cape Gracias a Dios.” Subsequent international maps include the toponym ‘Nicuesa’ for the bay (Bihmuna), or coastline just south of Cape Gracias, for the next two centuries. Nicaraguan historian Perez-Valle makes the case that once the Spaniards discovered Lake Nicaragua, after having traversed the western coast of Central America in 1522, they began to conflate the lake’s Caribbean mouth with either the bay of Nicuesa (Bihmuna) or the Bahía de Cartago (Caratasca Lagoon), both of which became synonymous with the Cape Gracias region. This faulty geography became more jumbled as persistent rumors that riches lay at the Caribbean mouth of Lake Nicaragua, and created the belief that Nicuesa, and hence Cape Gracias, also contained riches.<sup>10</sup>

Rumors of gold in the east, coupled with protracted, albeit internal, struggles for political control of the isthmus, generated the first Spanish entrada into Nicaragua’s northern highlands of the Segovia Mountains in 1528. Gabriel de Rojas, following the guidance of Matagalpa Indians, discovered gold washes among tributaries of the Rio Yari (Rio Wangki) allegedly 35 leagues from the colonial capital of León. These mines became known as ‘las minas de Cabo Gracias’ despite the fact that they likely lay several hundred miles from the Caribbean sea.<sup>11</sup> Spanish confusion about the relative location of Cape Gracias grew more pronounced when Alonso Calero and Diego Machuca reached the Caribbean via the Rio San Juan in 1539. Once in the Caribbean, Calero sailed north to the “Rio Yare,” which Machuco reached overland from the Rio Sábalos, a tributary of the Rio San Juan.<sup>12</sup> Although neither Machuco or Calero likely traveled north of the Rio Escondido, or Bluefields, Spanish documents and internationally produced maps for the next two centuries considered the Rio Yare to be the same as the Rio Yari, or Rio Wangki—further linking the Cape Gracias region with the ‘minas de Cabo Gracias.’<sup>13</sup> The

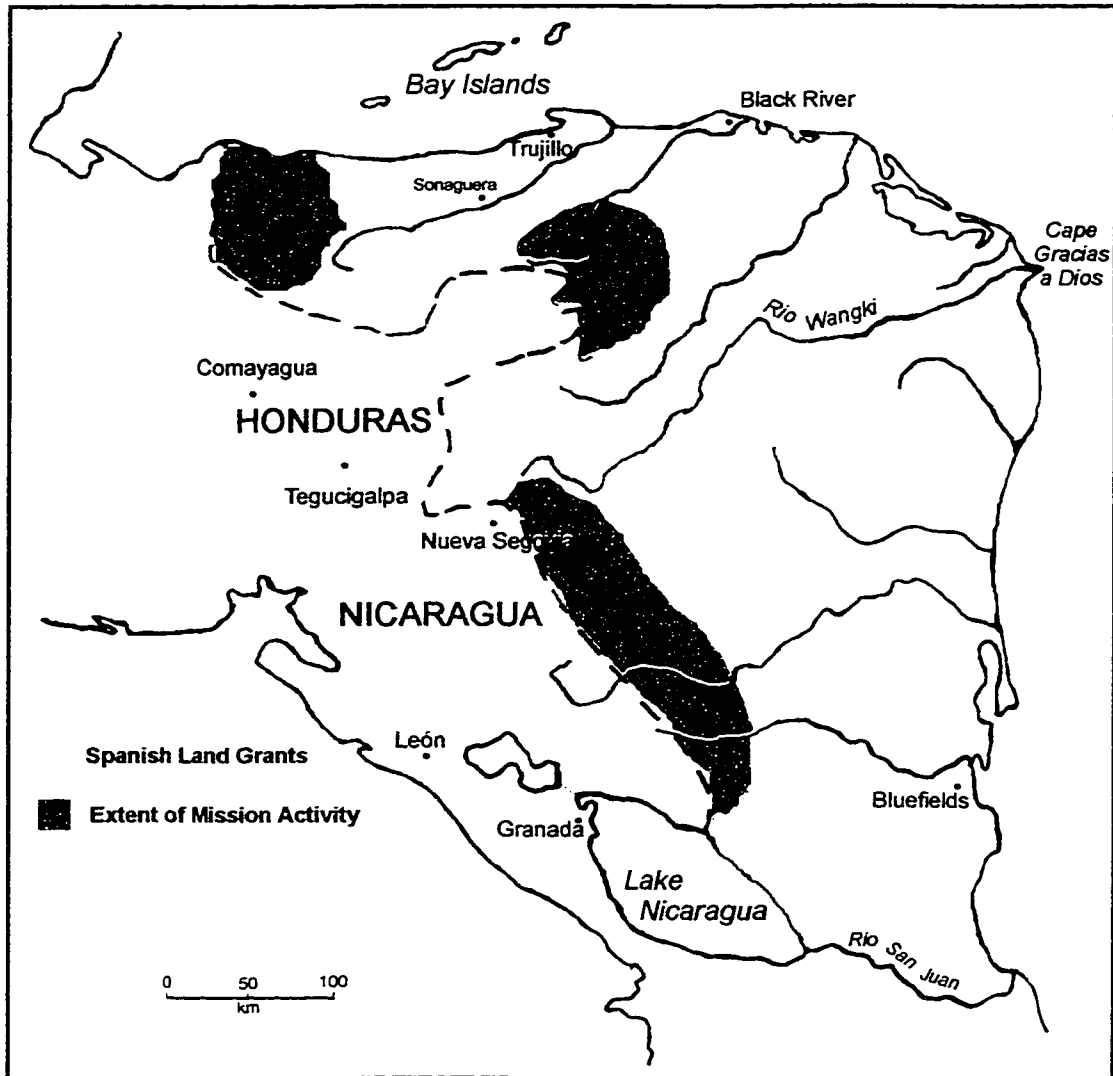
geographic confusion spawned by this ironic toponymical mistake underlies Spanish thinking about Taguzgalpa and Tologalpa (the Mosquitia) for the next 200 years.

In 1545, Spanish authorities sought approval to settle the *caribes*, or non-Christian Indians, of Taguzgalpa. A royal cédula of 1547 authorized Franciscan *entradas* from Trujillo and the Segovia highlands, but it remains unclear to what extent any were carried out. Two years after French buccaneers successfully sacked Trujillo for the first time in 1562, the Spanish Crown ordered Honduran governor Alonso Ortiz de Elgueta to conquer and populate Taguzgalpa and Cape Camerón. The governor allegedly sent the pilot Andrés Martín to explore the entire coast from Trujillo to the Rio San Juan. According to one writer, Martín founded the pueblo Elgueta on the shores of the Caratasca Lagoon, but the settlement was soon abandoned.<sup>14</sup> If true, this would have been the only Spanish settlement in the Mosquitia, or for that matter between Trujillo, Honduras and the Rio Matina, Costa Rica (founded in 1636), until itinerant colonies were established and abandoned between 1790 and 1800 at Black River and Cape Gracias (see Chapter Ten).

Spanish Control of the Nicaraguan highlands which separated the Nahuatl speakers of the Pacific from the Mayangna and Miskitu of the northeastern lowlands, was virtually nil during the colonial period. For the most part, Spanish interest in Nicaragua focused on the fertile and densely populated western lowlands.<sup>15</sup> A declining labor force and a relatively poor resource base discouraged Spanish immigration and dissuaded new activities on the eastern frontier. The Nicaraguan *tasación* (appraisal) of 1548 did not record any pueblos among the two eastern frontier departments of Nueva Segovia and Sébaco, and by 1560 only 40 Spanish residents lived in the province of Nueva Segovia, the region comprising the entire northeast portion of Nicaragua during the colonial period. Poor gold returns, Indian abuses and disease, and limited missionizing efforts combined to produce only 16 Matagalpan Indian pueblos under Spanish control in Nueva Segovia by 1603, but no control ever extended down the eastern slope of the central highlands.<sup>16</sup>

More durable missionary efforts in Nicaragua's eastern frontier began with Mercedarians based in Sébaco (Chontales) in 1606 (Figure 3.1). Juan de Albuquerque made three entradas in 1608 and settled 200 Matagalpan Indians at Muymuy (viejo) in the Cordillera Chontaleña just northeast of Lake Nicaragua.<sup>17</sup> As late as 1740, the eastern limit of the Corregimiento de Matagalpa stood at San Ramon nearby Muymuy (viejo).

In 1743, the district of Chontales-Matagalpa, a region encompassing the entire Central Cordillera from the Rio San Juan to Jinotega, contained 14 Indian *reducciones*, or Indian settlements: Matagalpa, Molagüina, Solingalpa, Sébaco, Jinotega, Muymuy Nuevo, Boaco, Camoapa, Teustepe, Juigalpa, Lóvago, Lovigüisca, Comalapa, and Elislaguina. Among these communities, only Muymuy Nuevo and Camoapa were formed voluntarily.<sup>18</sup> With the relative peace following the Seven Year War (1756-1762), the Franciscan Recollect Order commenced work among these pueblos, and most remain viable communities today. Missionizing or military impacts on the Sumu (Mayangna) remain unknown, but no Mayangna communities in Nicaragua were settled before the voluntary submission by the Kukra-Ulwa chief Yarrince in 1768, and none were settled among the northern Twahka or Panamahka in Nicaraguan territory. Nicaraguan efforts to settle or control Tologalpa remained so limited during the colonial period, that some documents have argued that by right Honduras should have retained the 'Costa de los Mosquitos' after the breakup of the Federation of Central American States in 1838.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 3.1** Spanish Land Grants and Mission Frontiers in Nicaragua and Honduras, 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries; adopted from Linda A. Newson, "Variaciones regionales en el impacto del Dominio Colonial Español en las Poblaciones indígenas de Honduras y Nicaragua," *Mesoamérica* 24 (1992): 297-312.

*Franciscan Entradas, or What's in a Name?*

The largest Spanish effort to settle the 'wild Indians' of Taguzgalpa was carried out by a handful of Franciscan priests, few of whom survived. In overview, the Franciscans made three attempts of varying strengths to settle the Indian groups of Taguzgalpa. Fray Verdelete's efforts between 1604 and 1612 among the Twahka and Pech of the Olancho Valley (Honduras) constitute the first serious Catholic attempts to convert *caribe* Indians outside the Spanish sphere of influence. The second attempt was launched from Trujillo when Fray Cristóbal Martínez and two other Franciscans settled Pech and baptized "guaba" Indians near Cape Gracias a Dios in 1622. In 1661, Franciscan evangelism shifted back to the highland valleys after another pirate attack again forced the temporary abandonment of Trujillo. The final push to reduce the *caribes* came between 1667 and 1675, when the priests Pedro de Ovalle and Fernando Espino achieved moderate, but short-lived, success settling Pech and Sumu in the Agalta Valley of Honduras.<sup>20</sup>

Before looking more closely at the evangelism efforts near Cape Gracias, it is worthwhile to examine the people whom the Spanish sought to settle. According to Vázquez, Taguzgalpa contained "more Indian tribes than hair on a deer." His lengthy list of Indian groups is often repeated without comment by historians and used to show that the Miskitu did not appear as an ethnic group before the late colonial period. Vázquez stated that Taguzgalpa contained Indian tribes denoted by the pluralized names: xicaques, mexicanos, lencas, payas, jaras, taos, fantasmas, alaucas, limucas, aguncuales, yales, cuges, bocayes, tomayes, quicamas, motucas, barucas, taupanes, bucataguacas, tahuas, alhatuinas, panamacas, yguyales, guayaes, guaias, guanaes, gaulaes, apazinas, ytziles, nanaicas, "and many others."<sup>21</sup> For his part, the Matagalpa corregidor named the following eleven *caribe* nations bordering his district in 1743: aguilas, muymuyes, tomayes, musutepes, tunlas, taguascas, guylubaguas, yuscos, panamaguas, talasanés, and bocaes.<sup>22</sup>

To understand these lists we need to consider the names in light of who likely provided them to the Spaniards and locate them geographically. It is well known that *xicaques* and *mexicanos* refer to inclusive classes of Indians, the former for any non-Christian Indian residing outside Spanish control, especially used for Indians in the Olancho and Segovia highlands, and the latter for Nahuatl speaking peoples who resided on the western margins of Taguzgalpa.<sup>23</sup> Other groups are either well recognized today, such as the Pech (*paya*), Yusku (*yuscos*), Tungla (*tunla*), and Lencas, or clearly correspond to people along a river, such as the *fantasmas* (Matagalpans of the Rio Pantasma), the *bocaes* or *bocayes* (Panamahkas from the Rio Bocay), and Panamahka (*panamaguas*). The *tahuas* and *taguascas*, commonly found in colonial documents, refer to the Twahka Indians who were well distributed along the Rio Patuca, and likely extended south of the Rio Wangki in the early colonial period. The Twahka call the Rio Patuca, Buhtuk, suggesting that *bucataguacas* simply refers to Twahkas of the Rio Buhtuk.

The Indian group ‘*alhatuinas*,’ later spelled *albatuinas* by Vázquez, first entered Spanish texts after Fray Martinez’ death near Cape Gracias in 1623. As later narrations make clear, the *albatuinas* are none other than the collective Indian enemies of the Miskitu as reported by wayward buccaneers, especially the Twahka-Panamahka. The word itself derives from the Miskitu language, *albawina*, or ‘one of slavery.’ Newson translates this word literally as “slavemeat” (*alba*=slave; *wina*=body or meat), and proposes that the word refers to those Indians subordinated by the Miskitu.<sup>24</sup> However, native Miskitu speakers informed me that *albawina* would more likely refer to Indians residing under Spanish control, or under Spanish servitude (*lo de la esclavitud*), than to Indians the Miskitu considered to be their subjects. In any case, the inclusion of a Miskitu word ‘*albawina*’ in the historical record as early as 1623, reaching a wide audience through Vázquez’ list, should have tipped off historians that Spaniards had indeed interacted with Miskitu speakers in the early 1600s.

The greatest source of confusion with uncritically reproduced lists of Indian names resides with the fact that different groups had different names for each other. The singularized *guaya*, *guaia*, *guana*, *gaula*, and *guaian* (used elsewhere by Vázquez) derives from the Mayangna word for the Miskitu people, *wayah* or *wayanh*—spelled *weiya* by the Moravian scholars in the early part of this century. Seventeenth and eighteenth century Spaniards would have spelled the ‘wa’ sound ‘gua,’ whereas the letters ‘i’ and ‘y’ were often used interchangeably, especially when located in the middle of words. Undoubtedly Vázquez’ *guaya*, *guaia*, *guaian*, and *guana* refer to the Miskitu Indians.

Spanish use of the Mayangna word *wayanh* is clarified by Fray Pedro de la Concepción in his 1699 account of an expedition along the upper Rio Wangki. Here, De la Concepción refers to “*los Guaianes y mulattos*,” and “*mulattos o sambos guaianes*,” and an individual “Guaian Indian from the nation of guales” who had recently attacked Nueva Segovia—an obvious reference to the first Miskitu attack in the same year. De la Concepción states that the *guaianes* and *mulattos* lived in 18 villages near the mouth of the Rio Wangki (see Table 5.1 below), and that their principal leader was called Quin, a frequent Spanish corruption of the English word ‘king.’ One of the communities noted by de la Concepción is termed “*guaba*,” the same name as the Indians baptized by Fray Martinez near Cape Gracias in 1623.<sup>25</sup> Although no one that I know has ever suggested this, it seems clear to me that the *guaba* Indians are none other than the Miskitu Indians.

The Mayangna term *wayanh* suggests at least three interesting phonetic relations to the Miskitu people and the Miskitu language vis-à-vis place-names near Cape Gracias a Dios. First, as I show below, Fray Martinez is said to have baptized over a thousand “*guaba*” Indians near Cape Gracias, but according to de la Concepción this name also denoted a village of ‘*Sambo guaianes*.’ This term ‘*guaba*,’ however, also shows a phonetic relation to the Mayangna word *wawa*, signifying a large-leafed plant used throughout the Mosquitia as an umbrella and food wrap (*Calathea spp.*). Although the prominent Rio Wawa of today is probably



not pertinent to this discussion, the river is often spelled 'Wava' (pronounced as 'guaba') on early Spanish and English maps.

Second, the placename Bihmuna for the lagoon just south of Cape Gracias is relatively new. From the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the lagoon was referred to variously as guana-sound, Guanasón, Guana Lagoon, Wana Lagoon, Wawa Lagoon, Waney Lagoon, Warner Lagoon, and also Wani Lagoon.<sup>26</sup> The lagoon or sound is actually a complex of periodically inundated estuaries, that certainly appeared different in the 17<sup>th</sup> century than it does today. The relationship between the root sound for the lagoon, guana, and the word guaba, do not seem coincidental in this case.

Finally, a Mayangna and Miskitu naming system, which calls the village at a river's mouth by the name of the river, suggests that Wani (or Guana) Lagoon and/or village may have a linguistic connection to the Rio Wangki itself.<sup>27</sup> As I presently describe, the Spaniards recovered the body of Fray Martinez eight leagues inland among "great savannas" along the "Rio Guani," which is almost certainly the Rio Wangki.<sup>28</sup> This statement further links the Rio Wangki with the Wani Lagoon, and los Guaianes, or the Miskitu people. In sum, several interesting historical placenames suggest that the Mayangna name for the Miskitu, *wayanh*, also relates to the place where the (Guaba) or Miskitu lived, near the mouth of the Rio Wangki.

### *Entrada at Cape Gracias*

Between 1609 and 1623, the Andalucian Franciscan Cristóbal Martinez attempted to settle Indians near Cape Gracias a Dios. This remains the most enigmatic chapter in Spanish-Miskitu relations, and paradoxically is hardly mentioned by Nicaragua historians. The only known account of Martinez' protracted efforts resides with "true original papers and authentic testimonies" consulted by the Franciscan chronicler Francisco Vázquez in his four volume work published between 1695-1714.<sup>29</sup> The events surrounding Martinez are significant

for two reasons. First, since the guabas refer to the Miskitu, Vázquez' chronicle provides the first clear historical record of a Miskitu-European encounter. Second, Martinez conducted up to three failed attempts to reach the Cape prior to 1622 and each ended in a shipwreck. The survivors allegedly mixed with the guabas producing "*los mestizos guabas*," indicating that the Miskitu had incorporated Europeans and/or mestizos people before Africans arrived in 1641.

According to Vázquez, after many years of trying to reach the wild Indians near Cape Gracias, the young Martinez finally set out in two ships from Trujillo on December 17, 1616. He was accompanied by another friar, 20 soldiers, and Captain Juan de Padilla "who was still living in 1671 and declared that which we relate here." Some days into the eastward voyage the boats hit a storm, one landed and the other wrecked on a reef. With the one remaining boat, Martinez asked to be taken to the Pech Indians "who were those Indians others had judged docile and capable of receiving the gospel." In the end, however, Martinez returned with the survivors to Trujillo. A second, or third, trip (the record is ambiguous) was attempted in 1619 with a pilot who knew the coast and "who had communicated at times with the Indians of that land."<sup>30</sup>

Before discussing Martinez' successful trip to the Pech Indians in 1622 and his final trip to the guabas in 1623, it is worthwhile to ponder the implications of ship-wrecked Spaniards surviving on the coast of the Mosquitia. In reference to the sum of Martinez' failed voyages, Vázquez states that:

the ship carrying the young Cristóbal shipwrecked on the shores of Cape Gracias a Dios. [Here,] he and other Spaniards remained captive among the heathen, [but] he escaped with time while the others produced a caste of mestizos among the guaba Indians (*hicieron casta de mestizos con indias de la nación guaba*).<sup>31</sup>

Although uncertain about the veracity of the stories which he is re-presenting, Vázquez henceforth refers to the "*mestizos guabas*."<sup>32</sup> The possibility of Spanish progeny remaining among the Miskitu would end here if Raveneau de Lussan had not written in 1688 that Cape Gracias:

has been inhabited for a long time by mulattoes and negroes, both men and women. The population already numerous, has grown by leaps and bounds ever since a Spanish ship, out-bound for Guinea with a load of padres, was lost by coming too close in shore to land, the coast being dangerous in this locality. Those who escaped death by drowning were kindly received by the half-breed indians in the immediate vicinity who were happy over the loss of this ship and the Spaniards who were their enemies.<sup>33</sup>

Writing ten years later in 1699, M. W. states that:

the Mosquito-men, about 60 years past, murder'd above 50 Spaniards, amongst whom were several friars who liv'd amongst them, some near *Cape Grace a Dios*, other some at *Guana-sound*, which is four leagues to the South of it, and the rest by the Brangmans.

However, M. W. hints that Spanish offspring may have survived because he refers to Indians, mulattoes, negroes, and “people of another mix'd breed” inhabiting a community just inside the mouth of the Rio Wangki.<sup>34</sup> Despite the fact that at least two well-read buccaneer accounts suggest Spanish priests shipwrecked or resided at Cape Gracias, and the fact that Vázquez clearly implies that Hispanic people remained among the guabas, the possibility that the guabas, or Miskitus, first commingled with Hispanic people and not Africans, has never been taken seriously in published works.

Although the narrative of Martinez' entrada is of interest, it unfortunately provides little information concerning the Miskitu. In December of 1622, Cristóbal Martinez, the lay brother Juan de Vaena, and four Indians from the Bay Islands passed through endless swamps somewhere near the Rio Tinto and encountered several Pech Indians who had been waiting for them. The Indians took the Spaniards to their village, said to be a place where four rivers came together at the Rio Xarúa. After three months, Vaena returned to Trujillo. One year later he returned with the lay brother Benito de San Francisco, and found that Martinez had baptized more than 700 adults from “diverse nations” (villages), and settled them in seven pueblos: Azocegua, Yaxamahá, Borbortabahca, Zuyy, Borcaquer, and

Guampún, also called Murahquí. Shortly after Vaena's arrival, the Indians began returning to the mountains and the padres thought it best to try their luck among "a nation called guabas, mestizos, whom [the padres] had high hopes for because they were likely Spanish offspring" and offered "much utility" as mediators among the nearby heathens.<sup>35</sup>

The Honduran governor, Juan Miranda, sent a ship to carry the padres 30 leagues east to a stretch of coast termed "anavacas," at or near, Caratasca Lagoon.<sup>36</sup> Here the padres found the guabas receptive to the gospel but living in constant fear of the *xicaques* (Twahka in this case) who lived some 7 leagues away. In three days the priests allegedly baptized over a thousand people, but they were soon killed by a nation of Indians called albatuinas, said to be cousins of the Twahkas who had harassed the Spaniards in Olancho. The story of this visit to the guabas and the deaths of the priests comes from the converted Pech who led Governor Miranda to the priests' "gravesite." Here Miranda found "great savannas," eight leagues inland along the Rio Guani.<sup>37</sup> Ironically, in Vázquez' account the Miskitu accepted the priests and it was the Twahka who killed them. This rendition contradicts the story heard by M. W., as stated above, which asserts Miskitu aggression against the Spanish. This symbolic transformation from 'Miskitu as friend' to 'Miskitu as hereditary foe' of the Spanish came to define Miskitu-Spanish relations at the same time it circumscribed their relations with the British.

### **Anglo-Miskitu Encounters**

In this section I ask three basic questions: what are the origins of Miskitu relations with northern Europeans and around what themes did these relations mature; how did English settlement at Providence Island build upon and expand existing Anglo relationships; how did Anglo-Miskitu encounters affect the ways in which the Miskitu began to see themselves? Although geography first attracted northern Europeans to the Mosquitia, it was Miskitu talents that kept them returning,

and indeed buccaneers became dependent on the Miskitu for necessary provisions, piloting, and to cross coastal bars. Englishmen who settled Providence Island (1629-1641) built upon these same basic relations but also cultivated friendships at an interpersonal level that was unprecedented. Providence Englishmen also sought natural resources for European markets, a quantitative shift in Anglo-Miskitu relations. A landscape vision that combined a fecund nature with a drive to exploit it produced significant consequences for the Miskitu who began to adopt these same enterprising values. After the addition of substantial, if entirely unknown African influences, the Miskitu, began to see themselves as co-equals among European nations. European dependence on Miskitu skills encouraged them to coddle Miskitu feelings, and genuinely consider them worthy allies of a separate but paralleling rank.

#### *The Origins of Miskitu Relations with Northern Europeans*

Before major European powers ended their official support for privateering in 1685, corsairs and buccaneers from France, the Netherlands, and the British Isles attacked key trade routes and Spanish port cities throughout the Caribbean basin. These activities were sustained through a network of secure refuge and supply nodes, including the many islands and shoals of the Miskitu Platform. Geographically, the Mosquitia lay mid-way along the circuitous pillaging routes that followed the trade winds southwest to the Lesser Antilles, South America, and Panamá, north to Trujillo, and then the Gulf Stream east past Havana. Since the Miskitu Coast contained no Spanish settlements and few defenses, it loomed as an ideal buccaneer landscape in the cul-de-sac of the Caribbean.

Although we have no direct account of pirate encounters between northern Europeans and the Miskitu before 1620, it is very likely that meetings did occur. French corsairs attacked Trujillo and the Darién between 1560-1580, and likely visited the Mosquitia. A century later Esquemelin found that the Miskitu spoke a

little French, while Dampier wrote the Miskitu “do not love the French,” and Sloane concluded that the Indians have a “propensity to the Dutch, but the French they mortally hate for their wanton behavior towards their Wives.” In 1730, Cockburn met a group of Tawira Miskitu in Panamá who conversed with him in English, while “some of them could speak a little Spanish and French.”<sup>38</sup>

By the 1620s, Dutch ships spent substantial time off the coast of Nicaragua. When English ships ‘discovered’ Santa Catalina (Providence Island) in 1627, Dutch pirates were already there. Among those named were the brothers Albert and William Blauveldt. The city of Bluefields, of course, owes its name to one of these brothers: “the Bay of Bleevelt, being so named from a pirate who used to resort thither.”<sup>39</sup> Early pirates also visited the Corn Islands. In 1643, William Jackson’s fleet visited “ye Corne Islands, from ye abundance of maize or Indian wheate, there usually planted by ye barbarous natives.”<sup>40</sup> However, Esquemelin implies that by 1671 native planters (Kukras) had fled the islands after repeated pirate abuses. In contrast to the development of friendly relations with the Miskitu, the Kukra, Ulwa, and Rama Indians either fled from the pirates or attacked them.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to other native Mosquitians, the Miskitu appear to have established durable associations based around pirate needs. The requirements of Caribbean travelers reflect universal naval necessities: fresh water, food, naval stores, safe havens, diversion, and intimate companionship. Next to the superimposition of Spanish premises that cut to the core of cultural difference, Anglo demands would have seemed relatively mild, or at least comprehensible to the sea-savvy Miskitu. Although pirates were probably capable of taking what they wanted without befriending their providers, the record suggests that they established mutually beneficial relations with the Miskitu. Part of the reasons for this are geographical.

In contrast to Bluefields’ harbor, north coast inlets are guarded by shallow and dangerous bars. Coastal visitors to this day lament their crossing, and numerous historical sources imply ships commonly wrecked. Juxtaposed with images of

shallow and dangerous inlets, are admiring descriptions of Miskitu maritime skills, especially their talents crossing these bars. Perhaps as a consequence of such prohibitive crossings, English pirates in particular spent the majority of their time at the Miskitu Cays. According to Dampier, the low, sandy shoals offered an ideal place to careen ships and acquire turtle meat from the Indians.<sup>42</sup> With ships in repair, buccaneers depended on the Miskitu for provisions. Green turtles provided the ideal food for people on the go, and the Miskitu were turtlemen par excellence. Pirates kept turtles in ‘crawls,’ or inter-tidal cages, at the Cays until needed, and once taken aboard, they could remain alive in ship holds for several weeks. One 1639 observer portrayed the Miskitu Cays as a bustling seascape of English, Dutch, and Miskitu turtling vessels.<sup>43</sup> Miskitu strikers also captured manatees for their guests, as Dampier testifies: “I have known two Moskito Men for a Week every Day bring aboard 2 Manatee,” with each weighing near 600 pounds.<sup>44</sup> The two below passages illustrate the extent to which the pirates came to depend on Miskitu maritime fishing skills:

They are very dexterous at darting with the javelin, whereby they are very useful to the Pirates towards the victualling their ships, by the fishery of tortoises, and *manitas*, a sort of fish as called by the Spaniards. For one of these Indians is alone sufficient to victual a vessel of a hundred persons. We had among our crew two Pirates who could speak very well the Indian language.<sup>45</sup>

These men are the boldest in the world in braving the perils of the sea and are without dispute the most dexterous in fishing. They go out to sea in small boats that the average sailor would scorn; in these they remain three or four days at a stretch, as unconcerned, despite the weather, as if they were part of the boat.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to provisions, including native fruits and Miskitu cultivars, the Mosquitia’s pine savannas furnished excellent naval stores. Here, buccaneers made extensive use of the ropy silkgrass (*kara*) and the fibrous bark from the mahoe tree (*sani*). Both provided excellent cordage for riggings, sail repairs, and fishing lines. The savanna provided pine pitch and tar for ship repairs, and if the latter were not

available, oil from monk seals could be used in the same manner: “ingenious necessity taught us to make use of ye oyle of Seales, which wee took in great abundance, & tempered ye same with lime.”<sup>47</sup> Pirates also utilized Mosquitia timbers in ship repairs, especially mahogany which possessed good bending qualities, superior buoyancy, a resistance to dry rot; and it did not shrink, swell, or warp in changing climates; and as an extra bonus, it was “not subject to serious splintering when struck by cannon balls.”<sup>48</sup>

Privateering was not only a functional occupation, and visits to the mainland provided typical male diversions. Here, pirates tell of excellent hunting, and imbibing local drinks including one made from toasted maize and cacao, today the national drink of Nicaragua (*pinolillo*), as well as various fermented brews called *mishla* made from masticated cassava with honey or roasted and pounded pineapples. Female companionship also appeared to be part of the Mosquitia’s attraction, as Esquemelin states, the Miskitu showed “us the most cordial friendship, and provided us with all necessaries whatsoever.” In addition:

every one has the liberty to buy for himself an Indian woman, at the price of a knife or any old axe, wood-bill, or hatchet. By this contract the woman is obliged to remain in the custody of the Pirate all the time he stays there. She serves him in the meanwhile, and brings him victuals of all sorts that the country affords.<sup>49</sup>

Much has been made of this translated passage, but I suggest that the women were probably Indian slaves procured by the Miskitu from elsewhere (see Chapter 8). The same reasons that pirates visited with the Miskitu also attracted later Englishmen. Still, when venture capital combined with geographical knowledge, a new level of Anglo-Miskitu relations developed.



### *English Settlement of Providence Island*

Beginning in 1629, Englishmen under a charter of the Providence Island Company (PIC) settled the smaller and more northern of two islands located some 100 miles off the coast of eastern Nicaragua. In the twelve years before a Spanish Armada uprooted the colony, English settlers provided the Miskitu with manufactured goods, rudiments of the English language, and notions of Christianity. By taking the son of a Miskitu leader to England for three years, settlers also legitimated or invented the tradition of Miskitu kingship. The Miskitu encounter with the PIC, although brief, laid the foundation for long-term Anglo relations by connecting the Miskitu to a growing British diaspora in the western Caribbean.

After the ‘discovery’ of Providence Island, English investors, many of whom were involved in the North America colonies, formed a joint-stock company to send puritan colonists. The first settlers to arrive came from Bermuda, St. Christopher (St. Kitts), Barbados and, in May of 1631, England. European settlers were of four classes: planters who shared the product of their 30-50 acre plots equally with the company; artisans who labored for wages; white indentured servants who were allotted to the planters; and military men (privateers) engaged to protect the colony. The first Caribbean transplants also brought African slaves, but new slaves did not arrive until after 1633.<sup>50</sup> By 1635, some 500 white men, including some Dutch, 40 white women, and 90 African slaves inhabited Providence, but by 1637 there were “nearly as many blacks as whites.” When the Spanish captured the island in 1641, they found 350 Englishmen and 381 African slaves, but investors claimed 600 slaves had been lost.<sup>51</sup>

All African slaves purchased at Providence Island came from Dutch trading ships, but others were probably captured from Spanish ships during privateering raids.<sup>52</sup> Soon, settlers began purchasing African slaves at a rate unparalleled in any English colony during this period.<sup>53</sup> In accounting for this peculiarity, Kupperman

reasons that Africans were somehow being acquired below market value by Dutch privateers. She hypothesized that:

Some of the earliest slaves imported [to Providence] were bought at Cape Gracias a Dios for “bills, lances, hatches, lances, beads, canvas clothes and shirts,” and knives. These commodities, staples of the Mosquito Coast trade, indicate that the Africans may have been escapees from Spanish slavery captured and resold by the Indians.

In a footnote to this section, Kupperman cites a letter dated January 31, 1638, in which the investors agreed to pay William Blauveldt for procuring slaves at “the Cape,” but the placename Cape often referred to the entire mainland of eastern Central America.<sup>54</sup>

English settlers at Providence Island may have instigated the eventual African settlement at Cape Gracias in two distinct ways. First, given that many accounts associate the African arrival to the coast with a 1641 shipwreck, the same year Providence was captured by the Spanish, it is probable that Africans arrived on their own directly from Providence. If investors did lose 600 slaves as they claimed, and only 381 were captured by the Spanish, some would appear unaccounted for. The Spanish attack occurred in September, the Mosquitia’s *mani lupia*, or short calm, a situation that would have greatly facilitated African sea travel.<sup>55</sup> Second, it is possible that the Africans brought to Providence arrived via Cape Gracias in the first place. While escaping Africans may have reached Cape Gracias from Honduran mining centers as some authors claim, it seems unlikely that they were being captured and sold by the Miskitu in the 1630s.<sup>56</sup> What seems more likely is that Dutch pirates held captured Africans at the Miskitu Cays. Whatever the case, by 1671 Esquemelin noted that the Indians of Cape Gracias “have among them some few negroes, who serve them in the quality of slaves. These happened to arrive there, swimming, after shipwreck made upon that coast.” He adds, the “negroes that are upon this island live here in all respects according to the customs of their own country.”<sup>57</sup> (I discuss the arrival of Africans to the Mosquitia in Chapters Four and Five).

The increase in African people on Providence Island reflects the evolution of investors' profit-making strategies, as well as wider Caribbean events, including two thwarted Spanish attacks in 1635 and 1640. In general PIC thinking and activities moved progressively through three stages: (1) cultivating export commodities on Providence Island (1629-1632); (2) strengthening ties to the Miskitu and developing the mainland trade (1633-1637); and (3) preparation for mainland colonization (1638-1641). In the first stage, settler and investor energies concentrated on sowing a puritan and yeoman society in the Caribbean. Settlers experimented with the New World trade crops of tobacco, cotton, indigo, and cochineal, as well as several Old World crops such as sugar, figs, oranges, lemons, grapes, pomegranates, rhubarb, cloves, the New World "guinny" pepper, mace, nutmegs, raisins, currants, peas, melons, and even mulberry trees for silk production, palma christi, the dye madder, and the castor oil plant. Exports of cotton and tobacco were disappointing, and there is no record that sugar or rum was ever shipped from Providence Island. With such poor performances, settlers eventually began transplanting crops they had acquired from the mainland. In addition to food crops such as maize, cassava, and bananas, settlers also brought plants that showed commercial potential such as the bromeliad Europeans called silkgrass (*Aechmea magdalenensis*), annatto (called tomarin from the Miskitu word *maring*), and vanilla (referred to as dette from the Miskitu word *diti*).<sup>58</sup>

### *Miskitu-English Interactions*

Stage two (1633-1637) in PIC thought and actions was precipitated by a reorientation toward off-island profit sources that increasingly necessitated the establishment of mutual trust with the Miskitu Indians. In doing so Providence seamen built upon existing Miskitu-Anglo ties established during the previous half-century, but expanded on these relations in significant ways. They formalized trade in natural resources by establishing work shops on the mainland and a trading

station at the Miskitu Cays. The shift to a focus on mainland trade and strengthening of Indian relations was predictable after Providence commodities repeatedly failed to turn a profit and Spanish ships increasingly threatened the island colony. As more and more settlers began to dwell at the Mosquitia on a regular basis, the fathered children there because PIC correspondence required that such offspring receive “a Christian education.”<sup>59</sup> In all settler-Miskitu interactions, PIC investors dictated appropriate English behavior. While relations established on Providence Island played a dramatic role in directing the long-term course of Miskitu identity, the quotidian restructuring of Miskitu cultural activities took place on the mainland.

All evidence suggests that stage two ushered in a radically new phase in English-Miskitu relations. Investors meticulously cultivated a greater knowledge of mainland resources and diligently tried to strengthen their ties to the ‘Cape Indians.’ They provided specific instructions to treat the Indians with special deference: “You are to endear yourselves with the Indians and their commanders and we conjure you to be friendly and cause no jealousy.” Captain Camock, for example, was ordered to allow no sinning or drunkenness at Cape Gracias “which will render the very name of Christians odious to the very heathen you take in hand by drawing the curse of God upon your endeavors.” Designed relations carried over to Providence Island as well. The Miskitu had been accustomed to travel out to Providence Island before English settlement because “Governor Bell was directed not to interfere with this practice.”<sup>60</sup> Indian men who came to the island voluntarily were allowed to work. Indian slavery was strictly forbidden, and any colonist found abusive was to be punished in the presence of the Indian who witnessed it.<sup>61</sup> We know that young Miskitu men came to Providence because they were paid for their labor with “beads, glasses or other such Trifles,” or articles useful for courting partners.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, hatchets, lances, knives, cloth, and shirts, which the Indians “do most esteem,” were reserved for the mainland trade.<sup>63</sup> As one 18<sup>th</sup> century commentator put it, the

Indians “laugh at the intrinsic worth of any thing being compared to that of knives and hatchets.”<sup>64</sup>

To further their project, investors established a mission school for Indian children and, in 1632, they authorized Governor Bell to “import a small number of men and children for education,” although no women were to be brought to the island “for fear of some inconveniences depending thereon.”<sup>65</sup> The mission school certainly affected some Miskitu because, in 1687 Sir Hans Sloane met Miskitu King Jeremy and some “others of his country” in Jamaica. These men spoke “broken English” and had “learned the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed and Ten Commandments, which they repeat with great devotion.” Sloane met with Jeremy when the latter had come to Jamaica to “beg of the Duke of Albermarle, Governor of Jamaica, his Protection, and [ask] that he would send a Governour thither, with the power to War on the Spaniards, and Pirats.”<sup>66</sup> From Sloane’s conversation with King Jeremy we learn that:

in the Reign of King Charles I. of ever Blessed Memory, the Earl of Warwick . . . did possess himself of several Islands in the West-Indies, particularly that of *Providence*, . . . lying East from Cape *Gratias de Dios*, (vulgarly known by the name of the *Muskitos*) . . . which put the said Earl upon trying all ways and means of future Correspondence with the Natives of the said Cape and neighbouring Country, and in some little time was so successful as to gain that Point and farther prevail’d with them so far, as to persuade them to send home the King’s Son, leaving one of his People as Hostage for him, which was Colonel Morris, now living at *New York*. The Indian Prince going home with the said Earl, staid in *England* three years, in which time the Indian King died, and the said Natives having in that time had intercourse of Friendship and Commerce with those of Providence, were soon made sensible of the Grandeur of his Majesty of Great Britain, and how necessary his Protection was to them. Upon the return of the said Indian Prince, they [‘the said Natives’] persuaded him to resign up his Authority and Power over them, and (with them) unanimously declare themselves the Subjects of his said Majesty of *Great Britain*, in which Opinion they have ever since persisted, and do own no other Supream Command over them.<sup>67</sup>

Unfortunately, this paragraph amounts to the entire record of PIC or English involvement in the creation of Miskitu kingship.

From the time of their initial contact with eastern Central America, Anglo men conceptualized the Mosquitia as a fertile realm that combined natural resources with strategic space commercial opportunities. Providence settlers were the first to articulate and harness this landscape vision to the plow of commodity exchange in a way that contoured the Mosquitia into a specific kind of place. In 1633, investors received a letter stating that two settlers “are acquainted with the Several natures and languages of the Indians, have received courteous usage in many parts of their Country, have had large promises of future entertainment, and Commerce, and are engaged to return unto them.”<sup>68</sup> In this same year Captain Camock Sussex had sent specimens of silkgrass he had obtained from the mainland, and wrote that he had established a trading station on one of the larger Miskitu cays.<sup>69</sup> Investors were so impressed with the strong and smooth silkgrass fiber that they took out a patent for ‘Camock’s flax,’ as well as “a separate charter of incorporation for the mainland trade in Central America,” giving them the exclusive and self-proclaimed right to trade on the coast with “divers heathen people.”<sup>70</sup>

Evidence for what resources were actually traded is contradictory. On the one hand, investors asked to receive samples of resources, including:

Gum of pine Tree, Lignum vitae, and other Gums, Anotto or Tomarin. Skins of all Beasts that have any Furre, or may seem vendible. Cassia Fustula, Sarsaperilla Guacum, Mecoachan or wild potatoes. Red oil, Wax and honey. Contra Yerva which is an Antidote against poison of Serpents and arrows, and by that means it may be discovered. Or what other Antidotes you shall find in the Country. Bezar stone, Manatee stones, the stone of Alligator's head. And if you shall meet with any things upon the main that may be useful in Providence we desire you from Time to Time by all opportunities to furnish that Island.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, Sorsby claims that, in addition to the above items, settlers traveled at least 40 leagues up the Rio Wangki to trade for colored feathers and medicinals.<sup>72</sup> However, a 1635 report suggests the Indians had little to trade except some gums and perfumes.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the investors required that each boat trading on the

mainland have someone literate who would record in a journal “the several natures and number of people, their government, Commodities, Countries Soils Rivers.”<sup>74</sup>

A propagandistic pamphlet seeking settlers for a new mainland colony entitled *Certiane Inducements to well minded people*, published in London around 1645 by former PIC investors, suggests that settlers utilized the Miskitu in their commercial endeavors. The *Inducement* states: “Silke-grasse, which grows naturally, and may be cut once a year; this by the Indians is easily fitted to make cordage, and to be spun into a fine thread.” The folio claims that “The *Indians* are also apt to labour, and will be helpful in making cordage, also in building and Smiths worke, so likewise in Fishing.” Also described in some detail are the various sea turtles, including the “hankes-bill Turtle (of which is the shell for Combs),” silkgrass, and the manatee—which “might well be termed a Sea Cow, for the taste thereof is like Biefe.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition to interest in natural resources, settlers experimented with cultivated crops. A 1638 report from Cape Gracias suggests that the English had successfully sown sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, annatto, and silkgrass on the mainland.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, a 1637 report presents a positive spin for agricultural potentials at Bluefields. These two reports, in conjunction with simultaneous trade developments, have led some historians to suggest that settlers established ‘sugar plantations’ in the Mosquitia, a likelihood not readily confirmed from the existing documents. Indeed, there is no record that any crop was shipped directly from the Mosquitia, nor was refined sugar or rum ever shipped from Providence Island itself.<sup>77</sup>

If the English farmed, they would not have done so at the Cape proper where soils are among the worst in the Mosquitia, but to the north along the Rio Kruta or near the Caratasca Lagoon, or the Rio Patuca. One Spanish observer in 1790, could not help but state, tongue in cheek, that the altitude of the Cape was one and half feet, a wasteland, with “no soil to speak of.”<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Miskitu lexicon and the historical record suggest that most commercial activities took place around the Rio

Kruta-Caratasca area. The Miskitu call the mahoe tree used by colonists to make cordage, *sani dusa*, or the rope tree. The most important Miskitu settlement on the north coast of Honduras in 1700 was called Sani (see Chapter Five). The Miskitu call silkgrass, *kara*, the root for the toponymies Caratasca and Karata, or silkgrass point.

Vanilla was almost certainly acquired along the Rio Kruta. “Dete,” or vanilla, is mentioned several times in company records, but its Mosquitia distribution is generally restricted to the Rio Kruta and south of Bluefields.<sup>79</sup> M. W. found that “Monelo trees” produce a fruit like french-beans with a rich fragrance when dried “grows very plentiful on the banks of Black River [Rio Kruta], in this country, and some quantities in Wanks [Rio Wangki].”<sup>80</sup> Sloane spoke with a Captain Gaugh in 1687 who “lived amongst the Indians” near Cape Gracias who possessed extensive knowledge of how to dry and cure “Vaniglias.” Capt. Gaugh likely stayed at Kruta because M. W. met an Indian chief named “Gaugh” near the Rio Kruta: Indian leaders often took the names of Europeans they met. The detailed Cape Gracias report by the 1845 Prussian commission mentions vanilla no less than five times as growing along and nearby the Rio Kruta.<sup>81</sup> In sum, available records suggest that the English spent the majority of their time near the Rio Kruta, not coincidentally the same place where Africans shipwrecked after the Spanish took Providence in 1641 (see Chapter Five).

### *Mosquitia Colonial Designs*

Stage three (1638-1641) marked a pronounced turning point in PIC thinking. Although Mosquitia trade showed some potential, it was not deemed viable without a more direct English presence. The proposed solution was to colonize the Mosquitia with a new breed of English settlers: seasoned planters from the North American colonies.<sup>82</sup> In 1638, PIC investors hired the Caribbean-savvy Nathaniel Butler as Providence’s new Governor. His first task was to visit Cape Gracias to



determine its potential for a European-style settlement. Butler sailed into the Cape harbor in May of 1639 and “after a divine service and a sermon, itt being the Lordes Daye,” he declared the “place very fitt for a Plantation the only exception against itt is, that the mouths of the River is soe barred that noe vessell can goe in that drawes above five foote water.”<sup>83</sup> Desperate to turn a profit after limited success, investors’ geographical imaginations began to conflate Providence Island with Cape Gracias into a single vision that sought to establish the English empire in Central America.<sup>84</sup>

Even after Providence fell from English control, investors did not diminish their hopes to settle at Cape Gracias. The PIC-inspired pamphlet, *Certaine Inducements*, indicates that investors continued to attach their hopes of prosperity to the Mosquitia’s productivity. As with other contemporary promotional literatures, the authors’ built their ‘inducements’ around two common themes: the Black Legend and a fecund landscape. First, the “poore Indians desire the English to Inhabit with them . . . they abhor the Spanish, and wish to receive proper English names.” Second, the land’s resource abundance and fertility know no bounds. English grains were said to grow well, for “The Land needs noe dung, nor any fallow years. . . One man by labour can provide for twenty men.”<sup>85</sup> In the end, repeated failure did not deter the English imagination. Mosquitia fertility remained a dominant theme of promotional literature for the next two centuries. Such tropical myths were always fueled by settlers on the ground who sought to attract, and later sustain, investor interest and capital. The exaggeration of tropical fertility had always characterized PIC correspondence. Indeed, Kupperman found that to keep receiving investor good will, settlers continually praised the richness of the soil, even as crops were failing.<sup>86</sup>

### **Pirate Encounters and the Origins of Miskitu Identity**

Throughout their 17<sup>th</sup> century contacts with northern Europeans, the Miskitu began to view themselves as coequals among the nationally varied Europeans who

took so much interest in them and their landscape. While it remains impossible for anyone to ‘know’ how the Miskitu thought of themselves during this period, it is a mistake to assume that because they are ‘Indians,’ and/or ‘mulattos’ that they thought of themselves as inherently inferior to Europeans simply because (a) the Europeans did and (b) they sought out European commodities at, what appears to us now, unequal rates of exchange. As a way to lead into the topics of the remaining study, I revisit many of the same texts used throughout this chapter to understand how the Miskitu began to see themselves vis-à-vis the Europeans they interacted with.

Although other commentators have read these same texts and have exposed processes or effects of English hegemony and Indian subordination, I find that the only certain themes are contradiction and ambiguity. I contend that these colonial texts harbor a kind of paralleling narrative that undermines the very Euro-centric superiority the texts attempt to naturalize. Reading against the grain exposes other themes as well and suggests that Englishmen greatly respected the Miskitu, came to depend on them, and that the Miskitu developed a ‘no nonsense’ stance toward the Englishmen. These themes repeat throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century and reinforce the strong sense-of-self dimension of Miskitu identity that, in my view, blocked more pronounced forms of Anglo, Moravian, North American, or Nicaraguan assimilation in later centuries.

A central aspect of Miskitu identity formation was the adoption of several European cultural forms. As we saw above, in marked contrast to other native Mosquitians, the Miskitu had few troubles with European visitors, and in all probability used the Europeans as a foil against their ‘albawina’ neighbors. In 1635, investors reprimanded Samuel Axe for “the slaughter of divers Indians by the English under [his] command, during [his] abode at the Maine.”<sup>87</sup> Daniel Elfryth was reproached for an altercation with the Indians that led to the massacre of many of his own men.<sup>88</sup> We can be certain that these encounters occurred with the

Mayangna, Rama, Kukra, or Pech Indians, and possibly with Miskitu accompaniment.

According to M. W., the Miskitu “in regard that they have had some small commerce with the English, esteem themselves to be a very notable sort of people, affecting much to be call’d Mosquito-men, and distinguishing their neighbours by the names wild Indians and Alboawinneys.”<sup>89</sup> The self-ascribing term ‘Mosquito-men’ suggests that the Miskitu saw themselves akin to Englishmen, Scotchmen, Frenchmen, and Dutchmen. I will argue later that this self-selected suffix demonstrates that the Miskitu, and especially the Sambo Miskitu, began to see themselves as fellow countrymen comprising a nation. Evidence from the 19<sup>th</sup> century suggests that Anglos clearly conveyed their national identity, and the distinction among themselves, to the Miskitu. This kind of interaction helped the Miskitu choose and conceptualize the ‘Miskitumen’ as Miskitu from the nation of the Mosquitia. As I will show, from the earliest accounts the Miskitu both distinguished themselves from other native Mosquitians at the same time they began to see themselves as commensurate with European nations.

Tensions among European humoring, respect, and dependence support the view that the Miskitu came to see themselves as the equals of Anglos. Just as the Providence investors had ordered their own ship Captains 50 years earlier, later English Captains treated Miskitu sailors with ‘special deference.’ According to Dampier the English gave the Miskitu “a great deal of Respect, both when they are aboard their Ships, and also ashore, either in Jamaica, or elsewhere, which they often come with the Seamen.” However, he claims “the pirates humour them,” letting them do whatever they want. Perhaps it was humor, but the Miskitu maintained their own canoes, which they used exclusively, for “no whites could manage” their canoes, “nor will they let any white Man come in their Canoa.” Pirates often had to coddle to Miskitu moods: “For should we cross them, though they should see Shoals of Fish, or Turtle, or the like, they will purposely strike their Harpoons and Turtle-Irons aside, or so glance them as to kill nothing.”<sup>90</sup> Under

such circumstances Europeans had little recourse, indeed we should be asking who was dependent on whom at this historical conjuncture.

Appeasement had to be accompanied by resolute action or the Miskitu removed themselves, something that hurt the pirates more than the Indians. As de Lussan found the Sambo Miskitu will “frequently render assistance to our filibusters when taken on board and when given promises of being allowed to participate in the prizes captured,” but these promises “must be faithfully executed; for let them be deceived just once and they can never be relied on in the future.”<sup>91</sup> Miskitu men accompanied the first buccaneer expeditions across Panama and into the Pacific in 1679 where they applied their fishing skills to turtling off the coast of Guayaquil, Ecuador and as far south as Chile. For Dampier, Miskitu skills were “esteemed and coveted by all Privateers” because one or two men could feed a ship of 100 men: “it is very rare to find Privateers destitute of one or more of them, when the Commander, or most of the Men are English.”<sup>92</sup> After the official end of privateering, the Miskitu also accompanied Jamaican trading sloops where they got “good Wages too, and are treated in the friendliest manner by the Commanders, being always their companions, and called Brother.”<sup>93</sup> In my view, northern Europeans came to depend on the Miskitu in innumerable ways, including regional knowledge and piloting among coastal shoals.

Miskitu affection for pirate ways presents a popular image in the literature that shows two faces under close inspection. The Miskitu apparently “consider it a great honour to be named” after and by a pirate.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, several authors point this out, a fact which subsequent writers have understood as a kind of slovenly respect for Europeans, a natural form of subordination which tends to characterize the ‘other’ as inferior or childlike. Still, with the end of privateering, the Miskitu cooperated with, and actively sought, official English support to root out wayward pirates. M. W. notes that if an outlaw were sought by the British authorities, they would turn him in, “as they lately did *Capt. Banister* to *Capt. Sprag*, who came thither after him in a frigate.” In addition, when King Jeremy visited Jamaica in

1687, he sought the new Governor's support "to War on the Spaniards, and Pirates."<sup>95</sup>

Deference to the alleged superior knowledge of Europeans provides another ambiguous theme. Dampier writes that the Miskitus fight well but that "they think that the white Men with whom they are, know better than they do when it is best to fight. . . . [they] being ready to imitate us in whatsoever they saw us do at any time."<sup>96</sup> An expected statement for a man of his times who took European supremacy as a natural state of affairs, as did his readers. However, when given a chance to discuss British ways of fighting and have it recorded in their own voice, Miskitu leaders responded:

As we are entire strangers to the mode of fighting practiced by the English, we wish rather to go to war our own way, and if we are furnished with arms and ammunition, the King of England may depend upon our acting with the utmost vigilance against the Spaniards.<sup>97</sup>

Countless examples abound to suggest the Miskitu did not appreciate British 'knowledge' in the same way the British did, and often subverted the authority such wisdom was supposed to command.

For the sake of their military prowess, 200 Miskitu were brought to Jamaica in 1725 and again in 1738 to help the whites capture runaway African slaves, or maroons. After the first venture, the people of Jamaica invited the Miskitu to live there, "assigning them lands and let them enjoy rights of Englishmen." The Miskitu declined, however, according to Uring because they did not "want to leave their own country." During the campaign, the Miskitu were formed into companies under their own officers and paid 40 shillings a month plus shoes and other articles. They had "some White Men for their Guides," but the whites proved unsatisfactory to the Miskitu. After one man shot a peccary, the Miskitus became upset, for "that was not the Way to surprise the Negroes," and if the inept whites wanted meat the Miskitus would do so with their bows and arrows.<sup>98</sup>

In the chronicle of William Jackson's voyages, we learn that sailors relied on Miskitu hospitality and medical skills. After plundering Trujillo in 1643, Jackson's fleet arrived at Cape Gracias:

ye 8 day of September; &, being come to anchor, ye Indians in their Canoas came aboard of our Vice-Admirall, to visitt their ould ffreinds, & divers of them speake & understand our Language, by reason of ye great correspondence they held with ye islanders of Providence . . . Here we made but small stay, in regard of our men's sicke and weake Estate, & therefore hired some of ye Indians to goe along with us to ye Musquitos, which are Certaine little Islands, 14 leagues from ye Cape, & there to strike Turtils for ye refreshing & recovery of our men. . . . From whence departing wee came to ankor before ye Muskitos . . . where wee landed our sick men, & sett upp little Hutts or Cabines for them to lye in. The meantime our Indians were not idle, but dayly struck more or less Turtil, which was dressed & given to our men; by ye nutrimente whereof & ye Healthfulness of ye place, it pleased God that many of them recovered in short space. . . . [Upon leaving] we dismissed our Indians with a satisfactory reward in requital of their paines.<sup>99</sup>

God likely had less to do with the recovery of the sick men than Europeans believed. M. W. found that Miskitu sukias considered green turtle "their best physick" and regularly prescribed it for their patients, which they do in addition to singing "some strange unintelligible tunes or songs over the diseased." Miskitu sukias almost certainly treated Jackson's men, since the journal's author later mentions leaving the Indians "to their superstitious Rites & Ceremonies."<sup>100</sup>

Characteristics of present-day Miskitu ethnocentrism can be viewed in their 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century relations with Europeans. It has been my experience and that of many other writers, both contemporaries and later scholars, that the Miskitu tend to see the world through the prism of their own identity. The Miskitu tend to think of themselves as above all ethnic groups that presently or have ever inhabited the Mosquitia, including Anglos in many cases. Contrary to an image of the Miskitu that depicts them as a colonized people, or a people who have wilted under the influence of successive '-isms' such as colonialism, capitalism, Moravian evangelism, and racism, I find that early contact with Europeans actually cultivated

an exaggerated sense of pride in *miskitu laka*, or Miskitu ways. It is both an intended complement and poignant commentary to note that the Miskitu are among the most ethnocentric people I have ever met.

\* \* \*

Within the first 150 years of Miskitu-European contact, the die shaping future Mosquitia developments had been cast. Despite unsuccessful efforts to secure lasting contacts with the Indians of Taguzgalpa, the Spanish never wavered in their belief that by right the land and its people belonged to the King of Spain. Ironically, the Miskitu Indians, the eventual scourge of Spain's dominion in eastern Central America, went unrecognized as an indigenous group by Spanish writers until the early 1700s. Being more removed from Spanish control and much less populous or troublesome than the Twahka Indians, the Spaniards never realized that the Mayangna term *guaian* denoted the Miskitu. Instead, Hispanic authors for several centuries found solace in describing the Miskitu as zambos who were easily manipulated by Anglo pirates. Nicaraguan historians reproduced these passionate writings and in so doing failed to consider that the Miskitu likely assimilated several Spanish shipwreck victims before the arrival of Africans.

In contrast to Spanish encounters, Anglo buccaneers experienced and imagined the Mosquitia's physical and human landscape as consummate. Northern Europeans established stalwart relationships based on mutual interest, design, and interpersonal trust. The records of the PIC show that the settlers treated the 'Indians of the Cape'—for they never use the word Miskitu—with special veneration and courtesy, something the Miskitu would interpret as a fraternal kinship with foreign 'brothers.' The Miskitu, who received weapons and manufactured goods, viewed their Anglo relations as beneficial and began to see themselves as coequals with Anglo-interlopers. The formation of a Miskitu ethnicity began with genuine, if periodic, acquiescence on the part of English seamen who came to depend on

Miskitu maritime skills and regional knowledge. Although abandoning Providence Island in 1641, Englishmen remained in the western Caribbean just as the Mosquitia took root as a fecund landscape in the English imagination.

### Notes to Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> Seafarers from Northern Europe fall into two groups: privateers/corsairs and pirates/buccaneers. The former group was often sponsored by governments, while the latter operated outside of official jurisdiction. By the 1570s, buccaneers became the dominant element in the Caribbean; see David Watts, *The West Indies. Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Kenneth R. Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean. Trade and Plunder, 1530-1630* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Kenneth R. Andrews, "The English in the Caribbean, 1560-1620," in *The Westward Enterprise. English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650*, ed. K. N. Andrews, N. P. Canny, and P. E. H. Hair (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 103-123.

<sup>2</sup> Although the standard interpretation argues the canoe was a Mayan trading vessel, Bill Davidson has argued that the inhabitants of the Bay Islands were likely Pech, see William V. Davidson, "Geographical Perspectives on Spanish-Pech (Paya) Indian Relationships, Northeastern Honduras, Sixteenth Century," in *Columbian Consequences*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 205-212; see also William V. Davidson, "Geografía de los indígenas toles (jicaques) de Honduras en el siglo XVIII," *Mesoamérica* 6, no. 9 (1985): 58-90.

<sup>3</sup> Fernando Colón, *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by his son, Ferdinand*, trans. Benjamin Keen (1959; reprint, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 234. Fernando was barely 13 years old when he accompanied his father and uncle, Bartholomé, on this voyage and he never again returned to the Indies. Since the published account from which this book was translated appeared after his death in 1539, debate about the chronicle's authorship continues.

<sup>4</sup> Carl O. Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 123; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Journals and Other Documents on the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1963), 373, 407. The Rio de la Posesión likely corresponds with Black River, or the Rio Tinto.



<sup>5</sup> Eduard Conzemius, "Los Indios Payas de Honduras," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 19 (1927): 245-302; Karl M. Helbig, *Die Landschaften von Nordost-Honduras* (Hamburg: Hermann Haack, 1959); Linda Newson, *The Cost of Conquest: Indian Decline in Honduras Under Spanish Rule* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); Potthast, *Mosquito-Küste*; Ramón D. Rivas, *Pueblos Indígenas y Garífuna de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymura, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Colón, *Admiral Columbus*, 234, 235.

<sup>7</sup> William Davidson would agree with this interpretation. He locates the ethnic boundary at the Rio Plátano or Patuca, see *The Historical Geography of the Bay Islands, Honduras* (Birmingham: Southern University Press, 1974), 26; Davidson, "Geographical Perspectives on Spanish-Pech (Paya) Indian Relationships," 208.

<sup>8</sup> Colón, *Admiral Columbus*, 236.

<sup>9</sup> The caravels continued to sail south until the Rio de Desastres, so named when a long boat sent ashore to gather wood and water capsized and the men drowned. From here the ships visited the Islas Limonares—Corn Islands or the Pearl Cays—and then Monkey Point and finally Cariay, near present-day Rio Matina in Costa Rica; Sauer, *Spanish Main*, 125; see also Jaime Incer B., *Nicaragua: Viajes, Rutas y Encuentros (1502-1838)* (San José, Costa Rica: Asociación Libro Libre, 1993), 27-35.

<sup>10</sup> Eduardo Perez-Valle, *El Desaguadero de la Mar Dulce* (Managua: Banco de América, 1977), 31-35. The Spanish believed that gold was transported to Tenochitlán in pre-Hispanic times along the Río San Juan. This belief originated from two sources: (a) a royal cédula dated 1535 ordering the exploration of the San Juan, and (b) a single sentence attributed to the chronicler Torquemada that refers to a town at the mouth of the San Juan where "Indians . . . speak a Mexican dialect not so corrupt as that of the Pipil" (referring to the Nahuatl-speaking Indians of western Nicaragua). As far as I know, it was the archeologist Lothrop who first speculated that the mouth of the San Juan may have been an "Aztec trading post;" Samuel K. Lothrop, *Pottery of Costa Rica and Nicaragua*, 2 vols. (New York: Heye Foundation, 1926), I: 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Celia Guillén de Herrera, *Segovia* (Telpaneca, Nicaragua: Editorial Hospicio, 1945), 17-31.

<sup>12</sup> Alonso Calero, "Relación del Viaje del Capitán Alonso Calero, Sobre el Descubrimiento del Desaguadero," CRNP, 728-740; David R. Radell, "Exploration and Commerce on Lake Nicaragua and the Río San Juan, 1524-1800," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 12, no. 1 (1970): 107-125; Perez-Valle, *El Desaguadero*, 143.

<sup>13</sup> Newson falls victim to this geographic confusion by claiming Machuco and Calero reached the Wangki River, an extremely unlikely possibility. This could explain her translation of Taguzgalpa as 'town of gold;' Newson, *Indian Survival*, 64, 69, 78. The first significant gold and silver deposits were not discovered in the Nicaraguan highlands until the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The currently important mining areas of northeastern Nicaraguan were not discovered until the 1880s.

<sup>14</sup> José Reina Valenzuela, *Comayagua Antañona, 1537-1821* (Tegucigalpa: Academia Hondureña de Geografía e Historia, 1943), 41; see also Jesús M. García Añoveros, "Presencia Franciscana en la Taguzgalpa y la Tologalpa (la Mosquitia)," *Mesoamérica* 15 (1988), 54; Ricardo Beltrán y Rópide, *La Mosquitia: notas documentadas para la historia territorial de este parte de Centroamérica* (Madrid, 1910).

<sup>15</sup> In the absence of viable surplus products or minerals, many Pacific coast Nicaraguan Indians were shipped off to Peru or died of disease by 1560. Radell estimates that a half million, or over one-third of the entire indigenous population of Nicaragua, died in the first half century of Spanish colonization, one of the most rapid depopulations in Spanish America; David R. Radell, "The Indian Slave Trade and Population of Nicaragua during the Sixteenth Century," in *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, ed. William M. Denevan (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976): 67-76.

<sup>16</sup> On the frontier, where wealth was scarce, *encomenderos*, or land grantees, notoriously mistreated the Matagalpan Indians, and many fled into the nearby mountains or rebelled outright. As early as 1545, the Matagalpas killed 14 Spaniards at the newly founded city of Segovia; Guillén de Herrera, *Segovia*, 31, 39, 53, 54; Germán Romero V., *Las Estructuras Sociales de Nicaragua en el Siglo XVIII* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1988), 39-41.

<sup>17</sup> Newson, *Indian Survival*, 167.

<sup>18</sup> Francisco de Mora y Pacheco, "Relación Geográfica del Partido de Chontales, 8 July 1743," *Wani* 7 (1990), 47.

<sup>19</sup> Felix Canales Salazar, *Derechos Territoriales de la República de Honduras sobre Honduras Británica o Belice, Islas de Cisne y Costas de los Indios Mosquitos* (Mexico City, 1946); Beltrán y Rópide, *La Mosquitia*.

<sup>20</sup> Francisco Vázquez, *Crónica de la Provincia del Santísimo nombre de Jesus de Guatemala*, 4 vols. (1714; reprint, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1944), 4: 77-206; Francisco de Paula García Paláez, *Memorias para la Historia del Antiguo Reino de Guatemala*, 3 vols. (1707; reprint, Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1968), I: 251-253; William V. Davidson and Cruz S. Fernando, "Delimitación de la Región Habitada por Los Sumos Taguacas de

Honduras 1600-1990,” *Yaxkin* 11 (1988): 123-136; Newson, *Cost of Conquest*, 268-270.

<sup>21</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 79. This list was copied and modified by Friar José Ximénez in 1748: “Lencas, Tahuas, Alhuatuynas, Xicaquez, Mexicanos, Payas, Jaras, Taupanés, Taos, Fantasmas, Gualas, Alaucas, Guanaes, Limucas, Aguagualcas, Yguyales, Cuges, Bocayes, Tomayes, Bucataguacas, Quicamas, Panamacas, Yziles, Guayaes, Mostucas, Barucas, Apazinas, Nanaycas and many others;” Newson, *Indian Survival*, 33-34.

<sup>22</sup> Mora y Pacheco, “Relación Geográfica,” 44.

<sup>23</sup> On the use of the term ‘Jicaques’ in reference to the Honduran Tol see Davidson, “Geografía de los indígenas toles (jicaques) de Honduras en el siglo XVIII,” 58-90.

<sup>24</sup> Newson, *Indian Survival*, 205.

<sup>25</sup> Pedro de la Concepción, Relación del viaje en el Año 1699, 13 Jan. 1699, AGI Guatemala 297, 50-61. I thank Bill Davidson for bringing this document to my attention and for providing me with a photocopy. The document has been transcribed (with some notable errors) and published as “Relación del viaje de fr. Pedro de la Concepción por la Taguzgalpa y de las costumbres y creencias de los indios infieles que allí habitan. Año de 1699,” in *Documentos Coloniales de Honduras*, ed. Héctor M. Leyva (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Publicaciones Obispado de Choluca, 1991): 211-218.

<sup>26</sup> See for example the following maps or text references: United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Map of Nicaragua, Puerto Cabezas 1:50,000, 1934, RG 127, USNA; M. W. “Mosquito Indian,” 286. Richard Owen, “Description of the Musquito Coast,” *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* (1841), 78; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 128, 130; Salvatierra, *Contribución*, 464; (untitled map), no date, Servicio Histórico Militar, X111-B-3, Madrid (copy, CIDCA, Managua); Incer B., *Nicaragua*, 290, 292; and especially the numerous map reprints in Eduardo Pérez-Valle, *Un Laudo con dos Incógnitas: Hara y la Isla de San Pío* (Managua: Talleres de Arte Gráficas, 1961).

<sup>27</sup> When asked about the meaning of the word ‘wangki,’ the Miskitu will inevitably say that it simply refers to the river or the Wangki Miskitu people. Although its root remains vague, one person told me that ‘wangki’ meant a small and rare flowering plant. It seems certain that the word is of Mayangna origin.

<sup>28</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 167-177. Today, in Nicaragua, the Rio Wani refers to a tributary of the Prinzapolka river near Siuna, which could not be the same river referred to here. Meanwhile, Columbus’ chronicler Porrás claimed the Indians along the coast at Cariay called low grade gold “guani;” Tomás Borge, “Why Wani?,” *Wani* 1 (1984): 3-10.

<sup>29</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 127.

<sup>30</sup> This trip also ended in a shipwreck; Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 140, 152.

<sup>31</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 128.

<sup>32</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 165, 166. The few interpretations of Vázquez follow this same reasoning, but suggest that the Spanish shipwreck may have occurred without Martínez; García P., *Memorias*, 252; García A., "Presencia Franciscana," 60; Don Domingo Juarros, *A Statistical and Commercial History of the Kingdom of Guatemala, in Spanish America*, trans. John Baily (London, 1823), 366.

<sup>33</sup> From the translation of de Lussan's French account it would appear that he believed that the Indians were already 'half-breeds' when the ship of padres wrecked; *Raveneau de Lussan*, 285.

<sup>34</sup> M. W., "The Mosqueto Indian," 289, 286.

<sup>35</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 157-165.

<sup>36</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 166; García A., "Presencia Franciscana," 60.

<sup>37</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 4: 167-177. Different accounts in the text make it difficult to know where the Spanish were killed, or to better understand just where the guabas lived. It seems probable that the priests were killed away from the site where they were found because one account places their gravesite near the Rio Patuca, where the Pech were originally settled. The fact that the priests' bodies were "buried" also suggests they were relocated by the Pech. However, as stated above, the Rio Guani is almost certainly the Rio Wangki.

<sup>38</sup> John Esquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, ed. William Swann Stallybrass (1684 English edition; reprint, London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1951), 234; William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*, trans. Albert Gray (1729 English edition; reprint, London: The Argonaut Press, 1927), 16; Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera, Barbados, S. Christopher and Jamaica*, 2 vols. (London: 1707), I: 78; Cockburn, *Journey Overland*, 241; see also Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 14. On the life of Dampier see J. H. Bennett, "William Dampier. Buccaneer and Planter," *History Today* 14 (1964): 469-477.

<sup>39</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 230. According to Brautigam-Ber, Albert came to the Caribbean with The Dutch West Indies Company in 1621. He explored up the Rio Escondido, a river he noted that the French already called *Cachée*. By 1633, the two Blauveldts were in the active employ of the Providence Island Company. The last we know of him, or possibly William, comes from a 1663 manuscript which refers to a "Captain Blewfields, resident of Cape Gracias a Dios, where he lived amongst the Indians;" Donovan Brautigam-Ber, "Abraham Blauveldt, Fundador de Bluefields," *Nicaráuac* 8 (1982): 39, 40, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Vincent T. Harlow, ed., "The Voyages of Captain William Jackson (1642-1645)," *Camden Miscellany* XIII (1923), 26. The diary of William Jackson's voyages was almost certainly written by the Providence seaman Samuel Axe.

<sup>41</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 231-232; see also Dampier, *New Voyage*, 31, 32, 66.

<sup>42</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 16

<sup>43</sup> Nathaniel Butler, "A Diary, from February 10th 1639 of My Personal Employments," (B. L. Sloane MS 758, photocopy, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 1640).

<sup>44</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 34; see also James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (1816; reprint, New York: W. W. Norton, 1950), 91-95, 105, 164; M. W. considered the manatee the "best flesh in the world . . . but who are not suffer'd to increase, thro' the greediness of the Indian, who spares no pains when he hath a prospect of getting any;" M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 290.

<sup>45</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 234.

<sup>46</sup> Raveneau de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan. Buccaneer of the Spanish Main and Early French Filibuster of the Pacific*, trans. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur (Cleveland: The Arthur C. Clark Company, 1930), 286.

<sup>47</sup> Harlow, "Voyages of Captain William Jackson," 31. The Caribbean monk seal was hunted into extinction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>48</sup> F. Bruce Lamb, *Mahogany of Tropical America. Its Ecology and Management* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966), 12.

<sup>49</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 233.

<sup>50</sup> Although African slaves eventually arrived in Providence in record numbers, many puritan settlers protested slavery on the assumption that "Christians may not lawfully keep such persons in a state of servitude during their strangeness from Christianity," but investors considered these opinions "groundless;" PIC correspondence cited in Anon., "A Forgotten Puritan Colony," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 165 (1899), 875; see also Alan Burns, *History of the British West Indies* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954), 205.

<sup>51</sup> Newton, *Colonising Activities*, 150, 258, 303. Following an unsuccessful Spanish attack in 1640, settlers removed some slaves to St. Kitts and Bermuda; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641. The Other Puritan Colony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 172, 338.

<sup>52</sup> Newton, *Colonising Activities*, 258; Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 168-172.

- <sup>53</sup> Providence Island also witnessed the first slave rebellion in any English colony. The 1638 effort was put down with the help of loyal slaves who found several mountain retreats, Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 170.
- <sup>54</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 169. In a letter of personal communication dated Nov. 26, 1995, Professor Kupperman clarified that from her readings she had “hypothesized” that the Dutch were acquiring slaves at Cape Gracias, she pointed out that this precise interpretation was not recoverable from the Company’s records.
- <sup>55</sup> John Holm speculates that settlers opposed to slavery from the beginning may have aided the escape of Africans prior or during the Spanish attack; “Creole English,” 177.
- <sup>56</sup> Helbig, *Landschaften von Nordost-Honduras*, 178-179; Helms, *Asang*, 16.
- <sup>57</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 234, 238.
- <sup>58</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 33, 84-86, 88, 104, 106, 109, 199; Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 7; William Sorsby, “Una Compañía Puritana en Mosquitia” *Nicaráuac* 8 (1982), 72.
- <sup>59</sup> Sorsby, “Una Compañía Puritana,” 71.
- <sup>60</sup> Newton, *Colonising Activities*, 143, 144; Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 8.
- <sup>61</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 166.
- <sup>62</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 154. The historical record is full of examples showing that women came to demand cloth, scarves, and beads from their male companions.
- <sup>63</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 166-170.
- <sup>64</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 52.
- <sup>65</sup> PIC to Governor, 1632, cited in Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 166. By 1638, however, some Indian women had visited the island; Sorsby, “Compañía Puritana,” 71.
- <sup>66</sup> Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, 76, 77, 78.
- <sup>67</sup> Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, 76-77. PIC documents remain silent on the entire matter; Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 97.
- <sup>68</sup> PIC correspondence cited in Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 95.
- <sup>69</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 87. According to Newton, the trading depot was located eight to ten miles off the coast because Captain Camock did not trust the Indians; *Colonising Activities*, 165.

<sup>70</sup> PIC communication cited in Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 102, 95.

<sup>71</sup> PIC to Camock, July 1633, cited in Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 97.

<sup>72</sup> Sorsby, "Compañia Puritana," 72.

<sup>73</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 106. Sloane spoke with a former Cape resident named Gaugh who "spoke of a Gum or Balsam, called China-Balsam, growing in the aforesaid *Mosquitos* Country, which is procured by applying fire to one side of the Tree, and gashing the other, at which gashes a black Balsam sweats out, very proper for Wounds;" *A Voyage to the Islands*, 79. On gums in eastern Nicaragua see Offen, "Historical Geography of Chicle and Tunu," 57-74.

<sup>74</sup> If such books were indeed kept, they are now lost; Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 100. Newton believes the turn toward systemic note-taking was part of the Company's efforts to stem private trade. Sailors bringing back parrots and monkeys became such a problem that they began to charge 10 shillings for each animal, *Colonising Activities*, 166.

<sup>75</sup> The pamphlet states that "all the relations in this booke have biene made and are, Confirmed by severall well knowne men of truth . . . who have lived there many years some Six some Eight some Twelve years some more some less, which said Inhabitants have not only made this report, but doe Evidence the truth by their personal returning with the last fleet in the year 1644, judging it the most comfortable Place that ever they lived in;" *Certaine Inducements to Well Minded People* ([London]: University Microfilms International, 1645?), 6, 7, 8-9, 10. The PIC held their last meeting in 1650, so the pamphlet was published between 1644 and 1650; Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, 211.

<sup>76</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 109. If the settlers did plant tobacco or cotton on the mainland, saplings were likely brought from other Caribbean colonies. Tobacco, which is planted by the Miskitu of the Rio Wangki today, is not mentioned by the early chroniclers of the Mosquitia. Since the Miskitu word for tobacco is *twaku*, it is possible that the Miskitu first acquired it from Providence settlers. On the other hand, the Miskitu could have acquired tobacco from the Twahka Indians of the Rio Patuca, perhaps associating the plant's name with the Indians from which they acquired it. The Twahka call tobacco *aka*; cf. Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 92.

<sup>77</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 106; Sorsby, "Compañia Puritana," 72.

<sup>78</sup> Antonio Porta Costas, "Relación del Reconocimiento Geométrico y Político de la Costa de Mosquitos desde el Establecimiento de Cabo Gracias a Dios hasta El Blewfields," *Wani* 7 (1990), 53.

<sup>79</sup> Several observers mention vanilla throughout eastern Nicaragua, but in most cases did not refer to the real thing, *Vanilla planifolia*, but rather *V. ensifolia* or *V. endorata*. On vanilla in Nicaragua see Arthur G. Kevordian, "Informe Anual del Servicio Técnico Agrícola de Nicaragua," in *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura y Trabajo* (Managua: 1944), 48; José M. Zelaya, "Agriculture in Nicaragua," (Washington, D. C.: Pan American Union, 1945), 14, 31; Robert C. Moncure, "Agricultural Collaboration in Nicaragua," *Agriculture in the Americas* 6 (1946): 10-11, 14; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 99-100; John Collinson, "Explorations in Central America," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 12, no. 1 (1868), 31.

<sup>80</sup> M. W. "Mosquito Indian," 296. Throughout Uring's narrative, he also refers to the Rio Kruta as 'Black River,' *Voyages and Travels*, 122. The root of the Miskitu word *kruta* comes from, *kru*, the *guayaba del llano* (wild guava), a common bush found throughout the Mosquitia pine savanna.

<sup>81</sup> Sloane, *Voyage to the Islands*, I: 78; M. W. "Mosquito Indian," 293; Fellechner et al., *Bericht*, 68, 73, 100, 191, 192. Evidence suggesting that vanilla was not procured south of Bluefields comes from Providence seaman Daniel Elfryth who noted that the coast south from Cape Gracias was poorly known by PIC mariners; Pargellis and Lapham, "Daniell Ellffryth's Guide," 316; see also Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 94.

<sup>82</sup> John Humphrey, Governor of the New England colony, was even appointed Governor of the new Cape Gracias settlement, although things never got that far. In 1638, investors issued a settlement patent to the Virginia planter William Clairborne for the islands of Roatán and Guanaja, which Company members felt came under their Charter. Although Clairborne never emigrated, he did send colonists and many remained until the Spanish retook the islands temporarily in 1643; Kupperman *Providence Island*, 212, 213, 280; see also Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, 210.

<sup>83</sup> Butler, "Diary," 50-51, 181; see also Cyril Hamshere, *The British in the Caribbean* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 45-51.

<sup>84</sup> This point is among Kupperman's central thesis, see Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 14-18, 199, 212, 280, 294, 323.

<sup>85</sup> *Certaine Inducements*, 2, 8-9, 10. After one 19<sup>th</sup> century author consulted the PIC records, he concluded that investors' conviction in tropical fertility demonstrated they suffered from a great want of thought, albeit they "had not yet learned how impossible it is for white men to do field-labour in the tropics;" Anon., "Forgotten Puritan Colony," 873.

<sup>86</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 81.



- <sup>87</sup> Kupperman *Providence Island*, 212; Newton, *Colonising Activities*, 275.
- <sup>88</sup> Sorsby, "Compañia Puritana," 72.
- <sup>89</sup> M. W., "Mosqueto Indian," 285-286.
- <sup>90</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 16, 17.
- <sup>91</sup> de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 286-287.
- <sup>92</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 15-16; see also James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (1816; reprint, New York: W. W. Norton, 1950), 91-95, 105, 164.
- <sup>93</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 161.
- <sup>94</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 67.
- <sup>95</sup> M. W., "Mosqueto Indian," 288, 289; Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, 76.
- <sup>96</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 16.
- <sup>97</sup> Proceedings at a General Congress held at Tebuppy the 1st Oct. 1780 by Colvill Cairns and James Thomson, by order of General Stephen Kemble and Chiefs of the two Tribes of the Mosquito Indians, Tebuppy, 1 Oct. 1780, PRO, CO 137/79: 164-167.
- <sup>98</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 160. It appears the Miskitu had some trouble in the mountains and were more effective the second time than the first. Many were killed or "joined the enemy;" Carey Robinson, *The Fighting Maroons of Jamaica* (Kingston: William Collins, 1969), 40; see also Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 87, and Chapter 5.
- <sup>99</sup> Harlow, "Voyages of Captain William Jackson," 25-26.
- <sup>100</sup> M. W., "Mosqueto Indian," 292; Harlow, "Voyages of Captain William Jackson," 26. It seems the pirates quickly appropriated this Indian knowledge. The 1645 Providence pamphlet promoted the health benefits of green turtle meat: "out of a hidden quality, is very medicinall for the cure of the Diseases of the Droopsey and Fluxes [by] gently purgeth their bodies thoroughly, and worketh a perfect cure." The authors further note that turtles yield a good store of "Oyle, which is so inoffensive, that halfe a pint may be drunke at a draught," *Certaine Inducements*, 5-6.

## Chapter Four

### Describing 'the Miskitu' People

The unraveling of mis-conceptions is almost as important as the creation of new conceptions, it would seem, and this is nowhere more true than in the realm of race relations. So before one can seriously reconstruct Black African-Native America contacts one must clear away a lot of mistakes, mistakes arising out of the very nature of discourse in a racist-colonial setting as well as mistakes arising from the assumption that the current meanings assigned to racial terms have an equal validity for the past.

— Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans*, 2.

A close analysis of contextualized expressions of Sambo and Tawira identity variance within the historical emergence of a Miskitu ethnicity necessitates that we must remain extremely cognizant of, and distinguish between, descriptive language and its historical reproduction. Within primary documents in English and Spanish, I attended to contextual and geographic variations in characterizing nouns and qualifying adjectives such as Indian, *indio*, mulatto, *mulato*, negroe, *negro*, Mosquito, *mosco*, Mosquito-men, Sambo, and *zambo*, to say nothing of racial terminology such as bushy-haired, straight-haired, copper-colored, black, and jet-black. While this was often difficult, sifting through much of the secondary literature proved equally problematic. While discursive constructions are rather easy to delineate, many writers have often failed to transmit the original terms, further confusing my efforts to trace distinctions at the same time it makes my case more difficult to accept by those inculcated by convention. That is, authors citing a

reference naming the *zambos mosquitos* of Sandy Bay, for example, might simply employ the modern lexicon such as Miskito or Miskitu in his or her text, effectively erasing any sign of the original use and its geographic context. My attempts to discuss Sambo-Tawira Miskitu differences in the past, be they geographic, political, ethnic or otherwise, must first clarify the context and meaning of contemporaneous ascriptors.

In the last chapter I argued that a few Spanish authors referred to Miskitu-speaking Indians they termed *guaba* or *guaian*, names which have their root in a Miskitu place-name and the Mayangna language respectively, no later than the 1620s. Readers convinced by my argument may be surprised to learn that virtually all authors publishing before 1970, and an overwhelming majority of authors writing since then, have considered the Miskitu to be a ‘post-contact’ or historic people, typically a cross between Africans and a coastal Mayangna group. More recent authors have implicitly accepted this construction, and have filtered the entire historical record through the belief that Miskitu people did not exist before 1500. This historiography is significant because it has shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> century imaginations of Nicaraguan statesmen and in turn greatly affected the lives of all Nicaraguan Costeños. This factual mis-conception has also generated a historical bias which has embellished the transformative powers of the British while simultaneously obscuring internal Miskitu differentiation during the colonial period.

To begin my study’s illustration of these points I divide this chapter in two parts. In the first part I review the secondary literature on Miskitu origins and how scholars have addressed the problem of varied historical descriptors. I locate the current study apart from previous efforts by arguing that Anglo-produced and reproduced labels reflect—but do not necessarily describe—self-referential categories held by the Miskitu, not the other way around. In the second section, I trace the possible origin of the term ‘mosquito’ and argue that, at first, northern Europeans only applied this term to refer those Miskitu of mixed African-Indian origins, or those living below the political leadership of ‘mixed race’ Miskitu. The

term was then retroactively applied to describe the ‘native’ Indians speaking the same language. Historical application of the ‘mosquito’ label combined with wider Spanish and English Caribbean usage of *zambo* and *sambo* to specifically designate the Miskitu-speaking Indians who mixed with Africans. I also argue that a revealing continuity and order structures all English language documents up to the 1840s, allowing us to effectively delineate two Miskitu groups throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. Only after this continuity is decoded and placed in a geographic context can historical texts be read as an illustration of Sambo and Tawira differentiation.

### **Conceptualizing the Miskitu in the Secondary Literature**

In the absence of revealing archaeological research and any apparent historical documentation, many authors have considered the Miskitu a post-contact people, that is a people who emerged after Africans shipwrecked on the Mosquitia’s shores and mixed with native Sumu (Mayangna) people. The influential works by Eduard Conzemius describe the Miskitu as “a hybrid colony” derived from the crossing of Africans with a Sumu group he called the Bawihka.<sup>1</sup> Troy Floyd’s important documentation of the Anglo-Spanish colonial struggle refers to the Miskitu as “transformed Sumus,” and therefore describes ‘unmixed Miskitu’ as ‘*caribes*,’ or Sumu Indians. Robert Naylor follows this same line of reasoning. Several influential publications by Mary Helms in the 1970s argue that the Miskitu are a racially mixed Indian and Afro-American ‘colonial tribe’ that over time became identified more as Indian than African only after Creoles became a significant population group in their own right.<sup>2</sup> Linda Newson’s work distills and summarizes these positions:

As a mixed racial group the Zambo-Mosquito cannot be classified as Indian any more than can mestizos, but there were considerable variations within the group, and those who inhabited the Nicaraguan part of the coast were more “Indian” in race and culture. Nevertheless, the culture of the Zambo-Mosquito in Nicaragua changed so substantially during the eighteenth century as a result of contact with the English that . . . they are not included here among Indian survivors at the end of the colonial period. . . . There are no documentary references to the Mosquito in the early colonial period, and it would appear that they emerged from the mid-seventeenth century onward.<sup>3</sup>

Many Nicaraguan writers, including important Sandinista thinkers, inherited this viewpoint, typically referencing the works of Conzemius, Floyd, or Helms, all of which have been translated into Spanish.<sup>4</sup>

Given that most authors implicitly understand the Miskitu to be a historic people, it follows that they have depreciated an analysis of colonial labels potentially expressing internal-Miskitu differences. If the Miskitu ‘were borne’ from the colonial encounter, most or all difference hinted at in the historical record would appear contrived, or an expression of some artificial categorization imposed by European colonizers. For the purposes of this discussion, I place scholarly viewpoints on the variation of Miskitu labels into three groups. The first group represents a heterogeneous perspective but authors typically assume that any variability among terms such as *sambo*, *zambo*, *mulatto*, *mulato*, *indio* and Indian were much more important to the naming party than to the Miskitu themselves. Since many authors in this group focus their questions on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they usually consider (a) all the Miskitu to be ‘racially’ mixed, (b) do not mention colonial labels at all, and/or (c) they collapse varying descriptors into the unproblematic ethnic category Miskitu, as if this term held the same meaning for all Miskitu language speakers in all historical periods.<sup>5</sup>

A second, and a more historical viewpoint, often relying heavily on Spanish language documents, acknowledges some type of distinction among the *zambos mosquitos* and the *indios mosquitos*. Still, authors following this arrangement tend

to reproduce uncritically the same partisan dispositions held by the original writers: the *indios mosquitos* were good (pro-Spanish), and the *zambos mosquitos* were bad (pro-British). Nicaraguan historian Sofonías Salvatierra, for example, made a significant distinction between the *indios mosquitos* and the *zambos mosquitos*. He emphasized the English role in orchestrating the (*zambo*) Miskitu Kingdom, what he called “*La Dinastía Mulata*,” and typically contrasted the ‘bad’ *zambos mosquitos* with the “*mosquito pacifistas*,” or *indios mosquitos*.

In this way, the English created a distinct politics between the *indios puros*, whom they could not fully dominate, and the negros and mestizos, sambos and mulattos, whom they controlled completely.<sup>6</sup>

The final group of scholars acknowledge some type of consequential political disunity among Sambo and Tawira Miskitu leadership, but authors do not elaborate this discord in terms of self-referential identity perceptions, and assume that any political or ethnic differentiation disappears by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Authors in this camp tend to accept that British commissions associated with the Miskitu Kingdom created Miskitu differences, rather than reflected an internal and pre-existing Sambo-Tawira Miskitu differentiation. Ted Gordon, for example, suggests that “there is little concrete evidence that the Miskitu differentiated among themselves on racial grounds, [but] it does seem that the terms the British used named political divisions the Miskitu recognized.” Olien suggests that varied racial lexicon reflected nothing more than “stereotyped” ethnic differences. These authors would therefore accept Sorsby’s representative statement that while there may have been political divisions among the Miskitu, the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu were “culturally and linguistically one.”<sup>7</sup> It would seem, however, that authors subscribing to this perspective assume that 18<sup>th</sup> century terminology such as sambo or *zambo* would have held the same type of racial and social significance among the 18<sup>th</sup> century Miskitu as it does today. The general focus of this group is on competitive political differences among Miskitu leaders that emerged during the British Superintendency.

My own views are related to but quite distinct from the latter group. While the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu may have shared a common language and culture, this does not preclude the possibility that they maintained self-referential and distinguishing identity categories which divided them in other ways. While it is clear that British commissions augmented Miskitu divisions, I will show that the ensuing geographic and political jurisdictions pre-existed such commissions, and indeed required the British to commission other leaders besides the king against their own wishes. Moreover, the fact that difference was expressed primarily in political contexts, and within colonial structures or terms, simply reflects the primary preoccupation of the of available sources. While the bi-polar and colonial context clearly affected Sambo-Tawira identity variance, to say that it created this variance would be misleading at best and wrong at worst.

It is my assertion that ‘race,’ or perceived racial differences especially in 20<sup>th</sup> century terms, does not necessarily provide the most noteworthy factor in establishing self-referential Sambo-Tawira identity variance. Indeed, there is significant evidence that many ‘Sambo’ Miskitu were ‘pure Indians’ and that many Tawira Miskitu were of mixed race. It is also certain that both groups socialized the off-spring of European-Miskitu unions. Simply put, signs of self-referential Sambo-Tawira identity variance available in the historical record do not reveal that race was a significant influence in Sambo-Tawira self-distinction. However, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it appears that those of mixed race (Wangki and coastal Miskitu) looked down upon inland Tawira Miskitu because they saw them as more rustic and backward. While identity variance between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu likely originated with the integration of African peoples among select and geographically localized families around 1641, the 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of ‘race’ that we have inherited would probably hold little meaning for the Miskitu of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, since the Miskitu probably numbered around 1,000 – 2,000 people in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Sambo and Tawira Miskitu people likely remained distantly connected through kin relations well after Africans became

a part of the larger Miskitu society. Certainly, even as the self-referential divisions took on significant internal meaning among the Miskitu, many Miskitu leaders remained related across Sambo-Tawira lines.

Sambo and Tawira identity differences during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries appear most closely related to shifting and bi-polar Anglo-Spanish political strategies, the geography of settlement, disparate experiences with Christian evangelism, unequal acceptance of British settlers and terms of mutual coexistence, traditional cross-family rivalries, relationships to neighboring Indians, and subsistence ecologies. Although exact answers are few, this study should be read as a meditation on what difference could mean in the contexts described. Still, I will depart from previous scholarship by arguing that some form of significant, consistent, and self-referential Sambo-Tawira identity variance substantially underscores all aspects of the Mosquitia's historical record and socio-political processes during the colonial period. However, I will also argue that at certain historical conjunctures the Miskitu unified across Sambo-Tawira lines in ways that generated or reassured a common and maturing sense of Miskitu ethnic identity. Expressions of Sambo-Tawira identity variance and Miskitu ethnic unity were highly contextual, as would be self-ascribing Miskitu identity markers to this day. Before discussing the nature or circumstances of these contexts, I must establish the ways in which the historical record conveyed variation.

### **Expressing Variation in the Historical Record**

The Spanish and English authors of the historical record conveyed differences among the Miskitu through racialized terminology such as mulattos and native Indians. The term 'Miskitu,' or any of its other spellings, as a descriptor for the Miskitu people does not appear in the historical record until the 1670s. I will show in this section that the Miskitu label was first used to describe only the offspring of African-Indian unions, then to all Miskitu speakers, and, hence, was then



retroactively applied to the ‘native Miskitu Indians.’ We do not know the origin of the name ‘Miskitu,’ but it appears to have been ascribed to the Miskitu by Europeans. Despite historical variations in terms and usage, a significant continuity of English and Spanish conventions allow us to trace, and make sense of, distinguishing markers through the 19<sup>th</sup> and even 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### *Origin and Use of the Descriptor Miskitu*

Although I have argued that the Miskitu-speaking Indians lived near Cape Gracias a Dios no later than 1500, historical sources do not ascribe these people with the Miskitu name until the 1670s. Indeed, the specific origin of the term Miskitu, or its variant spellings, has inspired a great deal of speculation. Some authors suggest that the word derived from the English corruption of the Spanish *mestizo*, or corruptions of the English word musket or the French *mousquet*. Others feel the term derived from the English name for the insect, and indeed, at least three prominent and early 18<sup>th</sup> century observers spelled the people the same as the insect. For example, M. W. referred to the “Mosquito Indians” but used this same spelling to discuss “flies call’d, in other parts of America, Mosquitoes, from this country, where do so much abound.” Uring spelled the coast, the cays, the people, and the insect with the same ‘Muschetos.’ Likewise, Cockburn applies “Muskitoes” to both the insect and the Indians.<sup>8</sup> The majority of documentary textual evidence, however, suggests that Europeans ascribed the Miskitu people with a regional toponym because the toponym appeared in the historical record before the term was applied to the Miskitu. For example, Romero mentions a map by Alonso de Santa Cruz—possibly produced in 1536—showing a “río de Moschitos” just “a little south of Cabo Gracias a Dios.” He also refers to a 1587 map by Juan Martinez showing the “Río de Mostaitos,” also south of Cape Gracias. An unpublished manuscript by William Sorsby refers to a 1540 map showing a “Río de Mosconitos.” Götz von Houwald cites a circa 1600 plate showing a “Río Mosquitos.”<sup>9</sup>

The earliest map I have ever seen with such a toponym is the 1647 map of Sir Robert Dudley, but this map was printed well after Englishmen of the PIC had produced numerous 'Miskitu' place-names in the written record.<sup>10</sup> For example, the 1631 "rutter" of Captain Daniel Elfryth provided detailed instructions for approaching "Cape muskeetoe," and "the musketoes," or the Miskitu Cays located off Sandy Bay. In 1639, Providence governor Nathaniel Butler spells these same cays "the Mosquitoes," while at the same time he referred only to the "Indians of the Cape." The author of William Jackson's 1643 journal refers only to "ye Indians" at the Cape, and "ye Musquitos, which are certaine little Islands."<sup>11</sup> As far as I am aware, the extant primary documents of the PIC never associate the variant Miskitu toponymies with the Indians who inhabited the Cape Gracias region. Detailed studies of the PIC literature referred to in the last chapter do not provide any direct quotes linking the 'Indians of the Cape' with a 'Miskitu' toponym, nevertheless these secondary studies refer to the 'Indians of the Cape' as Miskitu in their discussions.<sup>12</sup>

While it seems clear that the toponym appeared before the 'Indians of the Cape' were ascribed with their current name, any geographer worth his or her salt would have to caution that it is just as likely that the placename, derived from the Indian group, or a corruption of an indigenous word or placename as it would the other way around. Indeed, at least a few people including myself have suggested that the term Miskitu is somehow related to the Miskitu verb 'to fish,' *miskaia*, pronounced mis-ki-ya: the phrases 'I am fishing' or 'he is fishing,' would use the forms *miskuna* and *miskuia*, respectively. It is quite possible the European place names, which were likely formed in the presence of Miskitu fishermen, and the Miskitu verb worked together synergistically to produce the ethnic term which was then ascribed to the Miskitu people.

Whatever the exact case, the term 'Miskitu Indians' does not appear in the written record until some 20 years after the PIC disbanded. Romero states that 1671 marks the first year in which the term "Musketo Indians" surfaces in the Jamaican

literature.<sup>13</sup> The English translation of Esquemelin's 1678 Dutch book, however, does not use the word Miskitu. His relevant chapter is headed "Indians of Gracias a Dios," and he only refers to 'Indians' in the text.<sup>14</sup> The Frenchman Dampier, who visited the Mosquitia between 1679-1681, is the first direct observer that I am familiar with who ascribes the inhabitants of Cape Gracias with the name Miskitu. However, Dampier does this in such a way as to suggest that he is only referring to people of African-Indian unions. Although Dampier refers to 'the Moskitos,' he considers them only to be "a small Nation or Family, and not 100 Men of them in Number, inhabiting on the Main on the North-side, near Cape Gratia Dios." This geographic specificity is confirmed in an accompanying map entitled "Map of the Middle part of America" which shows the "country of the Moskitos" comprising only the area between Cape Gracias and the Caratasca Lagoon. I postulated in the last chapter that this location designates where Africans shipwrecked. Dampier also describes the Moskitos as having a "Copper-colour complexion," but his own writing implies that this 'color coding' signifies a mixed group because he states that pirates always ask about a region's inhabitants: "whether the major part are not Copper-colour'd, as Mulattoes, Mustesoes, or Indians?" I contend that Dampier's usage of the term 'Moskito' refers only to those people of mixed race and cannot numerically or geographically refer to all Miskitu-language speakers of the 1680s.<sup>15</sup>

My interpretation of Dampier is supported by the English translation of Raveneau de Lussan's descriptions from 1688-89. Although de Lussan mentions the 'Indians of Moustique,' he also refers to 'mulattos' residing near Cape Gracias who generally rendered assistance to the buccaneers. Indeed, de Lussan specifically noted that the native Indians moved south in response to mulatto settlement at Cape Gracias (see Chapter 5).<sup>16</sup> It is not until the visits by M. W. and Uring in 1699 and 1711 respectively, that authors employ the descriptor Miskitu to represent both 'mulattos' and 'Indians,' and even then with some hesitation. M. W. distinguishes between "mulattoes" and (Miskitu) "Indians," but uses the label "Mosqueto-men" to refer to both parties. Uring uses the phrase 'native Muscheto people' as well as

'mulattos,' but also uses "Muscheto Indians" to refer to both people in the same way that M. W. employs the label 'Mosquito-men.' This same basic construction became standardized in English usage beginning in the 1740s. In 1744, Robert Hodgson, Sr. mentions 'the native Indians' but instead of using mulatto for mixed African and Indian people, he uses the term 'Sambo' for the first time in English-language texts to describe the Miskitu. However, following M. W., Hodgson refers to both 'Sambo' and 'native' Miskitu groups as 'Mosquitomen,' showing the continuity of the self-selecting suffix.<sup>17</sup> Before excerpting and analyzing Hodgson's critical passage below, it is worthwhile to consider how the English term Sambo relates the Spanish *zambo* in contemporaneous usage.

#### *The Origin and Use of the labels Sambo and Zambo*

The English term 'sambo' appears to have emerged in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century as a reference to a person of African-Indian ancestry, and likely derives from the Spanish *zambo* which has an African and Hispanic origin. Although regional variations in use persisted, the first Spanish usage of *zambo* referred to one of African-Indian ancestry. This practice superceded the use of '*mulato*.' James Lockhart, for example, notes that in Peru before 1560 the term *mulato*, referred to anyone of partial African origins, especially African-Indian origins. He states further that *mulatos* "were not generally thought of as a group distinct from Negroes; a mulatto was a type of negro." In Peru, as elsewhere in Spanish America before the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the use of *zambo* to classify the offspring of an African-Indian union was not yet in use.<sup>18</sup> Forbes and Boskin suggest that the word *zambo* has an African origin, likely reaching the Spanish through the Portuguese *zambaigo*. The shorthand *zambo* came into common Spanish use to describe African-Indian mixes only around 1650. British West Indies' descriptions of African-Indian unions corrupted *zambo* to sambo by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The English noun Sambo began to popularly and somewhat derisively refer to one of

black-white origins only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> In the Mosquitia and Nicaragua, English and Spanish uses of the terms Sambo and *zambo* respectively in reference to the Miskitu conform to the wider regional and contemporaneous Caribbean and Central American uses.

The Spanish began referring to the Miskitu people as *zambos* only after 1700. As stated above, the Spaniards had no knowledge of the an ethnic group called ‘Miskitu’ before the 1699 attack at Nueva Segovia. Recall, that Fray de la Concepción referred to the perpetrators of this assault as “*los Guaianes y mulattos,*” and “*mulattos o sambos guaianes.*”<sup>20</sup> He did not use the term Miskitu. To my knowledge, the first Spanish language source ascribing the term *zambo* to the Miskitu label comes from a 1704 letter. In his communiqué to the Guatemala Audiencia, the unknown author sends word that 200 Englishmen and *zambos* attacked Nueva Segovia and along the Rio Ulua (Honduras):

These Zambos have their origin from some Negros that shipwrecked many years ago at a [group] of Islands called Mosquitos that are immediately off the north coast. They mixed with the heathen Indians that rescued them and with time have procreated and multiplied through their communication with English Pirates.<sup>21</sup>

This version became institutionalized among Spanish writers with the 1711 letter of the Nicaraguan Bishop Benito Garret y Arloví who wrote the King of Spain informing him about “*los zambos llamados mosquitos,*” the *zambos* called Mosquitos. In summarizing knowledge from the past decade, as well as testimony from a negro slave in Granada said to have lived among the Miskitu, Bishop Garret y Arloví related that a slave ship had wrecked at the mouth of the Rio San Juan in 1641 from which one-third of the Africans made it ashore, overpowered the *caribes*, and took their wives. This, he said, was the origin of the ‘zambos called mosquitos.’ Several other ship wreck stories exist, but most locate the wreckage at near Cape Gracias.<sup>22</sup>

It is no coincidence that the term *zambo mosquito* emerges in the Nicaraguan literature during the Wars of Spanish Succession (1700-1712). During this period, throughout Spain's American empire, chaos reigned while pirates made substantial inroads against weakly defended settlements. It was in this context that the Miskitu along with pirate accompaniment first attacked Matina, Costa Rica in 1701, and again in 1707, 1708, and 1711. The Miskitu also passed up the Bluefields River into Nicaragua and pillaged Muymuy Viejo in 1705, and Chontales in 1708, 1709, and 1710, in addition to attacks in Nueva Segovia in 1699 and 1704.<sup>23</sup> (I discuss the motivation and social context of these attacks in later chapters.) In sum, prior to 1699, the Spanish had little or no specific knowledge of the *zambo mosquitos*, and simply classified them as *caribes*, that is they lumped them together with all the other non-Christian Indians of Taguzgalpa and Tologalpa.

The concentrated suddenness of attacks changed Spanish perceptions of the coast virtually overnight, rudely introducing them to the Miskitu. Although at least one Spanish writer between de la Concepción (1699) and Bishop Garret y Arloví (1711) began associating the Spanish term *zambo* with the term *mosquito*, the Bishop's letter initiated a wide-spread use of the Spanish term *mosquito* as a reference for coastal people of mixed African-Indian ancestry. If we combine this knowledge with my analysis of Dampier's description above, we can assume that both English and Spanish writers initially conceived of the Miskitu as a people of mixed race. However, by the 1720s some Spanish writers began to distinguish between the '*indios mosquitos*' and '*zambos mosquitos*.' Still others used the terms inter-changeably or combined them in vague expressions such as '*indios y zambos mosquitos*' or '*zambos y indios*.'<sup>24</sup> It remains unclear to what extent the Spanish Central American use of *zambo* in reference to the Miskitu directly informed the English use of the Miskitu ascriptor Sambo, but it is probable that the Spanish applied this term to the Miskitu before the English did.

*Continuity and Order in English-Language Texts after 1740*

English-language descriptive labels referring to the so-called native and mixed Miskitu Indians begin to exhibit a high degree of order and continuity beginning in the 1740s. Indeed, most English documents produced during the British Superintendency (1749-1786) reflect the important statement made by the first Superintendent Robert Hodgson in 1744:

The Mosquito Shore extends from Cape Gracias a Dios to Great River 42 leagues southward, 12 of which viz. from the Cape to Sandy Bay, are inhabited by the Samboes, the other 30 by the native Indians; the said Shore extends likewise from the Cape to Black River 54 leagues, all which belongs to the Samboes, except [an] honors? Guard (as they are called) of Indians at Brewers Lagoon and another at Black River.

The Samboes are about 500 fighting men, the native [Miskitu] Indians in all about 350. At the back of them both are several other small nations, some in commerce with the Mosquitomen, some with the Spaniards, others divided between them, both sides contending for their alliances. The Samboes are a race sprung from two ship loads of Negroes cast away about 90 years ago at the Cape and intermarry'd with the Indians, their friendship to the English is of about 70 years standing; their fidelity to us is reckoned to exceed that of the Natives, as is their dexterity when rous'd. Both of them are fond of English goods, to procure which they make expeditions and voyages in the turtle season for shell; sometimes southward to St. Johns, Blanco, Bocca de Drago, Cocloo, and even to Darien formerly, sometimes westward to Truxillo, Dolco, the Bay of Honduras and formerly to and beyond Cape Colocho, but have partly desisted from their Western excursions, since one they made 17 years ago to Baccalo [Yucatán], where they took near 900 Indians, but paid dear for them by getting the small pox which has destroyed the better half of them.<sup>25</sup>

Hodgson's text illustrates five important points that establish the foundation for all subsequent English language texts. First, there are two groups of Miskitu people: the 'Sambos' and the 'natives,' the former resulting from shipwrecked Africans. Second, when a distinction between the two groups is not important in narration, the descriptor 'Mosquitomen' is used and refers to both groups collectively. Third, the two groups inhabit distinct regions, the 'natives' between

Rio Grande and Sandy Bay, and the Sambos from Sandy Bay to Black River. Fourth, Hodgson suggests that a 1727 small pox epidemic aided a demographic shift producing a Sambo majority. This raid likely occurred at Asención Bay on the Yucatán Peninsula, south of Cozumel.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Hodgson claims that Sambo fidelity to the English, as is their ‘dexterity when roused’ (i. e., usefulness to the English), is greater than that of the ‘native’ (Tawira) Miskitu. Understanding how Hodgson’s breakdown underscores Miskitu markers in subsequent English texts establishes our ability to understand regional geographic variations while pondering the implications and meaning of Sambo-Tawira differentiation.

Robert Hodgson’s son, Robert Hodgson, Jr., who arrived in the Mosquitia in 1750 and who was also a Superintendent (1768-1775), continued to same rhetorical constructions of his father.

The natives, or Mosquito people, are of two breeds; one are the original Indian; the other (who are called Samboes), a mixture of these with negroes, occasioned, so far as can be learned, by two Dutch ships full of them being cast away some years ago to the southward of Nicaragua . . . [The Sambos have] become as numerous as the others, and there is now no distinction either in their rights or customs.<sup>27</sup>

An important report written in the late 1760s by a former British Superintendent Richard Jones (1759-1762) suggests that the Tawira had extended their southern domains beyond the Rio Grande, as noted by Hodgson Sr. above, but the same basic form can still be ascertained:

the Ancient Mosquito Indians of pure unmixed Blood possess the Coast and Country aback from the Bluefields to Sandy Bay; from thence as far as Plantain River, Sandy Bay included, is possessed by a race of Sambos who derive their origin from a Cargo of Negroes Wrecked on this Coast about 100 years ago.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the following chapters numerous other examples, including those produced by direct Spanish observation or given to the Spaniards in testimony, verify this fundamental, and dichotomous Miskitu geography.



While many historians have recognized the divided nature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Miskitu settlement, they have failed to scrutinize how this geographic partition underscores descriptors and narratives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Doing so is significant because much of our evidence for identity variance prior to 1800 comes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1808, when visiting Miskitu communities at Caratasca Lagoon, Wright refers to his hosts as the “Samboe race of Mosquito men.”<sup>29</sup> Young, who also spent all his time along the north coast of Honduras between 1839-1842 refers only to the “Sambos, or Mosquitians.”<sup>30</sup> Well before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as we will see, the use of any native or racially pure qualifying descriptor completely vanishes for Miskitu inhabitants of the north coast. The most significant work detailing Miskitu geography of the early 1800s comes from Orlando Roberts. When describing the Miskitu from the Rio Grande to Twappi along the south coast of the Mosquitia he refers to “genuine unmixed Indians,” “unmixed breed,” “pure Indians,” and “Indians of pure blood.” He uses “Samboes” to describe those who lived at Caratasca and Sandy Bay. When referring to all Miskitu speakers, he employs the term “Mosquito men,” at another point clarifying his usage: “Mosquito men proper, or mixed breed of Samboes and Indians.”<sup>31</sup> Thus Roberts’ 1820 usage of ‘Mosquito men,’ referring primarily to the Sambo Miskitu illustrates a great deal of continuity with descriptions offered by M. W. in 1699 and Hodgson, Sr. in 1744. Also typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century observations, however, is that by Pim who simply considered the Miskitu to be “two distinct races, the aborigines and the descendents of the negroes formerly wrecked on the coast.”<sup>32</sup>

### *Racial Signifiers and Dialects*

Rhetorical constructions of inter-Miskitu variations can also be found in language referencing ‘racial’ traits and, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Miskitu dialects. Early statements denoting ‘racial’ difference among the ‘Sambos’ and the ‘native Mosquitos’ often base their distinction on hair type and skin color. The below statements by M. W. and Uring are typical:

[The Indians] are all of a dark yellow or brown complexion, having long black hair, excepting the Mullattoes, whose black hair curls; and their bodies are nearer to the colour of negroes, from whose mixture with the Indians they first sprung, occasion'd 50 years since by a Guiney merchant ship which was driven to leeward, having lost her way, and perish'd on this coast.<sup>33</sup>

All the difference I observed between'em was, the Native [Miskitu] Indians had long black Hair, and the Mulatto Race [Sambo Miskitu] had strong bushy curled Hair, a little changed in their Skin; the Copper and Black mixing made some Alteration.<sup>34</sup>

In both of these cases there is no indication that the 'natives' and the 'mulatto race' distinguished themselves from one another in racialized terms and, indeed, even the observers downplayed their own ability or need to make distinctions on this level. As we see in later chapters, M. W. noted little if any difference between the two groups, and Uring describes difference only in political terms.

Still, racial qualifiers were not irrelevant. The very word 'Tawira' used to designate 'pure Miskitu Indians,' among early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists, is an indigenous hair-type signifier, one in which the Tawira assigned to themselves, the Wangki Miskitu ascribed to them, and Sambo Miskitu specifically rejected. According to Charles Bell, the "[Miskitu] Indians call themselves Tangweeras (straight-hair), to distinguish them from the half-breed Sambos, who speak the same language."<sup>35</sup> Conzemius adds a variation to this common theme by claiming that the 'native' Miskitu "call themselves Tawira 'heavy haired' in opposition to their curly-haired kindred of mixed blood, whom they designate derisively by the term 'Priski.'"<sup>36</sup> During my time in the Mosquitia, I heard Miskitu people of the Rio Wangki in particular use the Spanish expression, *pelo crespo*, curly-haired, in addition to Miskitu terms *lal muku* (baby cow head) and *lal usra* (nest of termite head) in reference to African hair types among the Miskitu. However, I did not detect that these words were used contemptuously, and in fact were often used endearingly.

The geography of Miskitu language dialects, as they were recorded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflect a combination of relative historical isolation between the Sambo and Tawira, and fairly well documented migrations by the Sambo Miskitu. Conzemius and Heath discerned three to five Miskitu dialects in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *kabo*, or sea, dialect was spoken along the coast south from Sandy Bay to the Rio Grande in places such as the Sambo-formed communities of Karata, Wounta Haulover, Kiha, Wawa Bar, Prinzapolka, Sandy Bay Sirpi, and Tasbapauni. The *tawira* dialect was spoken inland from the kabo sites, at the back of lagoons at places like Kuamwatla, Layasiksa, Kukalaya, Klingna, and among the savanna communities of Yulu, Sisin, Auyapihni, Tapamlaya, Taura, Wakala, Krukira, and Twappi: all of which are in Nicaragua south of Sandy Bay and contained within the former Mosquito Reserve. For Conzemius, the Miskitu around Pearl Lagoon and the Rio Grande spoke a *baldam* dialect which was closely related to the Sambo *kabo* dialect spoken at Sandy Bay and Bihmuna Lagoon. The affinity between these two dialects reflects the heavy southward migration of Sambo Miskitu from the north coast after 1860, a topic beyond the scope of the present study. Both Heath and Conzemius, use *wangki* for the Miskitu dialect spoken along the Rio Wangki, and *mam* for the dialect spoken in Honduras. With very little moderation, most present-day Miskitu speakers would articulate these same dialect variations.<sup>37</sup>

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the initial and north-south dichotomous Sambo-Tawira geography on which this study is based becomes substantially rearranged, yet recognizable. After considerable southern and coastal migrations of the Sambo Miskitu for work, to receive Moravian evangelism, and possibly to move into the Mosquito Reserve, the coastal Miskitu began to refer to the lagoon Miskitu as Tawira:

usually the Indians [of Nicaragua] are divided into four main groups; Moskitos and Ramas who live on the sea coast, Tahwira on the shore of the lagoons and the Summu who live further west, who in part live along the rivers which are outside tidal influences and flood waters.<sup>38</sup>

Further, confusing the colonial distinction between Sambo and Tawira is the fact that the Rio Wangki Miskitu of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—formerly considered Sambo in the historical record and by many Moravians until 1900—generally refer to all coastal Miskitu south of Sandy Bay as Tawira, a characterization reflecting the pre-1800 human geography only. For example, Conzemius noted that coastal Nicaraguan Miskitu were called Tawira by the Miskitu of the Rio Wangki and Honduras. He claims, however, that these people “do not accept this term, but call themselves *Miskito aihwa*, ‘true Miskito,’ although obviously of mixed blood.”<sup>39</sup> Heath noted that among Miskitu villages near the sea coast “the inhabitants call themselves ‘miskuto aingwa,’ true miskitos, though very obviously of partly African descent, and give the people further inland the name of Tawira.”<sup>40</sup> Both Heath and Conzemius had trouble reconciling a belief that the ‘true Miskitu’ could be those of mixed race. They both assume that the ‘genuine’ Miskitu must be those who were ‘more indigenous’ in race, the exact opposite of what I have argued the historical record actually suggests.

Provided that the Sambo Miskitu called themselves the ‘true Miskitu’ in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century suggests that they may have always distinguished themselves from the Tawira with this adjective. That is, the Miskitu of mixed African-Indian unions considered the Tawira to be lesser Miskitu or possibly non-Miskitu at certain times. This interpretation also matches the historical evolution of the Miskitu label as I have interpreted it in this chapter, the narrative of missionary Ziock provided in Chapter One, and the tributary relationship the Tawira had with the Sambo after 1790. Meanwhile, it has been my experience in Nicaragua that the Wangki Miskitu consider themselves better educated and superior to the Miskitu of the savannas and the south coast, both or whom they still generally refer to as Tawira or *gente de sal* (people of salt). Indeed, the Wangki Miskitu leader, Stedman Fagoth, describes the “*tribu Miskita Tawira*” of Yulu in racialized terms bordering on disdain.<sup>41</sup> While we need to be careful applying 20<sup>th</sup> century terminology or constructions to the period before 1800, the relative permanence of similar categories provides

supporting evidence for the ways in which I explore intra-Miskitu identity variance during the colonial period.

\* \* \*

Commentators on Miskitu ethnohistory generally imply that the Miskitu emerged historically after Africans mixed with native Sumu peoples. I have argued that while the ‘Miskitu’ label was probably first used only to represent those Miskitu-speaking people of African-Indian origins, that Miskitu-speaking Indians had long lived near Cape Gracias before Africans arrived. The use of the English label ‘Sambo’ to describe those Miskitu of mixed African-Indian ancestry developed only after the people previously called ‘mulattos’ moved from being a numerical minority among the ‘Cape Indians’ around 1670, to being a majority no later than 1740. In 1727, a small pox epidemic, which ‘destroyed the better half of them,’ probably had a disproportionate impact on the Tawira Miskitu and helped foster a sense that a majority of Miskitu were of mixed race. I show in the next chapter that this epidemic marked a radical shift in Miskitu geopolitics and settlement.

By the early 1800s, the unqualified term Miskitu or the suffixed term ‘Mosquito men’ implied one of two things: (a) all Miskitu language speakers, or more likely (b) only those formerly called ‘Sambos.’ Many people, particularly those who only visited the Honduran coast, always referred the Sambo Miskitu as either ‘Sambos’ or ‘Mosquito men.’ When an author wished to reference only the Tawira Miskitu, limited to the southern Mosquitia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, racial purity qualifiers would often be added. Historical events, textual sources, the geography of linguistic dialects coupled with known migrations, early 20<sup>th</sup> century statements attributed to the Wangki and Sambo Miskitu, as well as my own experiences in 1994-97 all suggest that the Miskitu have made, and continue to make, significant contextualized distinctions between themselves.

## Notes to Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> Conzemius, "Notes on the Miskito and Sumu Languages," 58. Conzemius apparently derived the name Bawihka from coastal interviews since to my knowledge the name does not appear in the historical record. He claims the Bawihka lived along the Rio Kukalaya and later formed the community of Wasakin along the Rio Bambana but today the people of Wasakin have no knowledge of this term; see also Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 14-18; Mario Rizo, "Mito y Tradición Oral Entre Los Sumus del Rio Bambana," *Wani* 14 (1993), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 143; Robert A. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism. The Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1600 - 1914* (London: Associated University Press, 1989), 22-23; Mary W. Helms, "The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe," *Ethnology* 8 (1969): 76-84; Helms, *Asang*, 16-18; Mary W. Helms, "Negro or Indian? The Changing Identity of a Frontier Population," in *Old Roots in New Lands*, ed. Ann Pescatello (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1977): 157-192.

<sup>3</sup> Newson, *Indian Survival*, 38, 18.

<sup>4</sup> On Sandinista views on the racial-mixing of the Miskitu see the publication of papers presented at a 1981 conference hosted by the Ministerio del Instituto Nicaragüense de la Costa Atlántica (INNICA) in volume 8 (1982) of the journal *Nicarúac*; see also Karl H. Offen, "The Mythical Landscape: Indians, Nature, and Geography in the Historiography of Eastern Nicaragua" (paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 24-26, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Authors subscribing to this view include Helms, *Asang*; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*; Jorge Jenkins M., *El Desafío Indígena en Nicaragua: El Caso de los Miskitos* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1986); Carlos M. Vilas, *State, Class, and Ethnicity in Nicaragua: Capitalist Modernization and Revolutionary Change on the Atlantic Coast* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989); Theodore MacDonald, "The Moral Economy of the Miskito Indians: Local Roots of a Geopolitical Conflict," in *Ethnicity and Nations. Processes of Inter-ethnic Relations in Latin America, South East Asia, and the Pacific*, ed. R. Guidieri, F. Pellizzi, and S. Tambiah (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988): 107-153; Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction*; Garcia, *Making of the Miskitu People*.

<sup>6</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 454, 455. Other authors taking this viewpoint include José Dolores Gámez, *Historia de la Costa de Mosquitos (hasta 1894)* (Managua: Talleres Nacionales, 1939); Floyd, *The Anglo-Spanish Struggle*; Newson, *Indian Survival*; Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas*, 34; Michael D. Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral: Three Miskito Lines of Succession," *Ethnohistory* 45 (1998), 281; William J. Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore, 1749-1787" (Ph. D.

diss., University of London, 1969), 10. Other authors taking this perspective would include Potthast, *Die Mosquito-Küste*; Sarah May Howard, "Ethnicity, Autonomy, Land and Development: The Miskitu of Nicaragua's Northern Atlantic Coast" (Ph. D. diss., Oxford University, 1993); Eleonore von Oertzen, "Introduction. The British Protectorate up to 1860," NMHD, 18-40; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*.

<sup>8</sup> M. W., "The Mosquito Indian, 285, 286; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 115; John Cockburn, *A Journey Overland, from the Gulf of Honduras to the Great South Sea* (London: 1735), 236.

<sup>9</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 124; Sorsby cited in Holm, "Creole English of Nicaragua's Miskito Coast," 307; Götz von Houwald, "Mayangna=Wir," 203.

<sup>10</sup> Kit S. Kapp, *The Printed Maps of Central America up to 1860. Part I: 1548-1760* (London: The Map Collectors' Circle, 1974), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Pargellis and Butler, "Daniell Ellffryth's Guide to the Caribbean, 1631," 312, 313, 316; Nathaniel Butler, "A Diary, from February 10th 1639 of My Personal Employments," 48, 50; Harlow, "The Voyages of Captain William Jackson (1642-1645)," 25.

<sup>12</sup> Kupperman, *Providence Island*; Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*; Newton, *Colonizing Activities*. In an exchange of letters in November of 1995 and February of 1996, professor Kupperman told me she could not recall if the PIC documents ever used the word Miskitu in reference to a people, or if she added that to her writings based on the contemporary scene as did Newton and Parsons.

<sup>13</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 125.

<sup>14</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 233-238.

<sup>15</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, xvi, 7, 15, 27, 28.

<sup>16</sup> de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 285.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Hodgson, Sr. to Lord, Mosquito Shore, 4 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 65; see also Robert Hodgson, Sr. to Lords of the Committee, Black River, 1 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 67-68.

<sup>18</sup> James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru 1532-1560* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 176.

<sup>19</sup> Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans. The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*, Second ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 173-189, 234-237; Joseph Boskin, *Sambo. The and Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 34-36.

- <sup>20</sup> De la Concepción, Relación del viaje en el Año 1699, 13 Jan. 1699, AGI Guatemala 297, 50-61.
- <sup>21</sup> “Carta a la Audiencia de Guatemala sobre los establecimientos de los ingleses en la costa, etc. 1704,” CDHCN, 5.
- <sup>22</sup> “Informe de Fray Benito Garret y Arloví, Obispo de Nicaragua, sobre los mosquitos y el modo de reducirlos, Granada, 30 November 1711,” CRCM, 57, 58. On the various shipwreck stories see Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 123-126; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 17.
- <sup>23</sup> Between 1710-1721, 2,000 Indian slaves of both sexes were taken; Diego de la Haya, “Letter from Cartago, 8 Oct. 1722,” LCRC, 24; Juan Geronimo Duardo, “Carta a la Presidente de la Real Audiencia de Goathemala, Guatemala, 26 July 1704,” CDHCN, 6-7; “Carta a la Audiencia de Guatemala sobre los establecimientos de los ingleses en la costa, etc. 1704,” CDHCN, 3-5; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 64-67; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 157-159; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 84-87; Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 11.
- <sup>24</sup> “Don Diego de la Haya Fernández reclama del gobernador inglés de Jamaica la devolución de los indios de Costa Rica que se hallan en dicha isla, por haber sido apresados y vendidos por los Mosquitos, Año 1722,” CDHCR, 151-159; “D. Carlos Marengo informa al general D. Manuel López Pintado sobre los indios y zambos Mosquitos, San Felipe de Portobelo, 16 Feb. 1731,” CDHCR, 187-205.
- <sup>25</sup> Robert Hodgson, Sr. to Lord, Mosquito Shore, 4 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11, 65.
- <sup>26</sup> John A. Burdon, *Archives of British Honduras*, 3 vols. (London: Sifton Praed and Co., 1931) (hereafter ABH), I : 15.
- <sup>27</sup> Robert Hodgson, Jr., *Mosquito Territory*, 45; see also his “A View of the Mosquito Shore,” 12 Oct. 1766, PRO, FO 53/10: 16-18.
- <sup>28</sup> [Richard Jones,] “Report on the Mosquito Shore,” in *The Kemble Papers. Vol. II, Expedition to Nicaragua, 1780-1* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1884), 419.
- <sup>29</sup> John Wright, *Memoir of the Mosquito Territory* (London: J. Hatchard, 1808), 26-27.
- <sup>30</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 71, 79.
- <sup>31</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 113, 118, 125, 134, 137, 147, 156, 265.
- <sup>32</sup> Bedford Pim, *The Gate of the Pacific* (London: Lovell Reeve and Co, 1863), 75.
- <sup>33</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 293.



<sup>34</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 154-155.

<sup>35</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 4. *Tangweera* is Bell's phonetic spelling of Tawira.

<sup>36</sup> Conzemius, "Miskito and Sumu Languages," 59; see also George R. Heath, "Notes on Miskito Grammar and Other Indian Languages of Eastern Nicaragua," *American Anthropologist* 15 (1913), 51.

<sup>37</sup> Conzemius, "Miskito and Sumu Languages," 59-60; Heath, *Grammar of the Miskito Language* (Herrnhut: F. Lindenbein, 1927). Visiting Pearl Lagoon in the 1940s, Archie Carr referred to the all the Miskitu at Pearl Lagoon as "baldan;" *High Jungles and Low* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953), 215. The Miskitu word *mam*, is an endearing nickname typically used with children. As Wangki Miskitu see it, Mam Miskitu are more provincial than themselves, something they equate with less foreign contact and a later conversion to Christianity.

<sup>38</sup> Christian A. Martin, "Handel und Kreditwesen der Moskito-Indianer," *Globus* 65 (1894), 100; see also Christian August Martin, "Dreissig Jahre praktische Misionarbeit in Mosquito von 1859-90," in *Moskito. Zur Erinnerung an die Feier des Fünfzigjährigen Bestehens der Mission der Brüdergemeine in Mittel-Amerika*, ed. H.G. Schneider (Herrnhut: 1899), 58; Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory," 247.

<sup>39</sup> Eduard Conzemius, "Notes on the Miskito and Sumu Languages, 60. Walter Lehmann considered most Miskitu to be mixed, but termed the "pure blooded Mísquitos such as the *Táuirra*, straight hairs;" "Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise in Mittelamerika," 713, 714.

<sup>40</sup> George R. Heath, "Miskito Glossary, With Ethnographic Commentary," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 16, no. 1 (1950), 27.

<sup>41</sup> Stedman Fagoth, *Moskitia.. Autonomía Regional* (Tegucigapla: n. p., 1980), 23.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Miskitu Kingdom, Part I:**

#### **Three Regions United**

Although the metaphor ‘Mosquito Kingdom’ was used by M. W. in the title of his 1699 description, the term does not appear in the historical record until the Victorian era when British officials at Belize began using the expression to legitimize Miskitu claims and their own territorial ambitions. This begs the question if the notion of a ‘Kingdom’ characterizes Miskitu social and political organization during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this chapter, I will argue that it does and does not. It does in the sense that a kingdom emphasizes a political authority over an associated territory under a king. It does not in the sense that it stipulates a single sovereign. During the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the king commanded roughly the same authority as the general or governor. During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Sambo king began to consolidate power and rose above the other leaders as the symbolic authority of the Miskitu Kingdom. However, initially, he did not ‘command’ people outside his district, nor did his authority extend over the Tawira Miskitu whose highest leader was the governor into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The king’s rise in power was enhanced by the special relationship he shared with the British on account of his name and the 100 year tradition his position enjoyed before the British commissioned other leaders. I will use the expression Miskitu Kingdom throughout the study to refer to a socio-political institution in formation, as well as the territorial polity the metaphor increasingly symbolized.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how mid-17<sup>th</sup> century African-Miskitu unions modified the geography of Miskitu social organization, settlement patterns, and leadership structures in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I describe traditional Miskitu socio-spatial organization, and discuss how African integration established three distinct geographic regions recognized internally by the Miskitu. Initially, Africans only intermarried with Miskitu in a very limited area. The result was a fractured Miskitu society organized at a macro level around three regions and four districts. British efforts to transform the Miskitu into regional allies, recognized and strengthened the geographical and conceptual ‘boundary’ distinguishing south coast Tawira communities from their Wangki-Sandy Bay and north coast Sambo Miskitu counterparts. The goal of this chapter is to elaborate Hodgson’s claim that “Though [the Miskitu] are to all intents and purposes one people, yet they are not so properly a single state, as three united, each of which is nearly independent of the others.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Social Organization, Leadership, and African Arrival**

An examination of traditional Miskitu society reveals an underlying social geography. British officials eventually recognized this geography by commissioning several leaders in addition to the king. Commissions allowed leaders the right to receive special status symbols such as uniforms and walking canes, but also allowed them to receive other presents to distribute among their people. The first commissioned generation of leaders sustained their authority through their mastery and calculated manipulation of British knowledge systems, symbolic forms, and economic exchanges. Traditional Miskitu social geography combined with changes set in motion by the arrival of Africans and the external sanctioning of a new leadership model that geographically divided Miskitu society. These geographic divisions constitute two domains, Sambo and Tawira, three regions (north coast, Rio Wangki-Sandy Bay, south coast), and four districts, whereby each district was overseen by a commissioned Miskitu leader (see Figure

5.1 below). To begin illustrating how this came about I divide this section in two parts. The first deals briefly with traditional social organization among the Miskitu and the second deals with the location of the African shipwreck and the resulting settlement modification.

### *Traditional Miskitu Society*

Ethnographic and ethnohistorical works suggest that traditional Miskitu society was organized around two underlying geographical structures: (a) inter-nested socio-spatial networks that extend outward in scale from the immediate family to the ethnic group; and (b) a hierarchical-spatial model of spiritual-political authority. While historical processes have tweaked these two social structures over the years, I would argue that the traditional Miskitu cultural values supporting their continued function remain viable and significant. By this I mean that extended family networks continue to form the spatial basis for a regional Miskitu identity, and that internally valued and respected spiritual-political power continues to get reproduced through ranked interactions encompassing larger and larger geographic scales.

Miskitu socio-spatial networks grow outward from the immediate family to the extended family, the village, cluster of villages, the district, and finally the ethnic group. As works by Mary Helms and others have shown, the tradition of matrilocality assures the reproduction of these networks. Matrilocality specifies that married couples either reside under the same roof as the bride's parents or the pair establishes their own dwelling near the house of the bride's family. Long-time 18<sup>th</sup> century resident Colville Cairns told the Spanish Ambassador in London at the time of his defection, that from the Rio Patuca to Bluefields the Miskitu live in groupings based on family and/or kinship lines, "such that a boy will leave his old residence and build his house in the residence of his girl friend."<sup>2</sup> Although Helms believes matrilocality reflects an "adaptive feature" to

European culture contact, allowing men to pursue market interactions while women retained “the conservative element in Miskito society,” I believe that matrilocality always characterized Miskitu society.<sup>3</sup>

The tradition of matrilocality geographically organizes villages around kin networks, or *kaimka*. Indeed, the Miskitu word *kaimka* also connotes a ‘camp,’ or compound, spatializing the notion of blood relations. Among contemporary Miskitu, each *kaimka*, or extended family, will typically maintain a separate compound, or series of dwellings within the village. In the 1600s, this likely meant sharing the same long-house, providing space for up to 30 people (see below). This inter-village social geography, while not hard and fast today, still organizes villages around the most important Miskitu social network, the *kaimka*.

*Kaimka* networks across villages establish the spatial foundation of an intra-regional Miskitu social circuit. Men who move off to live in their wife’s community act as their *kaimka* representatives in other villages, but they never relinquish their affiliation with their home village. As Helms asserts:

In Miskito society, the individual who lives in a community as affine always retains his or her social identity with the kin group in the village of his birth, both in his opinion and in the opinion of others, no matter how long he has lived within his spouse’s village.

Indeed, village-*kaimka* interactions sustain a “vital link in the series of connected villages which constitute ‘Miskitodom.’ This social definition of [one’s village] is perhaps the most meaningful to inhabitants of the village, and is the least understood by outsiders.”<sup>4</sup> *Kaimkas* and the bounded reproductive circuits that sustain them form the social backbone of a compartmentalized Miskitu geography and Sambo-Tawira identity variance. As I show below, only some *kaimkas*, and hence village networks, intermarried with escaping Africans who arrived en masse in 1641, other *kaimkas* specifically removed themselves and did not intermarry. That said, it appears that the king, governor, admiral, and possibly the general likely remained distantly related throughout much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The second characteristic of traditional Miskitu society has always been a leadership model featuring male positions of authority organized hierarchically over space. All Miskitu villages, today as in the past, contain a *wita* (chief or headman). During the British superintendency, this man was often designated as a captain, typically a nominal title without direct linkages to British officials. Witas remained politically subject to regional higher-ups, especially commissioned individuals who for the Tawira terminated with the governor and for the Sambo culminated with the king before 1790. The role of witas during the 18<sup>th</sup> century remains ambiguous, but I suspect that, traditionally, witas were also *sukia nani*, or shamen, and played a very influential role in the day-to-day governance of individual villages. Witas and shamen likely emerged from another ambiguous group in traditional Miskitu society, the *tahplu*, or warrior. Miskitu ‘warriors’ successful in slave raids received the title *taplu* (*tahplu*).<sup>5</sup> It is unclear what recognition this title bestowed, but I was told by an elder Miskitu man that the term referred to “*una casta guerillero*,” or warrior caste, within Miskitu society.

The traditional role of sukias as socio-political leaders cannot easily be readily discerned from the historical record, however, they likely achieved their authority through their ability to assess divine will. For example, Hodgson stated that the Miskitu have, “a kind of priests called Sookies, who have some little influence over them, but are indeed consulted chiefly as fortune-tellers.”<sup>6</sup> By the 1700s, sukias appear in the historical record primarily as arbitrators in decisions concerning offensive military maneuvers, slave raids, or other important decisions. We do know, however, that some sukias were more powerful than others, and that often an external sukia would be called in to perform duties that the local sukia would be unable to accomplish. Roberts found that once sukias have “an ascendancy at home, their fame soon extends to the neighbouring tribes” who then seek them out.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while each village might have had a wita-sukia, this individual would be situated within a regional network of more powerful sukias.

The spatiality of Miskitu society can also be inferred from 19<sup>th</sup> century examples. For example, I suggested in Chapter Two that sukias were effectively ‘replaced’ by Moravian pastors as spiritual arbitrators with divine privileges within Miskitu society. One way in which this social transition was smoothed over is that late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Moravian pastors were also organized in a spatial hierarchy, something that made missionaries appear more like ‘new sukias’ than they probably realized. In addition to adopting a medical dimension to their spiritual evangelism, effectively trumping many sukia roles and talents, the Church sanctioned a host of representatives from lay preachers and unordained ministers to a hierarchy of ordained reverends and bishops. These individuals were arranged hierarchically and spatially, from preaching stations to mission stations to the Church office in Bluefields (later Puerto Cabezas), to the Church headquarters outside the country. The underlying spatial ordering of the Moravian Church’s hierarchy was reinforced through Mosquitia racial ideologies that placed whites at the top and Indians at the bottom, with Creoles and Jamaicans in between. Indian lay preachers, who had the least power and were essentially disciples of Creoles and whites, had the smallest and most remote preaching stations. Creoles and Jamaicans, who dominated mission expansion efforts during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were often unordained through most of their career and relegated to frontier outposts. They remained subordinated politically to white (German) missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. White missionaries maintained primary nodal Mission stations such as Bluefields, Magdala (Pearl Lagoon), Ephrata (Wounta Haulover), and by the 1880s Twappi. Meanwhile, it should be noted that higher ranked missionaries often ‘toured’ the mission district or districts in the same manner that more powerful sukias periodically visited villages in their ‘districts.’<sup>8</sup> It is my belief that Moravian spatial hierarchies closely mirrored spatial hierarchies among sukias and facilitated their acceptance in Miskitu society. Had traditional spiritual power not been arranged in this way, Moravian evangelism among the Miskitu might have taken a different course.

Villages comprising a single district were affiliated through kaimka networks. There is evidence that after Africans arrived, these networks partitioned Miskitu society so that networks that may have previously interacted no longer did. I suggest that small nucleated kaimkas grew into the various districts recognized and sanctioned by British commissions in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These commissions, then, tapped into an existing socio-spatial organization and division. Meanwhile, grounded in kaimka networks, but cutting across and uniting them in times of crisis, was a regional power structure that moved upward from village-level wita-sukias to commissioned leaders by the 1720s. The first kings and other important leaders were all sukias, but as time went on esoteric knowledge, and the manipulation of the Occidental symbols comprising such power/knowledge, began to parallel and eventually supercede traditional sukia powers, which in turn also began to incorporate foreign symbols.

#### *The Miskitu-African Encounter*

Some of [the ‘native Muscheto people’] have separated from the main Body, as those at Cape Camerone, our Neighbours, and gave this Reason for it; They said, that some People who were not of the ancient Inhabitants, but new Upstarts, were got into the Government, and behaved themselves with so much Pride and Insolence that they could not bear it, and therefore had separated from the main Body. They related the Matter thus: A Ship with Negroes by Accident was cast away on the Coast, and those who escaped drowning mixed among the Native Muscheto People, who intermarried with them, and begot a Race of Mulattoes, which were the People that Society could not brook should bear any kind of Command amongst them. Capt. Hobby . . . was of that Race, his Mother being a Negroe.

— Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 154-155.

The original inhabitants of Moustique who entertained [the shipwrecked Africans], have [now] settled ten or twelve leagues to windward of Cape Gracias a Dios, at places known as Sambey and Sanibey [Sandy Bay].

— de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 287.



The intermarriage of male and female African peoples among specific Miskitu kaimka networks along the Rio Kruta and the lower Rio Wangki around 1641 effectively divided Miskitu 'territory' into Sambo and Tawira domains over the next 100 years. The process did not occur rapidly, nor did it likely have much to do with 'race' in the sense of its 19<sup>th</sup> century construction. While political rivalry appears crucial in dividing the two Miskitu groups at the top, a spatial disjunction of kaimka networks appears to have sustained foundational and distinguishing social identities over time. This spatiality took on new meaning through colonial interactions. Before Africans settled in the Mosquitia, a chain of some 10 Miskitu communities extended along pine savanna margins between the Rio Wawa and the eastern edge of the Caratasca Lagoon, and along the Rio Wangki as high as Saklin. By 1700, approximately 2,000 Miskitu lived among at least 18 communities that extended from the Rio Patuca to the Rio Wawa (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Miskitu Communities in the Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century.**

1699	possible equivalents	1728	1737	1742	possible equivalents
Ditita	False Cape (Rio Kruta)	Tamanotarara	Tunla	la Tunda	Tungla
Guasla	Wasla (Rio Wangki)	Grabito	Gualpasiga	Gualpasiga	Walpasiksa
Auca	Auka (Rio Kruta)	Panamanca	Suinta	Gulpasiogsa	
Sauina	Saubila (Rio Kruta)	Sinta	Suinta	Suinta	
Aguastara	Awastara (Sandy Bay)	Aguatara	Aguatara	Aguaitara	Awastara
Zagua	Sawa (Rio Wangki)	Chinaracom	Aguatara	Aguaitara	Rio Grande?
Saguas	Uiwas (Rio Wangki)	Nanaves	Taulavera	Taulavera	Taura?
Maia	Wawa (Bihmuna L.)	Norosvira	Norosvila	Norosvila	Krukira
Guaba	Iban Lagoon (Caratasca L.)	Quaquaco	Guagua	Guagua	Wawa (Bihmuna)
Iaban guana		Guelescota	Suculinlaya	Suculinia	Saklin (Rio Wangki)
		Quelegoita		Olignita	Olignita
Paquí	Pakwi (Kruta, False Cape)	Anguelagalaia	Aguasdacora	Aguardacora	Lj Dakura (Sandy Bay)
Casanguera	Kaukira (Caratasca L.)	Calata	Caorquera	Caurguera	Kaukira (Caratasca L.)
Azotta		Yacop	Xinasdacora	Xinasdacora	(Sandy Bay)
Irraiala	Irlaya (Rio Wangki)	Ocrelaya (Irlaya)	Culuque	Cavalara	Cavalara
Daia buntta	Taia Bunta (Rio Kruta)		Guane	Guance	Wani (Bihmuna)
Tintaguina		Juan Cuinguina	Guanquil	Culuquinquanquil	Wangki?
Coloque	Klupki (Rio Wangki)	Yucuri			Kuri (Rio Kruta)
		Dacora	Dacora	Dacora	Dakura (Sandy Bay)
Ani	Sani or Wani	Sani	Saniaguala	Saniagua	Sani Awala (Caratasca L.)
			Sane	Sance	Sani (far eastern Caratasca L.)
			Catasqui	Catastiu	Katski (Honduras)
			Cruta	Cruta	Kruta (Honduras)
			Cutuca	Cutuca	Patuca (Honduras)
			Casca	Casca	Kahka (Honduras)
		Norabera			Nina Yari (Sandy Bay)

Sources: Fray de la Concepción, 13 Jan. 1699, AGI Guatemala 297, 50-61; "Declaración de Carlos Casarola, Negro Esclavo Bozal," *Wani* 10 (1991), 88; AGI Guatemala 302 cited in Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 127; Pedro de Rivera, "Noticias sobre los mosquitos y medios de exterminarlos," Guatemala, 25 Nov. 1742, CRCM, 120.

While village names in Table 5.1 can be interpreted differently than I have done, the majority of recognizable villages appear located near or on the Rios Kruta and Wangki. This is not surprising. As I suggested in Chapter Three, Fray Pedro Martinez' entrada probably took place up the Rio Wangki (Rio Guani or Wani). Here, recall, he allegedly baptized over a thousand Guaba (Miskitu) Indians. A likely exaggeration. Still, it does raise the possibility that disease may have devastated the Miskitu even before the small pox epidemic in 1727. Meanwhile, as we saw in Chapter Two, the Wangki Miskitu associate the Rio Kruta community of Auka with the mythical Ra people, who some contend are Miskitu ancestors, and in all probability was a central homeland of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Miskitu. In all probability, the overwhelming majority of Miskitu lived within 100 miles of the Rio Kruta by the 1640s.

I speculate that Africans first settled and mixed with Miskitu communities near False Cape, or the mouth of the Rio Kruta. Relatively soon thereafter, African-Miskitu communities began to appear at Caratasca, the Rio Kruta, the lower Rio Wangki, and by 1730 at Sandy Bay. (The isolated Sambo community appearing at the southern end of Pearl Lagoon around 1760 is not accounted for in the current analysis.) Four factors suggest that Africans shipwrecked very near the mouth of the Rio Kruta, also known as False Cape. First, Englishmen from Providence Island spent substantial time near the Rio Kruta, which they called 'Black River,' gathering vanilla, silkgrass, and mahoe bark (*sani*). The village 'Ditita,' named in 1699 (Table 5.1), means vanilla point in Miskitu and fortifies the outline presented in Chapter Three that Providence Englishmen investigated this plant along the Rio Kruta. The same can be said about the village of Sani, also situated near the Rio Kruta and an important Sambo community no later than 1730. Sani is the Miskitu word for the mahoe tree (*Hibiscus sp.* or *Heliocarpus sp.*) which provides a rope-like bark that pirates used to make cordage and the Miskitu use to make rope, fishing line, hammocks, and sacks. By accompanying Providence settlers to the Rio Kruta, Africans no doubt familiarized themselves with the route of their escape.

Second, ‘mulatto’ communities concentrated near the Rio Kruta by 1700, and evidence suggests that the ‘native Miskitu Indians’ moved west of the Rio Patuca and south of Cape Gracias in response to the emergence ‘mulatto’ leaders around the lower Rios Wangki and Kruta. In the two epigraphs of this section, Uring and de Lussan state that the ‘native’ Miskitu people moved west and south of Cape Gracias in response to the ‘new Upstarts’ who emerged through African-Miskitu conjugal unions. Whatever the exact reason for this movement, we know that mixed communities, generally headed by ‘negroes’ or ‘mulattos,’ concentrated along the Rio Kruta, the lower Rio Wangki, and eastern Caratasca, each connected by a network of small creeks, while ‘native’ Miskitu Indians moved west of the Rio Patuca and south of Cape Gracias along the margins of the Nicaraguan savannas. While Table 5.1 should not be read as the only Miskitu villages of the times, it is telling that the villages named after 1700 contain more south coast and savanna communities than are present in Fray de la Concepción’s 1699 recording. In hindsight, as foreign contact increased during the early 1700s and titled commissions took on internal significance for the Miskitu no later than 1730, the arrival of African peoples and their diverse cultural ways provided a major catalyst producing an expanded and divided Miskitu geography.

### **Miskitu Settlement Geography 1700-1730**

Male offspring of Miskitu-African unions emerged as politically dominant sukia-leaders within a limited geographic region bounded by the Rio Plátano in northeastern Honduras, along the middle-lower Rio Wangki, and, by 1730, among the network of communities collectively called Sandy Bay in northeastern Nicaragua. Politically, this region was divided into two districts overseen by individuals commissioned with two British titles. The north coast of Honduras, was headed by the general, and the Wangki-Sandy Bay district was headed by the king. By 1740 a colonel appears residing at Cape Gracias but always remains subordinate

to the king (Figure 5.1). Meanwhile, politically hierarchical clusters of three Tawira Miskitu communities arose in disparate ecological settings, under distinct historical processes, and exclusively in Nicaragua (Figure 5.1). These three clusters fell within two districts and correspond with political-geographic areas denoted by: (1) the coastal pine savannas of northeastern Nicaragua (what I will call the Twappi-savanna region), headed by the governor; (2) the Wounta-Prinzapolka coastal-upland corridor, headed by a subordinate to the governor; and (3) the lower Rio Grande and northern Pearl Lagoon, headed by the Tawira admiral (Table 5.2). The Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor, contained Tawira Miskitu in addition to Twahka, Tungla, and Ulwa Indians, was governed by a Tungla or Tawira captain who lived within the governor's jurisdiction. A good portion of the remainder of this study will outline how these four Miskitu Kingdom districts formed varying interconnections with British settlers, regional economies and ecologies, neighboring Indians, and Spanish officials in ways that shaped Miskitu ethnic identity.

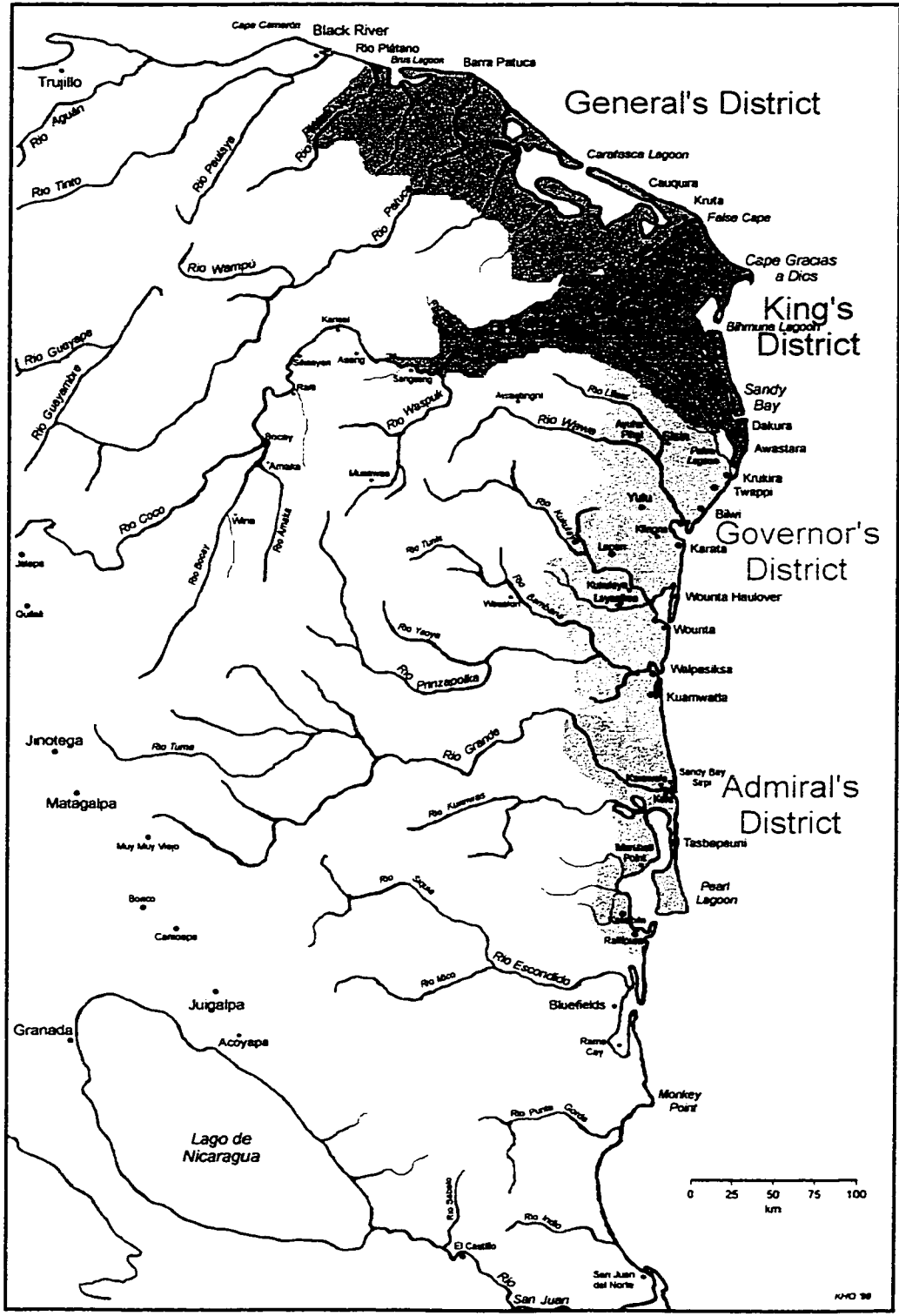


Figure 5.1 The Four Districts of the Miskitu Kingdom circa 1760.

**Table 5.2 Miskitu Political Geography circa 1740.**

<b>Miskitu Group</b>	<b>Leader's Title</b>	<b>Territorial Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Miscellany</b>
Sambo	King	lower Rios Wangki and Kruta, and Sandy Bay	
Sambo	General	north coast of Honduras from eastern Caratasca Lagoon to Black River	nominally below king (but often independent) among Sambo Miskitu, especially after 1730
Sambo	Colonel or Admiral	Cape Gracias	subordinate to and within King's district
Tawira	Governor	Twappi-savanna region from Krukira to Yulu to Prinzapolka	
Tawira	Admiral	Rio Grande and northern Pearl Lagoon	expansionist colony formed ca. 1729; subordinate to the governor in the same way that general nominally subordinate to the king
Tawira	Captain	Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor	subordinate to and within governor's domain; likely a Tungla/Tawira wita

### *The Northeast Coast of Honduras*

Some 700, mostly Sambo, Miskitu lived between the Rio Kruta and Cape Camerón along the north coast of Honduras around 1700. Observers described Miskitu communities from Cape Gracias to the Rio Plátano as mixed or ‘mulatto,’ but considered the few Miskitu west of the Rio Plátano to be native Miskitu. As we saw in Chapter Four, however, by the 1740s observers considered the entire north coast the domain of the ‘Sambo’ Miskitu. The headman along the northcoast until at least 1720 was Captain Hobby, a sukia and the son of an African woman, who likely took his name from the English Capt. Hobby who invited Dampier to sail with him to the Mosquito Shore in 1679. By 1710, some 10 white men with their Indian slaves had settled at the mouth of the Rio Plátano, adjacent to a Miskitu community that remains there to this day.

In the early 1700s, sources suggest that ‘native’ Miskitu communities had recently re-located west of the Rio Plátano and that their villages corresponded to those of white interlopers. The notion of a Sambo-Tawira frontier at the Rio Plátano is supported by a 1716 Spanish report stating that “*zambos*” extended only 30 leagues west of Cape Gracias.<sup>9</sup> In addition, M. W. states that an “Indian” Captain Mr. William who “has about 30 in his family” lived “about eight leagues to the windward of [Cape Camerón],” that is just west of the Rio Plátano.<sup>10</sup> Uring stayed with 2-3 families of ‘native Muscheto people,’ living near two white men at present-day Rio Tinto (Black River): the same people who provided the information in the quote introducing this section.

The largest ‘native’ Miskitu community on the north coast was located on the west side of the Rio Plátano, adjacent to the largest congregation of white settlers before 1730. At the mouth of the Rio Plátano, Uring found several huts flying the English Flag:



At this place lived eight or ten English White Men, who are called Merooners, and about the same number of the Native Indians [Tawira Miskitu]. Some of the White Men have taken Indian wives [Pech?], and others have their Women which are their Slaves, who are kept as Wives, by which they have several children; some of them have also Negroes and Indian Slaves, which hunt for them, and provide for the Families, for they have no Flesh but what they kill in the Woods, and live in the same Manner as the Indians.<sup>11</sup>

The Tawira Miskitu had formed a community on the west side of the river mouth, while “most” of the 8-10 white men resided on the east side. These people had their provision grounds 40-50 miles up river where:

Plantanes grow in old [Pech?] Indian Plantations, which had been long since deserted; and notwithstanding a good part of that Fruit was exhausted, they found enough to supply their present Occasion, though they were about Thirty People, which were continually supplied with breadkind from thence.<sup>12</sup>

As I elaborate further in Chapters Seven and Eight: (a) white interlopers prompted Indian slave raids and possibly chose their dwelling sites in relation to ‘abandoned’ provision grounds which these activities made available; (b) the location of the few white habitations before 1740 typically remained adjacent to Tawira Miskitu communities rather than interspersed with them; and finally (c) white communities in the 18<sup>th</sup> century do not appear to have located next to Sambo Miskitu settlements.

According to M. W. the coast from the Rio Plátano to Cape Gracias was predominantly mixed Miskitu, and that behind the coast lived Pech and Twahka Indians. Between Brewer’s Lagoon and Cape Gracias are:

many small scatter’d families of *Mulattoes*, and some *Indians*, especially about *Black-river* [Rio Kruta], which lies not above four leagues from the last cape, on whose banks above a hundred of these people inhabit, and many more on the side of a great lagune [Caratasca] lying near, and running into this river by a very obscure way, by which they go with boats on the water under the trees. The chief captains of those Indians there, are called Le Rouch, Bremmin, Old Brewer, and Gaugh; which last has the first place in these peoples esteem, being, as they term him, a Succhea, or is rather a conjuring quack doctor. . . . two different nations of *Indians* inhabit on the sides of the rivulets which fall from the said mountains, who live on the wild

game of the country, and are deadly enemies to the *Mosqueto-men*. They have no trade or acquaintance with any Europeans, except a small company of them who live near the head of Potucke, who, more thro' fear than goodwill, have some commerce with a small party of *Spaniards* who live at the head of that river.<sup>13</sup>

Within the next 40 years, English authors generally term M. W.'s mixed communities of 'mulattos' and "some Indians" Sambos. The area lying between the Caratasca Lagoon and the Rio Kruta was the abode of Captain Hobby, "one of the Chief Men on that Side of the Country," who Uring calls a mulatto, "his Mother being a Negroe." The 1737 testimony of returned African slave Carlos Casarola states that "Jabe" [Hobby] lived west of Cape Gracias at a place called "Sani, a community adjacent to a large sea" where he reigned as "an important *mulato*, like a prince, who the people speak of and revere as a *gran señor*."<sup>14</sup>

By the early 1700s, the northeast coast of what is today Honduras displays a fairly well defined Miskitu geography. To the west of the Rio Plátano lived 10-12 white men, their Indian and African slaves, and up to 40 'native' Miskitu. The 'native' Miskitu had recently moved west of the Rio Plátano with the rise in power of the 'mulatto' Captain Hobby. In contrast, only mixed mulatto-Tawira or Sambo, communities extended east of the Rio Plátano. Behind these Sambo Miskitu lived mostly Twahka Indians, especially along the Rio Patuca. By the 1740s, authors refer to the entire north coast Miskitu as 'Sambo,' however, the Rio Plátano remains a significant Mosquitia frontier for the next two centuries, and even today the sharp boundary separating Garífuna communities from Miskitu settlements lies a few miles west of this river at Plaplaya.

### *Northeast Savannas of Nicaragua*

The image of northeastern Nicaragua at the beginning of the 1700s contrasts sharply with that of the Honduran coast. From the time of de Lussan in 1688, to M. W. in 1699, to Uring in 1712, there is no evidence of mixed or Sambo communities

south of Cape Gracias a Dios. M. W. in particular describes numerous Miskitu ‘Indian’ families at Sandy Bay and upon the savannas to the south. By 1730, however, Sandy Bay emerges as a bastion of mixed communities, and indeed becomes a Sambo stronghold within the inter-Miskitu disputes that crop up over the next 50 years. This transition reflects the strong familial and provisioning ties of the Sandy Bay people to those of the adjacent Rio Wangki communities of Wasla and Kum. Von Tempski’s 1856 map shows a “Road” linking Sandy Bay to Coom [Kum], or the “Residence of the Kings,” demonstrating this connection geographically.<sup>15</sup> During a visit to Kum in 1997, community leaders told me that the people from Kum to Saklin had strong historical ties with the people of Sandy Bay. Although seasonal migration no longer takes place, Sandy Bay people travel up the Rio Ulang with mangos, cassava, and fish to trade for beans which they cannot grow. Moreover, to this day, several Sandy Bay and Kum residents claim descent from the royal family. King regalia including the crown and canes, or staffs, have remained within the communities until at least the 1970s, and local political leadership was inevitably a descendent of the royal kaimka (see also Chapter Nine).

According to de Lussan, after Africans settled near the Cape, “The original inhabitants of Moustique . . . settled ten or twelve leagues to windward of Cape Gracias a Dios, at places known as Sambey and Sanibey.”<sup>16</sup> Following my argument in Chapter Three, I suspect that the ‘original inhabitants’ summered at Bihmuna Lagoon, also termed Wani or Wawa (Guaba) Lagoon, from upland Wangki villages such as Saklin and Kum. As M. W. tells it, “in the dry seasons great numbers of them flock down to Sandy-key [Cape Gracias], and there live perhaps a month or two on fish.” Three hundred years ago the land mass forming ‘the Cape’ probably coincided with northern Bihmuna, the same “fine harbor” Captain Butler sailed into in 1639. Indeed, the Sandy Bay communities, the mouth of the Rio Wangki, and Wangki villages were substantially closer to one another in 1699. By the time M. W. arrived in the Mosquitia the area between Sandy Bay and

Cape Gracias was uninhabited. On the other hand, Sandy Bay comprised some 600 “Indians” distributed in four villages, an aggregation that Uring considered “the greatest body of Muscheto Indians.”<sup>17</sup>

On the north side of Sandy Bay dwelled an “*Indian* family under *Capt. Jacob*, on the banks of a river called *Boccho-stinko*.” At the middle of the bay “lives one Pickaree, an *Indian* captain, and his family, of great esteem amongst his neighbours, for his courage, and success in their wars against the other wild *Indians*.”<sup>18</sup> About three leagues from the sea, at the back of Sandy Bay, is the:

chief town of these people, consisting of about twelve straggling houses, and inhabited by 400 people in all or thereabouts; ‘tis situate on the side of a vast barren plain, which they call the Savanna. The most famous of this town are *Cpts. Franck, Kitt, Morgan, Antonio, Labrin, &c.*<sup>19</sup>

M. W. stated that “many of their buildings are somewhat lofty, like an English thatch barn, but open all round, having no walls, only, at a good distance asunder, some short poles which support the roof, which is cover’d with leaves and the tops of cane.”<sup>20</sup> These descriptions show that the Miskitu once lived in extended family long houses like those so well described, sketched, and utilized by the Mayangna until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Three more leagues westward on the savanna, along the “King’s River,” likely the Rio Ulang, “is the palace of the old king Jeremy, which indeed is but an old thatch’d house like the rest, open on all sides, supported by sticks about 16 foot asunder.”<sup>21</sup> As described by Sloane as well, M. W. describes King Jeremy as ‘an Indian’ who’s hair “hangs long down upon his shoulders.”<sup>22</sup> The King lived with his 30 year old son, “the Prince,” a sukia, and 50 of his people.

South of Sandy Bay at *Dorca* [Dakura], M. W. stated that “about 50 more *Indians* inhabit, the chief whereof is call’d *Annaby*.”<sup>23</sup> *Annaby*, likely a corruption of the English ‘Sandy Bay,’ was the first Tawira governor. About 5 leagues further south reside two or three families “who live on the banks of a river call’d *Housey* [Rio Twappi or Rio Krukira], and two or three more families inhabit between that

and the *Brangmans* river; near which three *Englishmen* have many years lived, with about 12 families of *Indians* in their neighbourhood on the *Savanna*.<sup>24</sup> According to M. W., to the south and westward of this last place lived about 20 more families of Miskitu Indians, a place likely corresponding with present-day Yulu. In M. W.'s description, Sandy Bay and Dakura are considered 'Indian' in 1699, a situation that changes after the small pox epidemic sends hundreds of Tawira to the Rio Grande and shifts the Governor's residence from Dakura to Twappi.

The human landscape of Sandy Bay transforms itself significantly by Casarola's 1737 testimony. The former slave tells his inquisitor that 5 days north of the Rio San Juan one encounters Tawira Miskitu in five communities (although he proceeds to name many more than five):

traveling five days from the Rio San Juan one encounters five pueblos of *indios mosquitos* that are called, one after another along the coast, Quaquaco [Kuamwatla?], Calata [Karata?], Sintá, Tamanotarara [Tapamlaya?], Grabito, Aguatará [Awastara] (where the negro providing this declaration was held captive and in the service of Yane, *indio mosquito medio mestizo gordo*, who he says has since died) Norosvira [Krukira], Guelescota, Nanaves, Dacora (where Anibel [Annaby] lived, but has since died and gone to hell, and Ocrelaya, Quelegoita, Chinaracom, a town of Englishmen containing some six houses [and their] sloops, but they may have died.<sup>25</sup>

In the very next sentence, Casarola names the communities of *mulatos mosquitos*:

Pueblos of *mulatos mosquitos*: Yacop [Jacob], Anguelagalaia, where the King lives mixed with Indians, Yucuri [Kuri], Norabera [Nina Yari], Juan Cuinguina [Wangki], Panamanca [Caratasca] wearing chest plates made of silver retrieved from the earth which they inherited from the ancients. It is said that [these mosquitos] fight with lances and *Sani* [slings of cordage?].<sup>26</sup>

At some point during Casarola's residency in the Mosquitia between 1703 and 1728 the Sandy Bay communities became predominantly the residence of '*mulatos mosquitos*.' The community headed by Jacob, which M. W. considered 'Indian,' is considered 'mulato mosquito' by Casarola. In addition, Casarola describes the king as a mulatto living among Indians. If we can trust the transcription, Casarola is

likely referring to King Jeremy II, the sukia-Prince noted by M. W., or more likely still his successor, Peter.

The three-year period between 1727 and 1730 marks a significant turning point in Miskitu ethnohistory and geography. As we saw in Chapter Four, Hodgson noted that a 1727 slave raid at the Yucatán Peninsula brought small pox to the Mosquitia which “destroyed the better half of them.” His 1744 figures of 500 Sambo and 350 Tawira “fighting men” suggest that African resistance to the Old World disease aided a demographic shift in favor of the Sambo Miskitu.<sup>27</sup> I would like to propose, in addition, that the demographic shift also affected Miskitu politics, geography, and identity variance in three significant ways. First, small pox killed King Jeremy II and Governor Annaby circa 1727. Second, royal succession created a power struggle and social unrest which encouraged a group of Tawira Miskitu, likely from one of the Sandy Bay communities and/or Dakura, to form a Tawira outpost at the mouth of the Rio Grande—the first known permanent Miskitu settlement south of Kuamwatla. Third, the post-1730 governing order, increasingly legitimated through British commissions, helped reify a new and more rigidly divided settlement geography. From 1730 forward, until wide-spread Sambo southward migrations beginning in 1860, only Tawira Miskitu and a small cluster of five ‘*pueblecitos*’ of Sambo Miskitu at the southern end of Pearl Lagoon, lived south of the Rio Krukira (or Rio Hueson on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps), not coincidentally the northern boundary of the Mosquito Reserve. Moreover, isolated Tawira or mixed Tawira-Sambo communities that lay north of Twappi became identified as Sambo Miskitu in the subsequent historical record. This settlement geography underscored the influential identity boundary between the two groups.

### *Lower Rio Wangki*

Historically, Miskitu communities along the lower Rio Wangki and Sandy Bay have acted as a kind political and cultural bridge between the north coast Sambo Miskitu and the Tawira Miskitu of the Nicaraguan savannas and lagoons. During the colonial period, the lower Rio Wangki communities were associated with the Sandy Bay communities through kaimka networks formed around dry-season pursuit of the green turtle at the Miskitu Cays. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, communities of the lower Wangki were headed by two mulatto brothers, Kit and Patrick. As I just showed, the rise of mulatto leadership along the lower Rio Wangki also effected developments at Sandy Bay. Mulatto leadership along the Rio Wangki became integrated with the kaimka of King Jeremy I (1687-1719) and King Jeremy II (1719-1729) and combined with the small pox epidemic to alter the composition of Sandy Bay settlements after 1730. As Sandy Bay communities became increasingly tied to external market economies, Sandy Bay residents ended their traditional upland retreat during the rainy season and relied on sea-oriented activities and foreign trade year-round, a feature that does not characterize the Rio Wangki communities nor the Twappi-savanna communities.

M. W. tells us that no Miskitu lived year-round at Cape Gracias, but two leagues within the mouth:

on the [st]arboard side [Irlaya?] going up, is the seaport of these *Indians*, where one Capt. *Kit*, a *Mullatto*, rules the roast, having several *Indians* with him, who here look out for the security of the river against surprise. On the other side over against him, on a damp savanna, lives one *Garret* a *Guiney* negroe (who escap'd thither from a *Guiney* ship that was lost 60 years since) with several *Mullattoes*, and people of another mix'd breed with him, all reverencing *Kit* as their chief. From this place the banks of the river are uninhabited until you come up 20 leagues higher [Kum], to the house of one *Patrick* a *Mullatto*, brother to *Kit*.<sup>28</sup>

Near Patrick's house, close to the savanna, is a "little *Indian* town of seven houses, of *Patrick's* neighbourhood [Wasla], or rather family, being all akin and under his direction." Among this community, 52 men can bear arms with "some being

*Indians, some dark Mullattoes.*” The headmen are old Glover, Patrick’s father, his brother Peller, a sukia, Febrin, Rowland, and Greenwill.<sup>29</sup> About 18-20 leagues further up the river, where the savanna is said to reach the river on the southside, is another place called the upper wanks, which is likely no higher than present-day Kisalaya. According to M. W., this place is:

the residence of the king’s brother, who living so obscurely and high up in the country, never met with any to give him a name; he has but eight men besides women and children; one of which first is called *Ben*. . . . This is the westernmost part of *Indians* up the river, except one more of about the same number, without names, who sometimes live a little higher up; but commonly lower down towards *Patrick’s*.<sup>30</sup>

M. W. traveled about 45 leagues still higher up the Rio Wangki where he encountered a major tributary that merged from the southside who’s “banks whereof are inhabited by another part of Indians who are flat-headed.”<sup>31</sup> This is undoubtedly the Rio Waspuk, just beyond the western limit of Miskitu settlement along the Rio Wangki at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Southern Tawira*

Two groups of Tawira Miskitu can be delineated south of the Rio Wawa after 1730: what I call the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor, which fell within the governor’s district, and the Rio Grande (which also was connected to Tawira communities in Pearl Lagoon via water routes now gone), which comprised the admiral’s district. Tawira residing behind Wounta Lagoon at places like Kukalaya, Layasiksa, and Tapamlaya, as well as those at Kuamwatla and up the Rio Prinzapolka appear to have a very different past than the north coast, savanna, or Wangki Miskitu. The Tawira, and another Indian group called Tungla, that dwelled between the Rios Kukalaya and Prinzapolka continued to seasonally visit the coast well into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, they maintained friendly relations with



upland Ulwa and Twahka and always remained politically subordinate to Tawira Miskitu leaders before 1790, and the king thereafter.

Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British writers considered the Tungla Indians distinct from the Tawira Miskitu, but during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Tungla called themselves Miskitu Indians. The placename Tungla appears early in the historical record. Conzemius cites a Spanish document from 1739 referring to the “Tuñla Indians,” and the corregidor of Matagalpa noted that “tunlas” lived adjacent to his district in 1743.<sup>32</sup> During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Irishman Cairns considered the Tungla one of six “nations of Indians,” including the Ulwas, Twahkas, Panamahkas, Kukras, and Ramas, that resided upland from coastal Miskitu settlements between Punta Gorda and the Rio Patuca.<sup>33</sup> Toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, two maps show the Tungla Indians along the Rio Prinzapolka to its headwaters.<sup>34</sup> By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, Bell described the Tungla as “a colony of the Mosquito Indians living a riverine life.” Bell encountered the Tunglas on a branch of the Rio Prinzapolka and opined that “they seem to be a mixed race between the Smoos [Ulwas] and Mosquito Indians, and their dialect is nearly pure Mosquito with a large mixture of Smoo words. . . They never construct such large and comfortable houses as the Smoos and Twakas.” Bell adds that “They claim to be the same as the Mosquito Indians, but although they speak the Mosquito language, they do not quite resemble the Mosquito men . . . they do not know how they came to live up the rivers, as no Mosquito Indian can live far from the sea.” In support of Bell’s geography, several maps up through the present century label the Rio Prinzapolka the Rio Tungla.<sup>35</sup>

While the Tawira/Tungla of the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor remained within the governor’s district, some Tawira Miskitu from Sandy Bay and/or Dakura established permanent habitations inside the mouth of the Rio Grande no later than 1730. This group formed the basis of the tawira admiralty. It is possible that this community had been in formation for some time, but received an infusion of Tawira ‘refugees’ following the small-pox epidemic in the late 1720s. By the late 18<sup>th</sup>

century, the Spanish official Porta Costas found 26 Tawira houses four leagues inside the mouth of the Rio Grande at a place called Arenas Blancas. Another league up the river were six other communities, each with 10-12 houses. Dunham and Roberts also described this same landscape in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> This outpost was governed by a Tawira admiral, a title which first appears in the historical record in 1740. Originating as a Tawira ‘outpost,’ the subsistence ecology of the Rio Grande Miskitu always remained precarious, and developed along dissimilar lines from the Tawira of the Twappi-savanna region or the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor. The Rio Grande settlement established strong market relations through salient participation in the southern ‘tortoise shell’ and Indian slave economies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the Tawira Miskitu of the Rio Grande were the principle instigators of Miskitu efforts to enslave their indigenous neighbors, in this case the Kukra and the Ulwa. It is important to realize that Miskitu slave raiding generally concentrated on ethnic groups away from Miskitu dwelling sites. There is no evidence that the Twahka or Panamahka Mayangna were captured or enslaved by either Sambo or Tawira Miskitu in the other Miskitu districts. Indeed, as I will show, the Sambo concentrated their slaving efforts on Indians below Spanish control. The north coast Sambo formed a reciprocal trade relationships with the Twahka of the Rio Patuca, as did the Tawira of the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor with upland peoples. As an expanding settlement, the Rio Grande Tawira came into conflict with Ulwa travel on the Rio Grande and Kukra residence at Pearl Lagoon. The southern expansion of the Tawira Miskitu in 1730 encouraged two mutually supporting developments: a precarious ability to produce or secure food from upland sites or peoples, and a greater dependence on foreign trade for social reproduction.

The human geography of Pearl Lagoon changes dramatically by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Historical descriptions suggest that the northern end of the lagoon was connected to the Rio Grande, and/or that the lagoon had a small connection to the ocean. In any case, such passageways insured that several Tawira communities

formed along the northwestern edge of the lagoon. In 1788, Fray Barrueta noted that Pearl Lagoon also contained a village of 500 “Yarrinces,” or Kukra Indians, but these were likely Tawira, or at least subordinated to Tawira leadership because two years later Porta Costas only noted three Tawira villages. At the southern extreme of the lagoon, Porta Costas noted five “*pueblecitos de zambos*” headed by Colonel César. This landscape is also noted in Del Rio’s 1793 map and by Fray Barrueta who reports a single “pueblo of zambos headed by an *anciano* named Sixar [César] with 26 houses and 160 people.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the “small colonies of Samboes” clustered in Pearl Lagoon, at what became Pearl City, remained apart from Tawira communities up through the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and remained the only Sambo Miskitu communities south of Sandy Bay during the British superintendency.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Sambo and Tawira geography of the southern coast remains stable and divided. Traveling along the coast in 1788, Fray Barrueta outlines the ethnic geography of the Nicaraguan coast north of Pearl Lagoon in the same manner that Casarola did some 50 years prior. Heading north from Pearl Lagoon, Fray Barrueta states:

[there] is a small pueblo with ten houses [Sandy Bay Sirpi?], and later are the pueblos of Principala [Prinzapolka] and Gualpasija [Walpasiksa], where an Englishman called Diego of good origins and his Miskitu wife live with their children. Six leagues further on one finds the following: Alabara [Wounta?, Kuamwatla?], Cuculaya [Kukalaya], and Layasija [Layasiksa], and others I no longer remember. Further along, is Tubapi [Twappi] of 26 houses and the residence of the Governor. [This village is surrounded by] a valley of various villages in which are 500 men able to bear arms. Among these include Quili [Bilwi] and another three villages whose names I do not remember. Later one finds Aquiguita [Dakura?, Awastara?], a place of mulatos and people of mixed race (*mestizos*), where the pueblos of zambos begin, among which Sandival [Sandy Bay] distinguishes itself because it is the residence of the king, whose populations extend out in intervals to the Rio Segovia [Wangki] and Cabo de Gracias, and continue until Laguna Azul, contiguous with Black River.

The hierarchy of these two nations (that of king Jorge and that of the governor don Carlos Antonio de Castilla), is completely ranked by military titles such as colonels, admirals and generals, and captains . . .<sup>39</sup>

In sum, the human geography of the Mosquitia throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century reflects the formation two principal domains: Sambo and Tawira. Sambo domains were divided into two districts: the north coast Sambo district headed by the general, and the Wangki-Sandy Bay Sambo district headed by the king. Likewise, Tawira domains were also divided into two districts: the Twappi-savanna district headed by the governor, which included the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor headed by a captain subordinate to the governor, and the Rio Grande-northern Pearl Lagoon district headed by the admiral.

### **A Miskitu Kingdom**

To examine the political nature of the Miskitu Kingdom, I divide this section into four parts. In the first part I summarize the scholarly debate about the Kingdom. In part two I examine the origin of the Miskitu king and the advent of the other commissioned leaders. The third section suggests that British motivations for expanding commissioned titles reflected military objectives, first in Jamaica against maroons and later against the Spanish in Central America. In the final section, I argue that the Kingdom, as a geographically circumscribed polity, came to constitute and reflect an emerging Miskitu ethnic identity.

#### *The Scholarly Debate*

One central problem in deciphering the nature of the Miskitu Kingdom concerns the ambiguous and discursive nature of the historical documents themselves. English language documents discussing the Kingdom are comprised of two main types. The first class projected the institution as autonomous of British

manipulation and an expression of Miskitu political culture. The second class of English language interpreters recognize that Englishmen created the institution, but that the Indians sought out this arrangement as some sort of inevitable alliance with a superior race. These writers often described the Miskitu as willing British subjects, and wrote as if such a state was natural, self evident, and mutually understood. On this point, the opinions of Hans Sloane, cited in Chapter Three, are typical and worth repeating: “the said Natives . . . were soon made sensible of the Grandeur of his Majesty of Great Britain, and how necessary his Protection was to them.”<sup>40</sup> Spanish language documents, on the other hand, typically saw the Miskitu Kingdom as a farce used to advance British pretensions, and they viewed the king as completely beguiled, if not wholly invented and imposed, by Jamaican officials. Many commentators writing in Spanish have viewed the Miskitu as naïve at best, and fully malleable at worst. Scholars wading through this discursive quagmire have predictably derived varied interpretations of titled leaders in general and the Miskitu Kingdom in particular.

Michael Olien’s 1983 article, “The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession,” opened a new chapter in Miskitu ethnohistoriography by showing that Miskitu kingship had followed a 240 year span of uninterrupted familial succession. Olien argued that the British never removed a king from office before his death, and that the British only sanctioned a successor king after he was chosen by the Miskitu themselves. In his more recent study, “General, Governor, and Admiral: Three Miskito Lines of Succession,” Olien extends this view and argues further that all titled officials may have emerged from the same extended family of African-Indian unions since the 1640s.<sup>41</sup> Olien, together with Philip Dennis, also reasoned convincingly that regardless of British intentions, the commissions took on real meaning among the Miskitu. Dennis and Olien also highlighted the importance of a leaders’ acquisition of esoteric knowledge, backed by European symbolism such as swords and uniforms, in achieving internal legitimacy.<sup>42</sup> Combined, the works of

Olien and Dennis provide the cornerstone rebuttal to the standard belief that the Miskitu kings were puppets of indirect British rule.

In contrast, Mary Helms and G3rman Romero have taken dissimilar views. Helms argues that Olien and Dennis confuse the king with the Kingdom. She suggests that prestige and respect bestowed upon titled figureheads did not translate among the Miskitu into a hierarchical and well governed social system. She argues that titled individuals did not hold real authority among the Miskitu, but achieved their special status as an outgrowth of warfare that did not translate to all areas of society.<sup>43</sup> While it is certainly debatable how Miskitu status translates into actual authority (even today), I will show that titled leaders, regardless of warfare successes, did command a great deal of authority through the manipulation of symbolic power. Since titles were hereditary, status was transferred and recognized through European gifts and symbols that may or may not have been affected by performance in warfare. For his part, Romero stresses the Jamaican role in orchestrating and legitimizing titled successions, something all Spanish-language writers have done. He argues that the Miskitu king and other titled individuals only commanded authority after they had received commissions from the British, and therefore that Jamaican officials managed the conditions of title succession by granting rulers their legitimacy.<sup>44</sup> While this position is partially correct, emphasizing foreign manipulation fails to understand how social legitimacy was actually obtained and what internal mechanisms sustained it.

Olien, Dennis, and Helms all appear unaware of any significant Sambo-Tawira tension during Miskitu ethnohistory, and they do not view titled individuals in this light. Indeed, Olien's most recent article suggests that regional variations recorded in the sources only represent "stereotyped" ethnic differences following the arrival of Africans. However, Olien makes several assertions about the relationship between Creoles and the Sambo Miskitu in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that call into question his command of 18<sup>th</sup> century Sambo-African slave relations and Miskitu geography more generally.<sup>45</sup> Romero's position, on the other hand, is much

closer to my own. He finds that “The jurisdictions of each [commissioned Miskitu leader] appear well defined [by 1740] and appear to follow ethnic considerations.”<sup>46</sup> However, Romero does not elaborate this point and subsumes identity variance and Miskitu ethnogenesis more broadly within the process of British orchestration and a neo-environmental determinism.

In my view, all the above authors’ opinions could sensibly characterize certain aspects of titled Miskitu leaders, as well as the Miskitu Kingdom more generally, but fail to understand how the colonial institution was (a) successfully transformed by the Miskitu into a central pillar of their identity by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and (b) molded Sambo-Tawira relations in ways that affected the history of eastern Central America. In this sense I believe the above authors have privileged historical documents at the expense of understanding how these processes related to and were affected by the Miskitu themselves. Although Dennis and Olien argue a very similar point, and show this in their research, they over generalize examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially regarding the Anglo-education of the king and his elevation over other titled leaders—an outgrowth of their failure to recognize the importance of Tawira-Sambo differences and the governor-king polarities they generated before 1790.

To illustrate my perspective I would like to make a general claim that loosely organizes the balance of this study. I suggest that the Miskitu king, all the titled officers, and the Miskitu Kingdom as a social structure, worked to locate the Miskitu internally, as an ethnic group, within Western conceptual notions of nation, country, and monarchy of the times. This occurred on at least two interrelated levels. First, through the transculturation of European symbols the Miskitu mimicked Occidental and principally Anglo traditions in ways that located their identity within European cultural forms. For example, Henderson described the Sambo Miskitu in 1804 as totally preoccupied with the English rules governing succession:

[A] very exact and perfect idea of the British law of succession is entertained by them. It is a subject which engages much of their attention from its having long been one of close imitation amongst themselves. Indeed, it would perhaps be found, that many points of our doctrine of primogeniture are much more accurately understood by these people . . . It certainly is not unfrequent [sic] to find Indians in this nation, at least those of the superior class, capable of discoursing on such topics with a precision that might reflect no discredit on a civilian.<sup>47</sup>

I suggest that kingdom politics, succession struggles, and the assertion of regional authority among Miskitu leaders played a central role in shaping Miskitu identity. Just as I illustrated anecdotally in the introductory chapter, internal social politics have always demanded a great deal of attention among the Miskitu, and in this sense Olien is correct when he argues that many changes in Miskitu society “have been self-generated rather than imposed from outside.”<sup>48</sup>

Second, through political jurisdictions held by commissioned leaders, the Miskitu hierarchy began to view their homeland, the Miskitu Kingdom’s territory, in sovereignty terms linked to the fact that they remained ‘a free and unconquered people,’ a common refrain attributed to the Miskitu. Although the Miskitu Kingdom was divided across Sambo-Tawira lines, as well as spatially among three regions and four commissioned districts, the common notion of ‘a Miskitu Kingdom’ or ‘Miskitu country’ worked to bridge internal differences or political disparities at key historical conjunctures. Although stated somewhat simplistically, Nicaraguan governor Juan de Ayssa succinctly captures this division and unity among the Miskitu: “The Mosquitos [Tawira] and zambos do not maintain a good relationship amongst themselves, but they can overcome this quickly when they wish to harass the Spanish.”<sup>49</sup>

Many analysts have considered contemporary Miskitu discourse supporting a territorial position to be a 20<sup>th</sup> century invention, but a territorial consciousness, or at least a corresponding behavior and discourse employing territorial metaphors, is evident among Miskitu leaders from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1730, Cockburn met raiding Tawira Miskitu in Panamá who bragged to him that their



country had never been conquered by the Spanish.<sup>50</sup> During his encounter with the Miskitu in 1759, the Spaniard Lara y Ortega noted that:

[The Miskitu] defend the entire coast, and consider themselves absolute Masters of it (*se consideran absolutos Señores de ella*), giving the reason that they have not been conquered by any potent force, and for this reason the Coast is theirs.

He continues that the Miskitu get on well with English but that “the English are conscious of the fact that neither they nor others can enter Sandivel [Sandy Bay], which is the place where the King holds Court, [if they are not invited].” During his visit among the Miskitu, Lara y Ortega stated that Superintendent Hodgson wanted to enter Sandy Bay, but that the Sambo would not let him, indeed “they wanted to kill him” because he had “previously made an unauthorized inspection of the King’s lands.”<sup>51</sup> Repeating what the Miskitu say, Superintendent Otway recorded in 1764, that “the Mosquito Indians have and do claim the possession of [their country], as their right by virtue of its having been always inhabited by them, who have ever continued a free and unconquered people.”<sup>52</sup> After the British pulled out of the Miskitu Shore, one observer recorded the Sambo Miskitu at Black River riling against the British, who had, “as they emphatically expressed it, ‘given away to their enemies their own country which God Almighty gave them’.”<sup>53</sup>

The Superintendency’s territorial extent was vaguely indexed to what the English felt were ‘Miskitu lands.’ Although it was in Britain’s interest to assert that the Miskitu understood that the Mosquitia ‘belonged to them’ or signified their sovereign ‘country,’ the day-to-day projection of this rhetoric resonated with comparative Miskitu geopolitical conceptualizations and experiences. This was especially true as titled leaders began to command authority within specific districts and attempted to extend their control over upland or neighboring indigenous peoples, formed ‘treaties of state’ with Spanish representatives, and granted land or resource concessions to British settlers in areas outside traditional settlement-provisioning domains (see Chapters 7-10). Over the years, the Miskitu attempted to

turn the Superintendency's spatial construction into reality by granting concessions to British settlers, taxing contraband trade, and asserting authority over upland Indians. This quotidian geopolitical practice generated a spatial and political link between the abstract notion of a Miskitu Kingdom on the one hand, and the emerging Miskitu nation on the other.

Both the British and the Spanish interacted, physically, rhetorically, and symbolically with the Miskitu in ways that generated an image of the Mosquitia as a territorial place associated with a Miskitu polity and the ethnic group. Physically a negotiated but very real boundary divided 'Spanish lands' from 'Miskitu territory.' Rhetorically in everyday conversation and in ritualized meetings, language expressing country, nation, and the sovereignty of an 'unconquered people' was readily employed. Symbolically, as we will see, all Miskitu leaders understood and manipulated national banners, flags, and distinctive national (i.e., Spanish or English) military uniforms depending on the context. Anglo and Spanish discourses, practices, and symbols inculcated the Miskitu with notions of proto-state territorial sovereignty, something that affected Miskitu socio-spatial dynamics as it forged a common Miskitu identity that helped bridge Sambo-Tawira differences. It is my view that scholars have falsely conceptualized the Miskitu Kingdom as a British invention and imposition at the same time they have ignored the ways in which Miskitu-Spanish dealings imparted and reinforced a spatial component of Miskitu ethnic identity.

#### *Formation of the Miskitu Kingdom*

I have shown in Chapter Three that the origins of kingship among the Miskitu began in the 1630s when English settlers of Providence Island "persuade[d] them to send home the King's Son, leaving one of his People as Hostage for him."

The Indian Prince going home with the said Earl, staid in *England* three years, in which time the Indian King died . . . Upon the return of the said Indian Prince, they persuaded him to resign up his Authority and Power over them, and (with them) unanimously declare themselves the Subjects of his said Majesty of *Great Britain*, in which Opinion they have ever since persisted, and do own no other Supream Command over them.<sup>54</sup>

Sloane's account, which he heard from King Jeremy I, remains the most detailed record of this event that we have. Confirming only the veracity of Sloane's meeting, the new Governor of Jamaica, the Duke of Albermarle, sent a letter to London in 1688 stating that various "Musketa Indians" had come to Jamaica to celebrate his arrival and inform him that they had been subjects of England since the reign of Charles I in the 1630s.<sup>55</sup> As we have seen above, to describe other Miskitu leaders circa 1700-1720 both M. W. and Uring use no rank higher than captain. Things change rather quickly thereafter. The initial division of Miskitu society into three regions, and later four districts, along Sambo-Tawira lines, as outlined above, compelled the British to institutionalize the recognition of other leaders. That is, internal difference along Sambo-Tawira lines compelled the British to commission other leaders because the king could not command sufficient authority among the disparate Miskitu population. Therefore, and in contrast to the reverse proposition held by many commentators, the increase of titled commissions such as governor, general, and admiral reflect a pre-existing partitioned Miskitu geography: the commissions did not create difference.

In 1729, the Jamaican Governor Hunter received a letter from "Peter, King of the Musketoos" informing him that King Jeremy II and Governor Annaby (a. k. a. John Hannibal) had recently died from small pox, creating social unrest among his people. Peter sought a new patent for himself, as well as one for a new governor who would assist him to oversee his domains to the south, and for a new general, chief inspector of the northern district.<sup>56</sup> In my view, this is probably the seminal moment in the formation of the Miskitu Kingdom, as a genuine Miskitu social structure, cultivated and supported by colonial endeavors. To understand this

moment a little better, it is useful to digress into a discussion of this conjuncture and the historical texts transmitting it to us.

Informed by more than a decade of Miskitu raids at Matina, Costa Rican Governor de la Haya wrote that the three principle leaders among the Miskitu were “Bernabé, Pittar and Anibel.”<sup>57</sup> Although Governor de la Haya does not associate these names with any titles in the writings that I have consulted, Romero and Olien argue that Bernabé refers to King Jeremy II and that Pittar is General Peter who is said to have held this title from 1722-1729—dates they have construed from de la Haya’s letters and the letter of King Peter just noted. Olien suggests that General Peter ascended to the position of king in 1729, the only known general to have made this transition, and that he, Jeremy II, and Hannibal were all brothers.<sup>58</sup> We can be sure that Anibel refers to Governor Annaby (John Hannibal), and while it is possible that General and King Peter are the same individual, I find less evidence supporting the notion that Hannibal and King Jeremy II were more than cousins—M. W. certainly did not think this—moreover, several questions would remain unanswered.<sup>59</sup>

The first problem concerns Peter’s letter. It is well known that most Miskitu leaders, at least in this period, did not write the letters ascribed to them. Most correspondence, including this letter, were signed by ‘marks,’ and typically verified in writing by a witness who was inevitably British. While this alone does not invalidate the letter’s contents, it calls into question what Peter meant by his “brother,” King Jeremy II. Olien himself points out that they may have been cousins since the Miskitu use the “Hawaiian cousin terminology.”<sup>60</sup> However, the Miskitu use the expression brother in several other regards as well, for example they often were recorded as saying that the King of England was ‘their brother,’ or that the English were ‘their brothers,’ or that all Miskitu were their brothers. It is extremely difficult to assume that the use of ‘brother’ in a letter refers to a fraternal sibling. The second problem is that de la Haya’s 1722 letter does not refer to Pittar as a General. In 1712 Uring only noted the authority of ‘Capt. Hobby’ on the north

shore and, likewise, Casarola who lived in the Mosquitia from 1703-28, only noted the north coast presence of “Jabe,” (Hobby) whom he called a *gran señor*, and was still discussing him in the present tense in 1737.<sup>61</sup> Finally, King Peter requests that Charles Holby receive the new patent of General. This is inevitably a corruption of Hobby since in 1731, Jamaican Governor Hunter received a letter from the new General Charles Hobby.<sup>62</sup> It is possible that Uring’s Capt. Hobby and Charles Hobby are the same, or at least father and son respectively.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, an alternative interpretation of de la Haya’s letter would be that ‘Bernabé’ was in fact Casarola’s ‘Jabe,’ since the Spanish did not likely realize that Jabe was a phonetic transcription of Hobby.<sup>64</sup> If so, this would throw Pittar’s identity in de la Haya’s letter up for grabs. One could argue, however, within an understanding that early leadership positions followed sukia authority, that Pittar may have been the Wasla sukia M. W. referred to as Peller (see above). This possibility would be supported by the fact that traditionally the Miskitu King came from a Wasla-Kum family that had kaimka relations with Sandy Bay.

Irregardless of the exact bloodlines, the 1720s mark a watershed decade culminated by a small pox epidemic, social unrest, and the transfer of the king, general, and governor positions to new individuals. I have already suggested that the unrest noted in Peter’s letter was responsible for a wide-spread southern migration of Tawira from Sandy Bay and Dakura to the Rio Grande. I also suggest that the nature of this separation is the event or process behind the oral tradition of Miskut outlined in Chapter Two. Recall that Miskut’s people split into groups, one going to the Rio Wangki, the other to Bihmuna, and another went south, splitting again into two groups. Indeed, the geographical movement associated with the Miskut story comes quite close to describing events that have been historically recorded between 1680 and 1730, migrations the epidemic may have crystallized in Miskitu memory. In my view the political posturing of Peter in 1729, and the subsequent geographic fracturing of Miskitu society, which consolidated Sandy Bay as a Sambo stronghold and strengthened the Tawira presence from Twappi to Pearl

Lagoon, forms the basis for a divided Miskitu geography, a genuine 'Miskituization' of British commissions, and the spatial construction of the Miskitu Kingdom as a political unity of disparate Miskitu peoples. From this moment on, titles became more important internally, and temporal divisions among the Sambo and the Tawira appear sharper and more geographically structured than at any time prior. This development, however, did not occur in a geopolitical vacuum. Jamaican officials, for more or less the first time, began increasing their interest in cultivating Miskitu friendship.

#### *Miskitu Commissions in light of British Military Prerogatives*

Some time shortly after the kingdoms of Scotland and England were united in 1707, British officials in Jamaica re-evaluated the commission system that they had inherited and contrived to put it to better use. They attempted to do this, in part, by linking commissions to the presentation of emblems of authority such as canes, swords, and other military regalia (see Chapter Nine). In addition, the ritualization of commission ceremonies shifted from Jamaica, where they held little meaning for lay Miskitu, to the Mosquitia where they were conducted in the presence of Miskitu populations. This last strategy attempted to elevate the king above other leaders in hopes of creating a command and control system that the British could rely on. While this approach to Miskitu relations did help endear the Miskitu to the British and it did achieve many regional objectives for Jamaican officials, things rarely worked out exactly as planned. Indeed, the British had no material way to enforce their vision, they could only shape external parameters and rely on cooperation. In the end, this proved insufficient. British objectives, as carried out by the superintendent, did not direct Miskitu activities as hoped. Moreover, the king did not, initially, command respect outside his own district or among the Tawira. This development required the British to commission other leaders and, for the most part,

deal with a coterie of titled leaders consisting of the king, governor, general, and admiral.

The exact origin of these specific titles has never been considered. Although most authors just assume they were randomly chosen and imposed by the British, it is more likely that the Miskitu insisted on these specific titles based on their understanding of Anglo rankings and their experiences with the military men of the Providence Island Company. After the king became associated as the principal leader of the Sambo Miskitu in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, important Tawira leaders selected the second most important titles available: governor and admiral. The title of governor was among the highest in the Anglo-Caribbean, and the governor of the PIC was certainly among the first and most important European man the Miskitu had ever met. After 1655, the Miskitu also held the governor of Jamaica in the maximum esteem. Meanwhile, PIC ship Captain Daniel Elfryth, who commonly sailed along the coast of Central America, often used the title of ‘Admiral.’<sup>65</sup> Although the Sambo and the Tawira understood that the title of ‘king’ held the supreme command among European nations, they also knew that ‘governor’ and ‘admiral’ were among the most powerful Anglo titles in the English language. It is important to recognize this because the Tawira seem to have felt short-changed by having their paramount leader, the governor, be ranked below the sambo king by the British. The importance of this claim becomes clearer in later chapters.

Although individual Miskitu men had long participated in military acts with northern Europeans, 1720 marks the first time that official British policy included the Miskitu into Jamaican military ambitions. In 1720, King Jeremy II and Governor Hannibal signed an agreement with Governor Lawes to “scour the [Jamaican] woods for runaway negroes.”<sup>66</sup> After the agreement, Lawes sent Captain Togwood to bring King Jeremy II to Jamaica along with 50 of his men “in the handsomest manner” to carry out this endeavor. Upon arrival at Sandy Bay, Togwood presented Jeremy and his people with rum, flour, sugar, and presented the

new king with his commission in a solemn and well choreographed ceremony.<sup>67</sup> This is the first time a Miskitu king had been ‘crowned’ on Mosquitia soil. Meanwhile, as noted in Chapter 3, the Miskitu went to Jamaica at least two more times to help capture maroons. In 1725, at least a hundred Miskitu participated in such ventures. By 1731 one British official felt that the “best way to reduce the [maroon] negroes would be to imploy [sic] the Musketoos, as has formerly been done, but that at present he believed they were much dissatisfied with the people of Jamaica, not having been paid according to their contract, when they were last imployed.”<sup>68</sup> If the Miskitu were dissatisfied, this did not deter 200 Miskitu from pursuing Jamaican maroons in 1738.<sup>69</sup> Miskitu successes against the maroons had Jamaican officials thinking about the Miskitu in terms of their ambitions in Central America.

In March of 1740, during the initial phases of the Anglo-Spanish War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1748), Robert Hodgson arrived at Sandy Bay and met with King Edward and Governor John Briton. Although other leaders such as Admiral Dilly, Colonel Morgan, and General Hobby were not present, Hodgson deemed “their presence not being material.” Apparently Hodgson felt only the king and governor, the heads of the Sambo and Tawira respectively, were necessary to conduct business. Hodgson told the king and the governor that since “they had long acknowledged themselves subjects of Great Britain, the Governor of Jamaica had sent [him] to take possession their country in his majesty’s name.” Hodgson was pleasantly surprised to find that the “Indians on this side [Nicaragua] do not appear so averse to government as [he] supposed, and those on the other [Honduras] are tractable enough.”<sup>70</sup> Once the Miskito ‘read’ over the treaty closely, King Edward effectively resigned his country:



The Declaration of Edward, King of the Mosquito Indians in the Presence of God under the British Standard set up at Senock Dawkra, 16 March 1740.

1st. That he resigneth all his Country on each side of Cape Gratia di Dios, and as far back as any Mosquito Indians or others that are depending upon him do inhabit to the Crown of Great Britain to be settled by Englishmen in such manner as shall be thought proper.

2nd. That he and his People do hereby become Subjects of Great Britain and desire the same protection and to be instructed in the same Knowledge and to be governed by the same Laws as the English who shall settle amongst them.

3rd. That they desire the assistance of Great Britain to recover the countries of the Fathers from their enemies the Spaniards, and they are now ready to undertake any expedition thought good for that end themselves.

4th. That they receive and choose Captain Robert Hodgson their commander in Chief as appointed by the Governor of Jamaica and will obey all Orders and follow all Instructions which he shall from time to time communicate to them from the Governour of Jamaica or the King of Great Britain.

5th. That they will help all Indian Nations who are now in subjection to the Spaniards to throw of [sic] the Spanish Yoke, and to recover their Ancient Liberty, and will join any force which Great Britain shall think fit to send to the West Indies for that purpose.

present

Captain Robert Hodgson

Thomas Whitehead

Richard Allen

Thomas Dale

Samuel Williams

Edward King his Mark +

Will. Briton Governour his Mark +

Captain Ephraim

Captain Hanson

Captain Starboard

English, Mosquito Men, and *all the Mosquito Nation both Samboes and Indians.* (emphasis added)<sup>71</sup>

Suffice it to say, I cannot accept that the Miskitu and the British came away with the same meaning from this treaty; certainly the Miskitu did not adhere to the agreement's terms from the outset. The remainder of this study can be read as a

critique of any verbatim interpretation of this agreement, or as a bald reflection of Miskitu endearment to the English.

Immediately after signing the agreement, Hodgson led some 230 Sambo and Tawira Miskitu and nine British subjects on a military expedition against several Spanish strongholds stretching from the Rio San Juan south to the Boca del Toro, Panamá. When Hodgson ordered the Miskitu to attack the Tojares Indians they refused. Later, at Rio Cocle the Tawira deserted the expedition while the Sambos refused to take orders. In his description of this event, Sorsby portrays the Miskitu as deliberately disobeying orders, trading in the midst of battle, and shrewdly assessing their military advantage or disadvantage.<sup>72</sup> After Hodgson had proposed attacking an island supporting El Castillo along the Rio San Juan, he noted that “the Mosquito men were so averse to it, that they declared, if I would not let them go on in their own way, and make slaves of the Spanish Indians, they would proceed no further.” Toward the end of his military campaign, Hodgson wrote requesting another “12 blank commissions for the chiefs,” and a body-guard: “my life is in more danger from these [Miskitu] Indians than from the Spaniards.”<sup>73</sup> It appears that the Sambo and Tawira behaved differently but that both acted in defiance of British oversight. Indeed, both Miskitu groups continued to defy many British military orders for the duration of the superintendency (see Chapter Eight).

Although Hodgson’s initial campaign was a failure, he attempted another military expedition against Spanish settlements in August of 1740. However, this time he employed a more experienced understanding of internal Miskitu differences: he divided the Miskitu into three groups, whereby each group would be led by their respective leaders and would ascend the river in their respective districts. Indeed, in all probability, Hodgson did not *do* anything, but instead simply let the Miskitu plan the attack their own way while taking credit for its masterminding in correspondence. In any case the result was a reflection of Miskitu territoriality as it existed in 1740: 200 Tawira led by Governor Briton ascended the Rio Grande de Matagalpa; 200 Sambo Miskitu along with 100 Pech and possibly Twahka Indians

escorted General Handyside up the Rio Patuca, while Hodgson and King Edward ascended the Rio Wangki accompanied by some 220 Sambo Miskitu from Sandy Bay.<sup>74</sup> These same inland routes, within the same districts, provided access for these same distinct parties during slaving and military purposes throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hodgson's recognition of, or resignation to, the reality of a Sambo-Tawira geopolitics henceforth informed British policies toward the Miskitu throughout the superintendency.

### *Kingdom Geopolitics*

The above discussion shows that the Miskitu Kingdom was spatially constituted and characterized by some underlying self-referential differentiation between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. This point is further illustrated in a passage by Hodgson, Jr.:

Though they are to all intents and purposes one people, yet they are not so properly a single state, as three united, each of which is nearly independent of the others. The first inhabit from the southern extremity till about Bragmans [extends to Krukira], and are mostly the original Indians; their head man they call *governor*. The next extend to about Little Black River [Rio Kruta], and are mostly Samboes; their chief is called *king*. The last is to the westward, and consists of Indians and Samboes mixed; their head man is called *general*.

The power of these three principal men (which is hereditary) is nearly equal; a small difference being in favour of the king, who is a little supported by the whites for the sake of his name, but none of these chiefs have much more than a negative voice; and never attempt any thing without a council of such old men as have influence among those of their countrymen who live around them [likely sukias]. When any thing of importance is to be done, the people of consequence meet, and argue, each as he pleases, but are seldom unanimous, except when they think their country is immediately concerned. The king has a commission or patent for being called so from the governor of Jamaica, and all the other chief people have commissions (admirals and captains) from his Majesty's superintendent; *and upon the strength of these, always assume much more authority than they could without them*. However, it is at best such that it may be more properly said that their

directions are followed, than that their orders are obeyed; for even the young men are above serving the king, and will tell him they are as free as himself. (*italics in original*)<sup>75</sup>

This important statement contains several points that I want to elaborate as a summary and conclusion to this chapter. First, titled succession was hereditary. As I have already shown, the nature of Miskitu primogeniture occupied much internal discussion, especially among the Sambo, and was followed according to English standards. Power struggles, however, were not unknown especially in cases where no clear successor emerged. In general, however, the eldest son ascended to his father's position. Ascension to a titled position, especially within the context of warfare also signified inalienable social responsibilities that no Miskitu leader could ever rise above. As I will show in remaining chapters, the extent of royal benevolence indexed the extent of subject loyalty, a notion that could describe both European monarchies as well as contemporary Miskitu society. To sustain personal power a leader had to procure valued commodities, through warfare or by other means, but also re-distribute them among his people and his kaimka network in conformity with established Miskitu traditions that value communalism.

Second, although the Tawira admiral emerged no later than 1740, the admiral title was initially subordinate to the governor such that he was not considered a major leader until the 1760s. Note in Hodgson Sr.'s 1740 account, although an Admiral Dilly existed, he did not lead the expedition up the Rio Grande. However, the Tawira admiral, who was typically a brother or nephew of the Tawira governor, increased his stature rapidly. By 1766, for example, British settlers stated that the Miskitu have four chiefs, the king, general, governor, and admiral "who govern independent of each other, and have their titles by hereditary right."<sup>76</sup> By the 1780s, both the English and the Spanish had bestowed the Tawira admiral with honors equal to the king or the governor. A Sambo admiral and/or colonel often appears below the king within the Wangki-Sandy Bay district by the 1740s, but this admiral and/or colonel was never on par with the Tawira admiral of the Rio

Grande/Pearl Lagoon district. Unlike the Tawira admiral who lived some 100 miles south of the governor, the ‘Sambo admiralty’ was always geographically situated within the king’s district, allowing little room for independent action.

A third point would be that only the king received his commission directly from Jamaica, while the other leaders received their commissions directly from the British Superintendent. However, the record is contradictory on this point. For example, an exchange of letters between Hodgson, Jr. and the new Governor of Jamaica, William Trelawny in 1772, suggests that the governor often appointed lesser titles:

[Hodgson:] As your excellency has not been pleased to listen to what I wrote concerning the inferior Mosquito Commissions being issued in Jamaica, it is now in vain for me to do other wise then make the best of the Indians you have appointed. Frederic might perhaps as well, instead of his present commission, been appointed admiral in the [place] of the late Admiral Israel, who as well as all his people were Samboes: but I rejoice at your Excellency’s having been informed in time [since you just arrived] of the distinction between them and the original Indians, for if he had been appointed over the late Admiral Dilson’s people, who are all of the latter sort [Tawira], it would have made great uneasiness. I am myself indeed strongly of opinion, that excepting King, Governor, and General, none of them ought to have an higher title than Captain, for by that means, the Superintendent might the easier employ good men, without disturbing the pride of worse with higher Rank; for this reason, I cannot well recommend any one to your Excellency to succeed the said Admiral Dilson. I have already wrote much on this [issue], and have mentioned some appointments I was willing to accept [for] the purpose of forwarding the Settlement.<sup>77</sup>

[Trelawny:] I shall hope for your further communications and remarks on this important subject, and shall attend to your recommendations, both as to persons and rank, for any future Mosquito Commissions: but it appeared to me highly proper to gratify the Mosquito King by granting the Commissions he requested in this Island, even at the risk that his imperfect descriptions might occasion some little mistakes in names and precise jurisdiction.<sup>78</sup>

This exchange illustrates two more points. First, ‘Samboes’ could not be appointed over Tawiras. It should be obvious by now that “the distinction between” the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu precluded any direct oversight of one group by a leader

from the other group. Second, just as King Peter did in 1729, King George attempted to solidify his own power base by requesting specific appointments, at least for the people below his own jurisdiction, in this case the Cape Gracias admiral.

Two final points can be gleaned from the original excerpt. First, Hodgson's remark that leaders with commissions "always assume much more authority than they could without them" suggests that the manipulation of foreign symbols and the distribution of the presents that such manipulation generated began to play a very important role in Miskitu society by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The manipulation of foreign symbols, that is the cultural negotiation of their meaning by the Miskitu, took place in the complete absence of force or sustained coercion. In my view this allowed the transculturation of foreign notions, material objects, and ideologies to instill a good deal of traditional values and beliefs into externally influenced processes of social change.

According to Hodgson, "to all intents and purposes" the Miskitu are one people, they "are not so properly a single state, as three united, each of which is nearly independent of the others." In addition, Hodgson states that the directions of leaders are followed rather than orders being obeyed: "for even the young men are above serving the king, and will tell him they are as free as himself." These two statements are both supported and undermined by M. W.'s well-cited passage:

[The Miskitu] live peaceably together in several families, yet accounting all *Indians* of one tongue, to be the same people and friends, and are in quality all equal, neither king nor captains of families bearing any more command than the meanest, unless it be at such times when they make any expeditions against the *Alboawinneys*; at that time they submit to the conduct, and obey the orders of their king and captains; yet on no account do they pay any taxes, rents or do any sort of services, but have all the country in common (excepting their dwelling-house and small plantations.) They must all hunt and fish alike, or starve, unless sick.<sup>79</sup>

Herein lies the crux of social dynamics during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1671, Esquemelin felt that the Miskitu governed themselves "by

commonwealth, no king nor sovereign among them.”<sup>80</sup> As in M. W.’s time, a cohesion among kaimka networks generated a sense of Miskituness that cut across Sambo-Tawira lines. However, things changed as titled leaders ascended from externally sanctioned figureheads around 1680 to internally respected commanders of esoteric knowledge no later than 1740. Beginning with the Miskitu expeditions against the maroons, the local crowning of King Jeremy II, and the small pox epidemic of 1727-29, the Miskitu king emerged as the leader among equals. Although the Miskitu Kingdom remained not so much “a single state, as three united, each of which is nearly independent of the others,” the colonial institution of commissioned titles developing before 1730 helped lay the groundwork for Hodgson’s attempt to forge a united Miskitu polity during the 1740s. The subsequent formation of the British Superintendency for the Mosquito Shore and the greater institutionalization of Miskitu titles, annual presents, and district level recognition helped forge an incipient Miskitu ethnic identity that occasionally rose above and united the Sambo and the Tawira.

Throughout the Caribbean basin the British worked to generate stable ethnic groups which they could rely on through top-down manipulation. This was the case among maroons in Jamaica and the Guianas as well as among native peoples in Surinam.<sup>81</sup> as well as among Perpetual efforts to unite the Miskitu and elevate the Miskitu king worked in some contexts but failed in others.

### **Notes to Chapter Five**

<sup>1</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 46.

<sup>2</sup> “El Marqués del Campo a Condé de Floridablanca, London, 24 Oct. 1786,” CRC, 249.

<sup>3</sup> Helms, *Asang*, 23-24; see also Mary W. Helms, “Matrilocality, Social Solidarity, and Culture Contact: three case studies,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 26,

no. 2 (1970): 197-211; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 57-58; Garcia, *Making of the Miskitu*, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Helms, *Asang*, 53, 55.

<sup>5</sup> Conzemius, "Nombres Geográficos Mosquitos," 301; Heinrich Ziock, "Sambo vs. Tawira," NMHD, 234.

<sup>6</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 48. On regional sukias versus local sukias see also Bell, *Tangweera*, 139; Frederic Smith, "Station Report from Karata, 1876," NMHD, 170; Ernst G. Gebhardt, "Prophets and Laura," NMHD, 287; Lioba Rossbach, "Indian Life through the Eyes of Moravian Missionaries," NMHD, 41-59.

<sup>8</sup> Dunham noted that a "Sookerman" went about Pearl Lagoon collecting "an annual tax from all the inhabitants in his district." He also noted that sukias cannot see a woman in labor or after her delivery; Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 73, 74. I was told by the wife of a Moravian pastor that this customary taboo is now applied to Moravian pastors: "*es un costumbre de nosotros*," it is our custom.

<sup>9</sup> D. Ambrosio Tomás Santella M., "Sobre el cumplimiento de la Real Cédula . . . acerca del exterminio de los mosquitos," Guatemala, 3 Oct. 1716, CRCM, 79. Conzemius noted that Miskitu speakers living west of the Rio Plátano spoke a distinct dialect from the dominant Honduran dialect *mam*; "Miskito and Sumu Languages," 60.

<sup>10</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 286.

<sup>11</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travel*, 123, 124, 125, 143.

<sup>12</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 125. Jones was equally astonished with the Rio Plátano: "I have known Plantain suckers to flourish here for near thirty years on the same stock with little or no care;" "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 427.

<sup>13</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 286. On the interconnection of Caratasca, Rio Kruta, and the Rio Wangki see Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 157, 166-167.

<sup>14</sup> Casarola lived at "Aguatara," (probably Awastara) as a slave of the Miskitu Indian Captain Yane between 1703-1728; Germán Romero V. and Flor de Oro Solorzano, eds., "Declaración de Carlos Casarola, Negro Esclavo Bozal," *Wani* 10 (1991), 88.

<sup>15</sup> Von Tempski's map is included in Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory."

<sup>16</sup> de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 287.

<sup>17</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 287; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 156.



- <sup>18</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 287.
- <sup>19</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 287; see also Newson, *Indian Survival*, 65.
- <sup>20</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 292-293.
- <sup>21</sup> M. W. estimates the king’s age to be about 60, “Mosqueto Indian,” 287. Casarola provides the same description of the King’s residence: “the King lives in his *rancho* of palm without walls,” “Declaración de Carlos Casarola,” 87. This is likely the present-day community of ‘Kinstown.’
- <sup>22</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 288, 290; Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, I: 76.
- <sup>23</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 288. M. W. states the distance between Dakura and the king’s residence is about 40 leagues. This is clearly a mistake since present-day Dakura is much closer. It would seem that M. W. never visited anything south of Sandy Bay, as his references become much more vague; at one point he refers to Costa Rica, being only a little south of Dakura.
- <sup>24</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 288. Two of the Englishmen, Thomas Arkes and John Thomas, accompanied de Lussan across the Isthmus via Segovia in 1688. They greatly informed M. W.’s account.
- <sup>25</sup> Romero V. and Solorzano, “Declaración de Carlos Casarola,” 88. The problems comparing these placenames to contemporary counterparts are overwhelming. Casarola resided at Aguatará. This sounds like a corruption of Awastara, but the Spaniards also referred to the Rio Grande as ‘Aguatará.’ The Spanish often corrupted the Miskitu word *awas* (pine), into *agua* (water). This creates confusion with the numerous Mayangna toponymies that employ the suffix *-was*, meaning water, or river; cf. Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 137.
- <sup>26</sup> Romero V. and Solorzano, “Declaración de Carlos Casarola,” 88.
- <sup>27</sup> Hodgson to Lord, 4 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 65.
- <sup>28</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 289.
- <sup>29</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 290. Fifty two men able to bear arms living in seven houses suggests some 200-250 people, or 30 people per house, a similar number to that suggested for statistics representing Sandy Bay.
- <sup>30</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 290.
- <sup>31</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 290. Allegedly the Sumu flattened their babies heads against a board to avoid having heads the same shape as monkeys; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 28; Bell, “Remarks on the Mosquito Territory,” 256, 258.
- <sup>32</sup> Conzemius, *Ethnographic Survey*, 89; Mora y Pacheco, “Relación Geográfica,” 44; Table 5.1.

- <sup>33</sup> “Plano de Colville Cairns para mejor Establecimiento del Gobierno español en la Costa de Mosquitos, London, 24 Oct. 1786,” CRC, 253.
- <sup>34</sup> David Lamb, Map of Mosquito Coast, Bluefields, 1780, PRO, CO 700, 9; [José del Río?], Carta Ydografa de la Costa de Mosquitos e sus Adiacentes, [1793,] map on display at CIDCA, Managua.
- <sup>35</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 262, 267; Bell, “Remarks on the Mosquito Territory,” 258. Roberts also mentions the “Dongulas” and the “Tongula Indians” living up the Rio Prinzapolka and at the back of the “Tongula Lagoon” [Wounta]; *Voyages and Excursions*, 119, 126. Today the mixed Miskitu-Sumu village of Tungla resides far up the Prinzapolka, and was considered “Sumu” as late as 1930; Newton Wilson, Quamwatla Annual Station Report for 1930, AMC, 5. Still other authors consider places like Tungla, Layasiksa, Kukalaya, and Kuamwatla to have been the abodes of the Prinsu Sumu, now “extinct;” Heath, “Miskito Glossary,” 28; see also Berendt, “Zur Ethnologie von Nicaragua,” 46. As far as I know, no one identifies themselves as a Tungla today and I have seen no primary reference to this indigenous group since the 1870s.
- <sup>36</sup> Antonio Porta Costas, “Relación del Reconocimiento Geométrico y Político de la Costa de Mosquitos desde el Establecimiento de Cabo Gracias a Dios hasta El Blewfields,” *Wani* 7 (1990), 56; Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 64, 105; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 115; see also Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 170-176.
- <sup>37</sup> Correspondence of Manuel de Barrueta in Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 169-170; Porta Costas, “Relación del Reconocimiento,” 57. The map, Carta Ydografa de la Costa de Mosquitos, likely produced by José del Río, designates a region of Pearl Lagoon as “*Indios Mosquitos Sambos*.”
- <sup>38</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 147; Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 70.
- <sup>39</sup> Correspondence of Manuel de Barrueta in Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 169-170; Porta Costas, “Relación del Reconocimiento,” 57; see also García P., *Memorias*, 3: 154-160.
- <sup>40</sup> Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, 77.
- <sup>41</sup> Michael D. Olien, “The Miskito Kings and the Line of Succession,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39, no. 2 (1983): 198-241; Michael D. Olien, “General, Governor, and Admiral: Three Miskito Lines of Succession,” *Ethnohistory* 45 (1998): 277-318.
- <sup>42</sup> Philip A. Dennis and Michael D. Olien, “Kingship Among the Miskito,” *American Ethnologist* 11, no. 4 (1984), 722-723, 733.

- <sup>43</sup> Mary W. Helms, "Of Kings and Contexts: Ethnohistorical Interpretations of Miskito Political Structure and Function," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 3 (1986): 506-523.
- <sup>44</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 160-169.
- <sup>45</sup> See for example Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 281.
- <sup>46</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 163.
- <sup>47</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 183-184.
- <sup>48</sup> Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 281.
- <sup>49</sup> Governor Ayssa cited in Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 199.
- <sup>50</sup> Cockburn, *Journey Overland*, 239.
- <sup>51</sup> "Relato de una Expedición al costa norte hecho por Juan de Lara y Ortega, Comayagua, 18 Sept. 1759," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 138.
- <sup>52</sup> Otway to Commissioners, 25 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33, 167.
- <sup>53</sup> Robert Sproat to Col. Thomas Barrows, New Egypt, 5 April 1803, PRO, CO 123/15, 61.
- <sup>54</sup> Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, 77.
- <sup>55</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 161.
- <sup>56</sup> King Peter to Governor Hunter, Sandy Bay, 3 Oct. 1729, PRO, CO 137/18: 68-69; "Meeting, 3 June 1730," JCTP, 1729-34: 120; see also Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 163-167; Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 283, 287.
- <sup>57</sup> Diego de la Haya, "Letter from Cartago, 8 Oct. 1722," CRC, 25.
- <sup>58</sup> Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 288, 297; see also Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 164-165.
- <sup>59</sup> Olien argues that Hannibal was the coast's second governor because he accepts Bishop Garret y Arloví's 1711 statement that a Piquirín acted as 'governor' at Punta Gorda. However, Garret y Arloví is likely referring to 'monte gorda,' a place name the Spanish applied to the hills behind Twappi where the Tawira governor traditionally resided. Moreover the Bishop claims the king lived 14 leagues further inland from the governor's residence at a "great pueblo," which is about the distance from Twappi to Wasla-Kum on the Rio Wangki; Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 296; "Informe de D. Fray Benito Garret y Arloví, obispo de Nicaragua," CRCM, 59.
- <sup>60</sup> Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 287.

<sup>61</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 121; Romero V. and Solorzano, “Declaración de Carlos Casarola,” 88, 89.

<sup>62</sup> “Meeting, 8 Feb. 1732,” JCTP, 1729-34, 276.

<sup>63</sup> Potthast would support this reading since she does not list Peter among her list of Miskitu generals; Potthast, *Mosquito-Küste*, 396.

<sup>64</sup> The Spanish often Hispanicized Anglo names, a tradition carried forth by contemporary writers as well. Bernabé was possibly the closest Hispanic name for the unknown ‘Jabe.’ As an example of this type of thing, for no explicable reason historian Tomás Ayón chooses to refer to Miskitu Governor Bretót (Briton) as Bernabé temporarily, before the Spanish name him don Carlos; *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 163.

<sup>65</sup> Pargellis and Lapham, “Daniell Elffryth’s Guide to the Caribbean, 1631;” on Elffryth’s use of the title Admiral see Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, 204.

<sup>66</sup> The agreement stated that “Jeremy, King of the Musquito Indians” would bring 50 Indians for six months; “Gov. Lawes to Council of Trade and Plantations, 24 Aug. 1721,” CSP, 1720-21: 126,128.

<sup>67</sup> British documents cited in Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 165.

<sup>68</sup> “Meeting, 3 June 1731,” JCTP, 1729-34, 206.

<sup>69</sup> During the 1725 outing, the Miskitu proved “ineffective in the mountains” and many were killed or “joined the enemy.” In the 1738 venture they were more successful; W. Adolphe Roberts, *Jamaica* (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1955), 62-64; Carey Robinson, *The Fighting Maroons of Jamaica* (Kingston: William Collins, 1969), 40; see also Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 87.

<sup>70</sup> “Robert Hodgson to Trelawny, Sandy Bay, 8 April 1740,” in *The States of Central America*, ed. Ephraim G. Squier (New York: Hurst and Company Publishers, 1858), Appendix D: 744-746; see also Dawson, “William Pitt’s Settlement,” 685; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 169.

<sup>71</sup> Declaration of Edward, King of the Mosquito Indians, Senock Dawkra, 16 March 1740, PRO, CO 123/1, 52.

<sup>72</sup> Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 20-23, 153; see also Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 170.

<sup>73</sup> “Robert Hodgson to Trelawny, Chiriqui Lagoon, 21 June 1740,” *States of Central America*, Appendix D: 746.

<sup>74</sup> Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 27.

<sup>75</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 46-48.

<sup>76</sup> “Letter of the Inhabitants of the Mosquito Shore to the late Early of Chatham, 1766,” in *The Defence of Robert Hodgson* (London: 1779), Appendix V: 4-5; see also Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 163.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Hodgson to Gov. William Trelawny, Mosquito Shore, April 1772, PRO, CO 137/68, 19.

<sup>78</sup> William Trelawny to Robert Hodgson, Jamaica, 15 Nov. 1772, PRO, CO 137/68, 22.

<sup>79</sup> M. W., “Mosqueto Indian,” 293.

<sup>80</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 234.

<sup>81</sup> Kenneth Bilby, “Swearing by the Past, Swearing to the Future: Sacred Oaths, Alliances, and Treaties among the Guianese and Jamaican Maroons,” *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 4 (1997): 655-689; Neil L. Whitehead, “Ethnogenesis and Ethnocide in the European Occupation of Native Surinam, 1499-1681,” in *History, Power, and Identity*, 20-35.

## Chapter Six

### Miskitu Land Use

At first glance the phrase ‘Miskitu land use’ appears to be an oxymoron. Conventional wisdom contends that the Miskitu were semi-nomadic hunters, gatherers, and fishermen, that agriculture did not occupy the attention of Miskitu men, nor did it provide essential provisions to their diet. Floyd, for example, claimed that the Miskitu are “averse by temperament to agricultural labor,” a view institutionalized in much of the secondary literature.<sup>1</sup> In my view, the basis for such interpretations comes from limited understandings recorded in primary accounts such as the 1743 statement by Mora y Pacheco:

The villages of these savages are without political union, they move about separate one from another, today in one valley, tomorrow in the next; without God, without order, without government. With only this luck they follow the same instincts as monkeys, that is, they stop where there is fruit, and move on when it is gone.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately we have advanced little beyond such stereotypes. Romero, for example, emphatically portrays all native Mosquitians as “*naciones montaraces*,” that is nomadic hunters and gatherers who willy-nilly pursued nature’s bounty. According to Romero, the small tribal units harbored no territorial conceptions and settled where ever food sources led them. In Romero’s view, the Indians moved randomly through a pristine wilderness in search of food, unable and unwilling to affect their domineering environment. Despite evidence that native Mosquitians used fire to culturally modify their environment for thousands of years before European contact, Romero emphatically states that they did not generate any

significant ecological impacts on their environment, and indeed that the Mosquitia was essentially “virgin” when Europeans arrived. This ‘Pristine Myth’ is so common in the historical literature that it now buttresses indigenous discourses and appears axiomatic in Nicaragua.<sup>3</sup>

In my view, the historiography of eastern Nicaragua has authenticated colonialist understandings of past human-environmental relations and, in so doing, has figuratively created a ‘mythical landscape.’ The mythical landscape juxtaposes the imagery of nomadic (and often racially inauthentic) Indians with a fecund, yet extraneously pillaged, environment, and cloaks both within a national vision of coast-to-coast territorial integrity. This triangular relationship among Indians, nature, and geography achieves its ideological significance within the historical narrative of the Nicaraguan nation, a story that couples foreign meddling and economic subordination with an ongoing redemptive struggle for national liberation. I have argued elsewhere that the mythical landscape coalesced several Enlightenment and social Darwinist rhetorical constructions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into 20<sup>th</sup> century Nicaraguan historiography.<sup>4</sup> Although beyond the scope of this study, this chapter can be viewed as a first order attempt to open an intellectual space for alternative conceptualizations of past human-environmental relations in eastern Nicaragua, and Miskitu-land relations in particular.

This chapter shows that Miskitu economic activities were firmly grounded in agricultural production and/or access to foods raised by others, and that each of the four districts outlined in Chapter Five maintained subtly distinct land-uses. While this chapter will reinsert the importance of agriculture in Miskitu food production, I do not wish to overstate the case. The Miskitu were not an agrarian people in the sense that society revolved around working the land to produce crops such as maize or beans. It is certain that day in and day out male activities revolved around hunting, fishing, turtling, boat making, and eventually natural resource acquisition for trade. Nevertheless, women grew many crops at village locations and maintained several swiddens, or itinerant farming plots, that occupied both flood

plains and upland sites cleared with and without fire. Indeed, one forgotten aspect of Miskitu social reproduction during the colonial period was the foundational talents of female agriculturalists.



**Illustration 6.1** Miskitu woman returning from her farm, Sandy Bay, 1950s; photo courtesy of Warren Wenger.

Whenever I think about the role of women in Miskitu agriculture and food production, I am reminded of the time two men were telling me that women no longer worked in agriculture. Before they could finish their explanation of why this was so, four *kuka nani*, or grandmothers, bent over with sacks of cassava and bunches of bananas, passed us as they returned from the farm (Illustration 6.1). Partly due to Moravian teachings about ‘proper’ gender roles, men now contribute generously to agricultural chores. Still, native Mosquitians make a great distinction between ‘*trabajo*,’ exchanging one’s labor for a wage, and farm work viewed as secondary to what should be more important male occupations. Thus, today the



amount of agricultural work men perform is inversely proportional to the availability of other economic options. During the period of this study, 1600-1800, I suspect that Miskitu women performed the overwhelming majority of agricultural chores, which during the dry season were quite significant. European observers generally overlooked Miskitu agriculture because they expected it to be done by men, close to the living quarters, and carried out in a recognizable manner. The abundant historical descriptions detailing Miskitu leisure time reflects food abundance and security rather than scarcity.

Women's role in 'gathering' food crops also needs to be revised. In addition to cultivating domesticated crops, all native Mosquitians managed 'wild' plants for desired products across space and time in a ways that undermine the very notion of gathering. In the English and Spanish languages, the words 'gathering' and '*recolección*,' respectively, accompany descriptions of traditional native Mosquitia lifeways. The assumptions embedded in these two concepts are the same, and imply that the action performed was carried out without much thought: one just heads off and gathers. It is my contention that we need to view indigenous 'gathering' more in terms of 'harvesting.' From my experiences in Nicaragua and from my understandings of rain forest peoples more generally, the descriptive verb 'to gather' should either be discarded altogether in this context, or its meaning should be explicitly modified to take into account purposeful manipulation of local ecosystems to achieve desired ends. Many Miskitu and Mayangna that I spent time with in the forest are master bush(wo)men who culturally modify their ecosystems in innumerable ways. They plant seeds in the forest, selectively care for preferred wild species by cutting down competitors or mulching surrounding soil, and they revisit the same 'gathering' sites through a network of maintained trails year after year. It is not a romantic or idealistic notion to state that native Mosquitians culturally contributed to and purposefully shaped the ecosystems from which they derived their living.

This chapter explores a set of six interrelated questions about Miskitu land use during the colonial period. First, how did seasonality affect upland-coastal Miskitu movements? Second, what factors account for the spatiality of farming sites in relation to permanent dwelling locations? Third, how did gendered subsistence chores interrelate on a daily basis? Fourth, where were different crops planted and why? Fifth, in what ways did the five Miskitu districts exhibit diverse land use strategies? And sixth, how and when did Old World introductions, including cattle, become a part of Miskitu household, and regional, economies? Given the nature of the sources, and the spatiality I am trying to highlight, I do not address these questions in isolation. Rather, I attempt to establish a general background for evaluating Miskitu land use and historical sources, and then move to examine geographic variation within the general land use framework. I contend that the spatiality and variation of Miskitu land use played a significant role in shaping the cultural milieu of Miskitu society, and provided a conservative base of Miskituness that contoured regional processes and the formation of Miskitu identity.

### **Conceptualizing Miskitu Land Use**

Several decades ago Mary Helms theorized a ‘coastal adaptation’ model to demonstrate how Miskitu cultural ecology had changed in relation to European ‘culture contact.’ Based on archaeological work by Richard Magnus,<sup>5</sup> Helms speculated that prior to European contact, the Miskitu lived much like the Mayangna, as an upland and semi-nomadic people who migrated seasonally to the coast. According to Helms, new eastward economies linked to European commerce encouraged year-round coastal dwelling by the Miskitu and reversed the geography of traditional seasonal movements. In this view, one-time fishing stations became permanent residences while trips to upland plantations took place periodically, reversing the pre-contact pattern and ended the ‘wandering nature’ of the Miskitu.<sup>6</sup>

My research finds that the model overstates the extent of coastal resettlement during the colonial period and does not explain regional variations in Miskitu land use or provisioning strategies. I would argue that Tawira communities of the Twappi-savanna district have, for the most part, remained in the same place for hundreds of years, and are not the product of culture contact. On the other hand, upland Tawira Miskitu along the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor continued to migrate seasonally to the coast even after 1860. Meanwhile, Sambo Miskitu at Sandy Bay and Caratasca developed strong kaimka and/or cross ethnic provisioning links with upland peoples. In my view, it is a conceptual error to consider the Miskitu as 'wanderers' during the historical period. Seasonal and daily movements appear quite regular within well defined coastal, savanna, and upland ecosystems, suggesting that upland and lagoon settlements were ancient and continuous rather than recent or ephemeral. We can improve our understanding of Miskitu historical geography if we consider all Miskitu settlements, coastal or otherwise, spatially fixed, and conceptualize seasonal or periodic movement as spatial expressions of a regional subsistence ecology and political jurisdictions.

Elaborating a better understanding of the geography of Miskitu land use and provisioning strategies is subject to four problems among contemporaneous sources: (1) regional or ethnic generalization based on experiences derived in a single community or region; (2) the aggregation of numerous distinct encounters into a single narrative; (3) gendered and Euro-centric biases about proper land use behaviors; and (4) generalizations based on single-season observations. Scholarly interpretations often fail to critically assess these points and, in my view, have reified two pervasive and mutually supporting myths about Miskitu subsistence: (a) that the Miskitu were nomadic hunters and gathers and (b) that agriculture was generally insignificant to Miskitu provisioning. Both myths are unsupportable after one strips away Euro-centric, gendered, and spatial biases about how, where, and when agricultural work should proceed. There appears little understanding on the part of observers, and some historians, about kaimka food sharing, especially

between coastal and upland families. Moreover, the false assumption that all the Miskitu established antagonistic relations with adjacent upland Indians, effectively obscures the fact that the Sambo and Wangki Miskitu traded manufactured goods for foodstuffs, including cattle, with Twahka and Panamahka Indians. On the other hand, the Tawira Miskitu who relocated to the mouth of the Rio Grande and northern Pearl Lagoon around 1730 formed antagonistic relations with neighboring Kukra and Ulwa Indians. This lessened their ability to produce or secure upland foods and compelled them to rely more significantly on commodity exchange for social reproduction.

In general, all native Mosquitians raised a host of New and Old World ground crops and fruit trees (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). While food shortages following storms, floods, or drought were not uncommon, native Mosquitians produced an abundance of ground provisions cultivated by women. After the hurricane of 1935, the Creole Reverend Wilson noted that: “The paucity of native food stuffs has been unparalleled for this fertile region [Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor] where once plenty cheered the very indolent.”<sup>7</sup> In general, the Twahka raised so much cassava, maize, bananas, plantains, tubers, and sugar cane that “food is never scarce with them, and the coast Indians, knowing their abundance, are always glad of an excuse to go up to the twahka settlements, as they are sure of a good blow-out.” Likewise, the upland Miskitu and the Tunгла produced “a superabundance of provisions.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to cotton, chocolate, sugar cane, and pineapples, “the Indians, as well as the coast-people, raise quantities of plantain, banana, and cassada [sic]: indeed, the provision-grounds return more of these productions than their owners require.” Roberts heard one Miskitu pine for the good old days when the Miskitu found “a demand for their produce, at Black River, and the other [English] settlements.”<sup>9</sup> While historical evidence of Miskitu agriculture is limited, contemporary evidence suggests that the maintenance of a stable subsistence base provided by women is what allowed Miskitu men to achieve their successes in other economic areas.

**Table 6.1 Mosquitia Ground Crops and Cultivars.**

<b>English</b>	<b>Miskitu</b>	<b>Twahka</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Scientific</b>
<i>Pre-Columbian domesticates</i>				
cassava	yauhra	malai	yucca	( <i>Manihot esculenta</i> )
maize	aya	am	maíz	( <i>Zea mays</i> )
sweet potato	tawa	pai, sulhkumuk	batata	( <i>Ipomaea batata</i> )
arum, cocoyam	duswa	wilis	quequisque	( <i>Xanthosoma spp.</i> )
chili pepper	kuma	angmak	chile	( <i>Capsium spp.</i> )
annatto	maring, aulala	awal	achiote	( <i>Bixa orellana</i> )
cacao	kakau	kakau	cacao	( <i>Theobroma sp.</i> )
cotton	wahmuk	wahmak	algodón	( <i>Gossypium sp.</i> )
pineapple	pihtu	masah	piña	( <i>Ananas comosus</i> )
<i>Pre-Columbian domesticates, limited cultivation or use among the Miskitu</i>				
vegetable pear	mukula	siau	chayote	( <i>Sechium edule</i> )
squash, pumpkin	iwa	mukatsa, ati	ayote	( <i>Cucurbita spp.</i> )
tobacco	twaku	aka	tobaco	( <i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> )
passion fruit	drap	sungsung	granadilla	( <i>Passiflora spp.</i> )
<i>Old World foods present by the early 1600s</i>				
banana	siksa, kustus	wakisa	bánano	( <i>Musa sp.</i> )
plantain	platu, wamplam plas	wakisa, wamplam yamanh	plátano	( <i>Musa sp.</i> )
sugar cane	kayu	tisnak	azúcar	( <i>Saccharum sp.</i> )
<i>Old World foods present by 1850 (primarily Creole households)</i>				
rice	rais	rais	arroz	( <i>Oryza sp.</i> )
ginger	sinsa	sinsa	jengibre	( <i>Zingiber sp.</i> )
watermelon	rayapisa	sawan kaski	sandía	( <i>Citrullus sp.</i> )
yam	usi	yamus	ñame, ñampti	( <i>Dioscorea sp.</i> )
taro, dasheen	dasin, duku	badu	malanga	( <i>Colocasia esculenta</i> )
arrowroot	ararut	ararut	?	( <i>Maranta</i> <i>arundinacea</i> )

**Table 6.2 Mosquitia House Garden Fruits and Palms.**

<b>English</b>	<b>Miskitu</b>	<b>Twahka</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Scientific</b>
<i>Pre-Columbian domesticates</i>				
avocado	sikia	sikia	aguacate	( <i>Persea americana</i> )
anona, soursop	dwarsap, punu	punu	guanábana	( <i>Annona spp.</i> )
guava	sikra	sikra	guayaba	( <i>Psidium guajava</i> )
gourd tree	sikul, kahami	sutak, sipul	jícara	( <i>Crescentia cujete</i> )
mombin, hog plum	pahara	walak	jocote, jobo	( <i>Spondias spp.</i> )
cashew	kasau	kasauh	marañón	( <i>Anacardium sp.</i> )
hone palm	uhum	ukan	yolillo?	( <i>Elais oliefera</i> )?
nance	krabu	krabu	nancite	( <i>Byrsonima</i>
<i>crassifolia</i> )				
papaya	twas	ulmak	papaya	( <i>Carica papaya</i> )
peach palm	supa	supa	pejibaye	( <i>Guiljelma gasipaes</i> )
sapote	kuri	sipul	zapote	( <i>Pouteria spp.</i> )
 <i>Old World trees present by 1750</i>				
coconut	kuku	kuku	coco	( <i>Cocos nucifera</i> )
lemon	laimus	laimus	limón	( <i>Citrus sp.</i> )
lime	laimus dahmi	laimus dahmi	limón	( <i>Citrus sp.</i> )
orange	anris	yalmis, aransa	naranja	( <i>Citrus sinensis</i> )
grapefruit	sadik	sadik	toronja	( <i>Citrus paradisi</i> )
 <i>Old World trees present by 1820</i>				
mango	mankru	mankru	mango	( <i>Mangifera indica L.</i> )
breadfruit	brikput	brikput	fruta de pan	( <i>Artocarpus altilis</i> )
 <i>Old World trees present by 1880</i>				
?	kinkintu*	singkintu	carao	( <i>Cassia sp.</i> )?
star apple	darapil	sarapil	caimito	( <i>Chrysophyllum sp.</i> )
rose apple	rusapil	darapi	manzana rosa	( <i>Eugenia jambos</i> )
tamarind	swahani dus	sapaminik	tamarindo	( <i>Tamarindus indica</i> )

\* corruption of the Creole term “stinking toe” for the odorous carob-like pods.

*Towards a Traditional Miskitu Land Use*

Hunting, fishing, and gathering, as well as upland, coastal, and village horticulture provided necessary foods for native Mosquitians for hundreds of years before European contact. As I showed in Chapter Two, seasonal patterns of animal movements coupled with regional ecological and climatic variations structured the spatial movements and provisioning activities of native Mosquitians. In this section I focus on land use, with the understanding that hunting and fishing contributed significantly to local diets (Illustration 6.2).



**Illustration 6.2** The deer hunter, Susun Forest, Wasakin, 1996.

The first representations of Miskitu lifeways illustrate a fundamental cultural-ecological difference between coastal Sambo and upland Tawira Miskitu before 1700. Writing about 1671, Esquemelin stated that although the Miskitu are a small nation:

they live divided, as it were, into two several provinces [sic]. Of these, one sort employ themselves in cultivating the ground and making several plantations; but the others are so lazy that they have not courage to build themselves huts, much less houses, to dwell in. They frequent chiefly the sea-coast, wandering disorderly up and down, without knowing or caring so much as to cover their bodies from the rains.<sup>10</sup>

Based on his experiences along the coast in March of 1689, de Lussan presents this same image. He found the “original inhabitants of Moustique” are lazy, cultivate little, and lie around all day:

while their wives do their work. . . . Their clothes are neither more luxurious nor more abundant than those of the mulattoes of the cape. Comparatively few have sedentary habits, most of them being nomadic vagabonds who wander near the shores of the sea.<sup>11</sup>

The historically salient Miskitu images of ‘lazy,’ ‘wandering,’ ‘nomadic,’ and ‘coastal,’ could not be more clear in these two early accounts. But can we join in with conventional wisdom and accept these two observations at face value?

In 1864, the Moravian missionary Martin reported that the upland Tawira visited his coastal Wounta Haulover every dry season, February to May. From across the lagoon whole families with their dogs, chickens, provisions, bananas, dried meat, and their cooking gear arrived in a single *pitpan*, or flat-bottomed canoe hallowed from a tree trunk. Upon seeing the fleets crossing the lagoon, the “people in the coastal villages would shout ‘*munna wina aula*,’ the hinterlanders are coming.” After landing, Martin tells us, the women would make salt by boiling seawater “around the clock,” while the men would rest from their plantation work or “visit their coastal countrymen [*landsleuten*].”<sup>12</sup> Over and over throughout his lengthy memoir, Martin details the subsistence differences between the Sambo Miskitu at his recently formed Wounta Haulover and the upland, or lagoon, Tawira



who lived at places like Kukalaya and Layasiksa within the fertile Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor district.

I contend that Esquemelin's 'wandering' ones and de Lussan's March 'vagabonds,' as cited above, are actually summering Tawira Miskitu. Boiling seawater around the clock would require a large amount of driftwood, which would need to be searched for and carried 'up and down' the beach, giving the perception of wandering. Meanwhile, male resting after a season of chopping bush does not seem that unreasonable. At the end of their holiday, these Tawira retire upland to permanent settlements before the ensuing floods.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, juxtaposed with Tawira vacationers in Esquemelin's account are Sambo Miskitu making "several" plantations. These were probably the same Sambo Miskitu that Dampier observed near the Rio Kruta, or False Cape:

After the Man hath cleared a Spot of Land, and hath planted it, he seldom minds it afterward but leaves the managing of it to his wife. . . . their largest Plantations have not above 20 or 30 Plantain-Trees, a Bed of Yams and Potatoes, a Bush of Indian Pepper, and a small Spot of Pine-apples.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately the 'lazy' and 'nomadic' labels stuck to the Miskitu despite the fact that observers: (a) used summering Tawira to judge year-round activities for all Miskitu people, and (b) recorded that Sambo Miskitu women managed 'several plantations.' Indeed, once we understand the above narratives in this light, we learn that the Sambo Miskitu women were actually working the north coast's best soils quite diligently.

During all historical periods, but especially throughout the century spanned by African arrival and significant Tawira migrations to the south, 1640-1730, Sambo communities tended to form year-round at the coast, while most Tawira communities remained along savanna margins or at the back of coastal lagoons. However, no simple correlation among coastal dwelling, European influences, and agricultural orientation distinguish the Sambo from the Tawira. For example, the Tawira of the Rio Grande lived near the mouth of the river and can be considered

coastal dwellers, while the Sambo of the Rio Wangki often resided year-round upland. Likewise, the Sambo of the north coast relied heavily on their own agricultural produce, as did the Tawira Miskitu of the Twappi-savanna district. However, there is some evidence to suggest that before 1730 only Sambo communities formed year-round at the coast.

### *Hunting and Agriculture Together*

Whether the Miskitu resided upland, at the back of lagoons, or along the coast, they maintained a diverse set of farming locations, and typically combined agricultural chores with hunting and river fishing ventures in a single trip. Some time around 1855, Charles Bell visited the Tawira lagoon community of Kuamwatla, inside the mouth of the Rio Prinzapolka. Bell tells us, "It was a considerable settlement before the cholera in 1855 swept off the best part of its people." Separated from the sea by two lagoons, but connected by a path, Kuamwatla residents had established along the beach "for miles . . . a succession of plantations of cassava, yams, and sugar-cane," in addition to "extensive groves" of coconuts. Far up river, outside the tidal zone, the Indians grow all their "bananas, plantains, and maize." Rich turtle banks lie off the coast some 18 miles, nearby rivers "swarm with fish," and the savannas and forest behind the village "abound in game." Surrounding the village are "groves of soopa palm [pejibaye], alligator pears [avocados], mammee apples [sapotes], limes, oranges, and coconuts." Indeed, the village is a garden of edenic virtue and fits closely Bell's overall theme of his book subtitled 'Gentle Savages.'

How did the Tawira Miskitu of Kuamwatla manage their plantations? According to Bell, in the morning, "fleets of pitpans" head across the lagoon:

each containing a man and woman, some children, and a dog or two; they are going to their plantations on the beach, where the women clear a few weeds with the hoe, and dig enough cassava to last a day or two, while the men walk along the bush at the edge of the beach to kill the deer and agouti

which destroy the plantations, or they fish in the creek with hook or bow and arrow.<sup>15</sup>

In general, Miskitu men and women traveled together but conducted separate and gendered activities on a daily basis. Bell observed the same thing among the Twahka of the upper Rio Bambana:

[As the people] began to return in their canoes [at the end of the day], each was received by its own troop of little children, who rushed shouting down the bank to meet their fathers and mothers and share the good things they had brought. They came up bearing strings of fish and bundles of game wrapped in leaves; the women toiled up the bank with great loads of plantains, bananas, maize, and firewood.<sup>16</sup>

Among the lagoon Tawira and upland Mayangna, agricultural work overseen by women was generally tied to daily hunting or fishing trips by men.

All native Mosquitians relied substantially on hunting, fishing, and to a lesser extent semi-wild harvesting, for their foodstuffs, and innumerable authors have detailed strong meat preferences among the Miskitu.<sup>17</sup> However, these habits and preferences do not make the Miskitu nor Mayangna nomadic, nor 'semi-nomadic' as much as the literature claims. Contemporary research finds that native Mosquitians have very clear hunting sites, or zones, associated with each village, or sector of villages.<sup>18</sup>

Just as in the past, native Mosquitia hunters follow obscure but well known "hunting paths" and typically conduct their business near farming sites, magnets for birds, monkeys, and large herbivores. My own experiences following Twahka and Miskitu companions through apparently untraversed forest, match accounts told by Bell in which hunters followed signs of bent twigs and notched trees.<sup>19</sup> Many of these hunting paths later served as mahogany truck passes to unite trees with the waterways that carry them to mills or markets. Nineteenth century hunters again made use of these same paths:

These [truck-passes] are the most delightful hunting places imaginable. They are grand avenues 30 feet wide, which extend for miles through the forest, having all the creeks and ravines bridged with rough logs, overlaid with

fascines and covered with earth. . . . In these abandoned truck-passes, if anywhere, game is likely to be found. All the stumps and roots are springing up with fresh young shoots, and the game of all sorts comes to browse or enjoy the sunshine.<sup>20</sup>

In short, what often seemed like random exercises in gathering, weed clearing, or simple hunting to observers, was in actuality a very specific spatial, temporal, cultural, and gendered ordering of the landscape by native Mosquitians.

### *Planting Locations*

All evidence indicates that, with the exception of some fruit trees and condiments, the Miskitu planted the majority of their foodstuffs away from village locations. According to M. W., the Miskitu maintained “small plantations, in obscure parts of the woods, near the river sides, at a good distance from their dwelling houses, to which plantations they retire, and are not so easily found out by an enemy, as at their houses.”<sup>21</sup> Hodgson agrees with this defensive interpretation: “They plant provisions in the obscurest part of the woods, but never much together, than an enemy may find no store.”<sup>22</sup> While food security would be important, at least three alternative explanations are plausible. First, planting small plots in different micro-environments reduces the risk of crop loss due to weeds, pests, and herbivores. Moreover, upland soils are better than those of the savannas or the coast. Second, the attraction of animals to farming sites means that jaguars and pumas would also be attracted to such locales, and would further inspire farm removal from dwelling locations. And, third, all native Mosquitians live by water. Such an arrangement ensures periodic flooding. Upland farm sites, especially up feeder creeks, provide refuge points during inundation as well as help limit crop losses.

Large herbivores can destroy an acre field in a day or two. Along the Rio Prinzapolka, Bell noticed that tapirs and peccaries “had done much damage” to the

“numerous plantations of plantains and Indian corn (maize) belonging to the coastal Indians.”<sup>23</sup> In my experiences, whole fields could be destroyed overnight by one to two cows that got past precarious barricades. The congregation of small animals and large herbivores at farming sites insures that hunters, be they man or beast, will also find crop locations attractive. To protect their crops, agriculturalists begin to pass more time at farm locations as crops mature. A few weeks of restless sleep and pre-dawn risings are often rewarded with an armadillo or agouti for lunch. Thus, on the one hand, people have an interest in hanging around their farming sites to protect their crops and acquire easy game. On the other hand, since game attracts dangerous predators cropping locales should not be too close to village sites. In the past, jaguar and puma populations were much higher. Uring, for example, noted that big cats “frequently” sought poultry at Miskitu villages.<sup>24</sup>

Farming away from villages in different locations reduces farmers’ risk of crop loss, creates ideal hunting environments, discourages unwanted predators at dwelling locales, and provides security during floods. The spatial relationship of both coastal or upland Miskitu villages to farming sites remains essentially the same today. While large herbivores and their predators have become less of a threat to crops or people, population-induced land pressures and roaming livestock have increased. In this way the spatial relationship of agricultural activities to dwelling location has remained relatively unchanged, despite pronounced Moravian efforts to pen livestock and establish farming at village locations.

### *Agriculture Variation among the Districts*

Considerable variation characterized provisioning routines within the four districts discussed in Chapter five. At 19<sup>th</sup> century Kuamwatla, we read that the Tawira Miskitu raised cassava, sweet potatoes, arums, and sugar-cane along the beach. Some hundred years later Nietschmann found that the ‘beach-ridge agriculture’ of the Tasbapauni (Sambo) Miskitu looked much the same.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, sandy and saline soils that periodically flooded limited agricultural activities along the coast. Indeed, many observers noted that only cassava was planted at beach communities. Conzemius considered cassava “the staple food of the coastal Miskito.” In general, coastal Miskitu communities produced little maize; Nietschmann’s study suggests that Tasbapauni farmers did not plant maize even upland.<sup>26</sup> Since bananas, plantains, and maize do better in silty soils, when given the opportunity, Miskitu agriculturalists planted them upland, but this option was not always available to coastal communities.

Along the coastal communities of the north coast, the threat of slave raids or harassment forced Pech Indians to abandon riverside plantations and freed upland provision grounds. In addition, north coast soils between the Rios Patuca and Kruta are far superior to those south of Cape Gracias near the coast.<sup>27</sup> These two developments allowed Sambo Miskitu communities of the north coast to plant more things around their homes than either coastal Tawira or Sambo Miskitu communities elsewhere, especially those at Sandy Bay. Uring implies that the Miskitu of the north coast sow “Platanes and Bannanoes; [and] Pine Apples in plenty, Indian Corn, Potatoes, Yams and other Roots; and also have Sugar Canes which they plant.”<sup>28</sup> In the 1760s, Jones observed that the ‘Mosquito men,’ at Caratasca “plant corn, yams, and cassava” on the ridge separating the sea from the lagoon. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Rio Kruta and False Cape villages near Cape Gracias were planting corn, plantains, cassava, calabash, cotton, and the castor oil bush “near sandy banks close to the shore.”<sup>29</sup> In addition, however, the north coast Sambo, also established amicable trade relations with the upland Twahka. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Samboe” General Robinson who lived at the mouth of the Rio Patuca was “greatly dependent upon [the Twahka] for game and other provisions.”<sup>30</sup>

Agriculture along the Rio Wangki took place along receding river banks, just as it does today. In 1852, Juan Francisco Irias described the “savage situation” of the Wangki Miskitu:

Most of them subsist by hunting and fishing, and a very few by a rude and petty agriculture, planting in little patches on the borders of the river, small quantities of plantains, yucas, sweet cane and cotton, the last of which is rudely spun and woven by the women in the form of blankets, sails for their canoes, strings for their bows, and netting for feather-work.<sup>31</sup>

Irias' derision aside, Young found that Miskitu along the Rio Wangki grew maize "of the finest quality" and frequently sold their produce at Cape Gracias where such produce could not be produced:

it is scarcely to be imagined with what eagerness their pitpans are surrounded, when they appear laden with their commodities . . . Very little bread kind is grown at the Cape, by reason of the sandy nature of the soil, so that the English residents have to depend upon the River Indians.<sup>32</sup>

The Sandy Bay communities maintained upland cassava plots along the Rio Ulang (Illustration 6.3), and families along the lower Rio Wangki provided other provisions. However, floods often prevented upland travel and travelers often noted winter food shortages at Sandy Bay.<sup>33</sup> After 1800, a Sambo and English settlement sprang up at Cape Gracias but residents remained dependent on provisions from elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

In general, hone palm nuts and vanilla were the only foodstuffs that grew uniquely around Cape Gracias that were traded upland.<sup>35</sup> By 1840, the king (who resided at Cape Gracias at this point) was also receiving cultivated, gathered, and manufactured tribute from subordinate Indians. For example, Bell met 20 Ulwa men on the Rio Prinzapolka taking tribute to the king. Their pitpans were loaded with bananas, sugar cane, cassava, pineapples, and wicker baskets of pejibaye palms. They also had quantities of tiger and deer skins, and "great cakes of indiarubber."<sup>36</sup>



**Illustration 6.3** Leech Mora among his five acre plot of cassava along the Rio Ulang, 1950s; photo courtesy of Warren Wenger.

The Tawira of the Twappi-savanna region had an entirely different relationship to agriculture than the Sambo Miskitu at Sandy Bay and Cape Gracias. According to Roberts, the northeast savanna Tawira farmed at nearby hills:

The principal provision ground of the Governor's people [around Twappi] is distant, at a place called the Hills, from which circumstance [the Tawira] are known, all over the coast, by the name of *hill people*. These hills, or elevations, three in number, are to the westward of Brancmans, at a considerable distance inland [likely Cujo, Tilba, and Rahra Hills]; . . . the land there, and to the westward, is extremely rich, and well cultivated. [Crops produced here by the Governor's people supply] the people at Sandy Bay, Cape Gracias a Dios, and other places on the coast, with the greater part of their provisions, such as bananas, plantains, &c. Being too distant from the coast to combine the advantages of agriculture, with those of fishing and trading, no strangers have yet settled on this high ground.<sup>37</sup>



Present-day savanna communities such as Auhyā Pihni, Yulu, Wakaba, and Sisin continue to farm and hunt at these ‘hills.’ In my view, Twappi is a good example of a Tawira community that did not relocate in response to European trade and ‘cultural contact,’ but always maintained this farming-dwelling spatial duality which appeared so strange to foreign visitors.

Like the Tawira of the savannas, the Tawira Miskitu and the Tungla of the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor maintained continuous upland plots, even though they always resided at the back of lagoons or along rivers. The Tawira who visited Reverend Martin seasonally at Wounta Haulover, had requested that a missionary be sent to them. As a precondition, Martin insisted they “move their plantations closer” to their villages and take up cattle raising. He claims they eventually complied, but missionary diaries suggest they complied only partially. Indeed, missionaries assigned to Tawira Miskitu communities at the back of the extensive Wounta water system in 1871, 1893, and 1908 constantly refer to residents being ‘away at their upland dwelling places,’ visiting their plantations at Akawas Creek, or ‘being on the river,’ however they do note the presence of cattle.<sup>38</sup>

Tawira communities that formed along the lower Rio Grande did so as an outgrowth of social unrest at Sandy Bay and Dakura during the small pox epidemic of 1727. They likely chose the Rio Grande because it provided excellent access to the southern turtle shell and Indian slave economies, not because of its agricultural potential. Nevertheless, the Rio Grande communities maintained agricultural plots six to eight leagues up the river, but their farming situation must have been precarious. The Rio Grande was a favorite slave raiding corridor for the Tawira against the Ulwa. Indeed, Rio Grande Tawira persecuted neighboring Kukra and Ulwa Indians into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the latter having numerous villages along the 300 mile long river.<sup>39</sup> Of all the Miskitu districts, the Rio Grande developed the strongest dependence on commodity exchange I suspect this dependence developed because more traditional provisioning networks, be they upland peoples or upland kaimkas, were less available under the circumstances.

## **Old World Introductions**

During his 1960s study at Tasbapauni, Nietschmann described the local coastal landscape as replete with the Old World breadfruits, coconuts, and mangos.<sup>40</sup> Despite their ubiquitous distribution around all Mosquitia villages today, little is known about how and when such trees, or other Old World plants and animals, entered the region, or became incorporated within indigenous agroecologies and local landscapes. In making a first order study, this section puts forth three claims. First, with the exception of bananas, plantains, sugar cane, and cattle, the Miskitu had been exposed to new crops and domestic animals for many decades before they incorporated them into household economies. Second, Black River, Bluefields, and to a lesser extent Cape Gracias served as entrance points, experimentation sites, and radiating nodes from which Old World introductions spread throughout the Mosquitia. Third, Creoles at Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, and Corn Island, as well as Garifuna along the north coast of Honduras, and eventually Moravian missionaries played a very significant role in transferring crops received from the wider Anglo diaspora to indigenous communities. This suggests, among other things, that the Miskitu women preferred raising and cooking Miskitu foods, and/or that they had limited exposure to new food crops. Although several hundred white settlers and their African slaves passed through the Mosquitia during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Miskitu incorporated few agricultural resources or agricultural technologies into their subsistence food production.

The earliest known exposure to, and possible introductions of, Old World crops and livestock occurred during English settlement at Providence Island. Despite the many new crops and livestock PIC settlers exposed the Miskitu to, the Miskitu probably only adopted sugar cane, citrus, and possibly tobacco and watermelon. Sugar cane, for example, was well established at Miskitu villages by 1700.<sup>41</sup> Whether PIC settlers introduced livestock or fowl to the Miskitu remains

unknown. The Miskitu words for horse (*aras*) and cow (*bip*), derive from the English words horse and beef, but the Miskitu word for pig (*kuirku*) derives from the Spanish *puerco*.<sup>42</sup> In all likelihood, the Miskitu first encountered cattle in Spanish territory. In 1671, Esquemelin's ship took two Miskitu to the Island of Guanaja where they helped hunt "wild cows" left by the Spaniards.<sup>43</sup>

The extent to which British settlers introduced European ground or tree crops during the 18<sup>th</sup> century remains entirely speculative. We do know that settlers at Black River cultivated many crops for their own consumption and also for sale in Belize, but those on the Nicaraguan coast planted relatively little (see Chapter Seven). When Roberts and Young visited abandoned settlements at Black River in the early 1800s they found oranges, limes, lemons, cacao, sarsaparilla, bananas, peas, beans, cabbage and "other culinary vegetables of England." By 1820, long after British evacuation, the only planter, "according to the West Indian acceptation of the term," was a Mr. Ellis and his partner at Rio Wawasang, Pearl Lagoon. Perhaps summarizing Anglo experiences with European foods throughout the Mosquitia, Young wrote: "European vegetables and fruits have been tried in various quarters and seasons, and although they have often looked well, they have never properly succeeded."<sup>44</sup>

### *Bananas and Plantains*

The arrival of *Musaceae* (bananas and plantains) to the Mosquitia remains problematic. Newson has argued that plantains arrived to the Americas prior to European contact. Spanish chronicler Oviedo maintains that the *plátano* found in the West Indies was different from the Old World variety brought to Santo Domingo in 1516. When Friar Alonso Ponce visited Nicaragua in 1586, his secretary considered *plátanos* to be indigenous.<sup>45</sup> The Miskitu and Mayangna, including a majority of Nicaraguan scholars, consider many of their *Musaceae*

indigenous. Still most international scholars believe that Europeans brought *Musaceaes* to the Americas from the Canary Islands.<sup>46</sup>

“*Plátanos*” are first recorded in the Mosquitia in 1623 among the Pech Indians, but had likely arrived much earlier.<sup>47</sup> All 17<sup>th</sup> century pirate accounts mention bananas and/or plantains, but give the impression they reached Miskitu villages from the west. In 1688, de Lussan wrote that the number and frequency of bananas along the banks of the upper Rio Wangki literally sustained the pirates during their Isthmus crossing.<sup>48</sup> Bananas and plantains flourish in heavy, clay soils and are generally cultivated along the higher banks of broad rivers and up their tributaries. This practice ensures that periodic floods carry the giant herbs and their suckers down river. The Mosquitia traveler literature is replete with sightings of ‘wild plantains’ or ‘wild bananas’ taking root at high water marks along all major rivers.

For his part, Uring expressed amazement at the fecundity of the plantain: though the people take no Care to cultivate the Trees or plant more, yet they find enough for their purpose; for when the Tree is cut down, which they always do when they gather the Fruit, it grow up again and the Fruit is fit for Use in about Twelve Months.

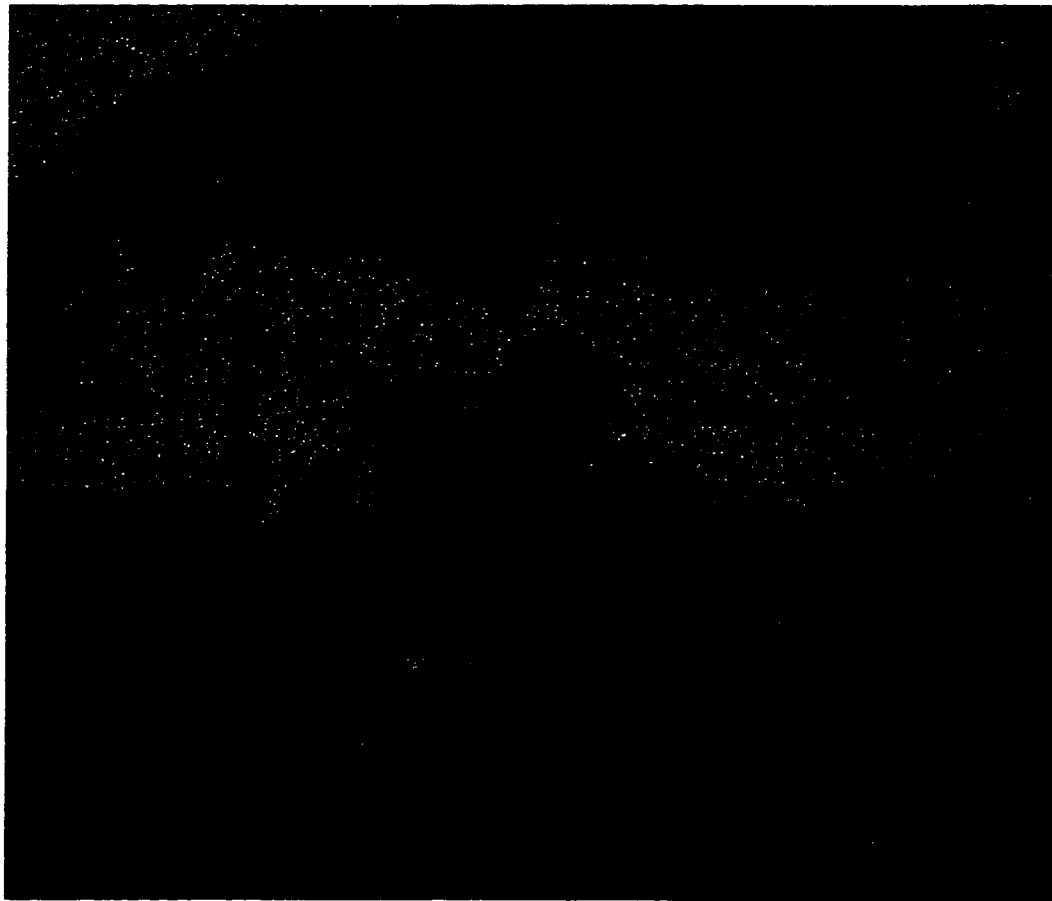
Although the people allegedly took ‘no care’ in plantain cultivation, Uring stated that white settlers actively spread the suckers:

Besides the Old Indian Plantations, each White Man has a small Plantation of Plantane and Bannanoe Trees; and when they had a mind to increase their Number after gathering the Fruit, they dug up the Roots, and divided each of them into three or four Parts, and planted them again; and from each Part there sprung a Tree.<sup>49</sup>

However they arrived to eastern Nicaragua, native Mosquitians had integrated *Musaceaes* into their diet no later than the mid to late 1500s, and, today, native Mosquitians consider at least one plantain variety to be indigenous.

### *Mango, Breadfruit, and Coconut*

Other ubiquitous Old World fruits have a more predictable entrance. The breadfruit and mango both arrived to the Mosquitia via English gardens at Jamaica and Belize. Mangos probably arrived to Miskitu communities near Sandy Bay no later than 1800.<sup>50</sup> Today, the age of mango trees often dates the founding of Moravian missions. Both trees were common in Bluefields by 1840, and by the 1860s, breadfruit had reached the Ulwa village of “Woukee” up the Rio Siquia.<sup>51</sup> Spread by suckers and not seeds, the breadfruit had also spread to the Rio Wangki by the 1860s, well before the Moravians took such a special interest in the Polynesian tree.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, by the 1920s, the Moravians had spread breadfruit to most Miskitu villages. The Swedish missionary David Haglund played a special role in this diffusion, and in advocating horticulture among the Miskitu more generally: “To encourage planting among the Indians those who had planted and fenced in five bread fruit trees were the guests at [Haglund’s] birthday party. Over twenty came. Another party was arranged for Christmas with the same result.”<sup>53</sup> According to local memory, Haglund planted thousands of coconuts, mangos, and breadfruit trees in his parish communities of Dakura, Awastara, pahara, Wasla, Bilwaskarma, and Sandy Bay between 1916 and 1934. Even after he returned to Sweden, he continued paying people 25 cents for every tree they planted and cared for (Illustration 6.4).



**Illustration 6.4** Swedish Moravian missionary David Haglund, Wasla, 1920s; photo courtesy of Santos Cleban, Moravian Church, Bilwi.

Other trees, such as the coconut spread on their own. Newson and Conzemius cite M. W. to show that the Mosquitia contained coconuts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a point of reference other scholars have also accepted.<sup>54</sup> However, if we scrutinize M. W.'s text more closely we find he only mentions the "Cocoa-nut tree," a common English-language spelling for the coconut at that time. Nevertheless, M. W. uses the expression "cocoa-nut trees" seven times, but always in reference to cacao. For example, according to M. W., the Spaniards have large stores of 'cocoa-nuts' at Trujillo and plantations of cocoa-nuts at Matina, the 'wild' Indians grow cocoa-nuts near the Olancho valley, and the Miskitu grind cocoa-nuts with a metate

along with maize to make a drink.<sup>55</sup> There can be no question that M. W. was referring to cacao. Meanwhile, as late as 1712, Uring found only one coconut along the north coast of Honduras.<sup>56</sup> In any case, coconuts appear to have first reached the Mosquitia on their own from the off-shore islands and cays. By the mid-1700s, African slaves at Corn Island and Bluefields cultivated coconuts to feed pigs and poultry, for cooking oil and, when rancid, for lighting.<sup>57</sup> Active planting of coconuts by the Miskitu occurred much later. Communities such as Kuamwatla had begun planting coconuts by 1840, however, among newly formed Sambo communities along the Nicaraguan coast in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coconut planting apparently followed Moravian encouragement. When Martin arrived at Wounta Haulover in 1864 he found only a few coconut trees, but quickly set out to promote their sustained cultivation. Missionary Smith claims that the Sambo Miskitu of Tasbapauni did not actively plant coconuts until 1874, despite having founded the village in 1861.<sup>58</sup>

### *Rice*

Although rice sustains today's Mosquitia population, its adoption by local communities did not occur until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. British residents and Creoles planted small amounts of rice for up to 100 years before Miskitu and Mayangna communities followed suit. In 1776, the Costa Rican governor claimed that the English grew corn, rice, sugar cane, and cotton at Black River, however, ten years earlier Superintendent Otway lamented that settlers hardly planted indigo, cotton, sugar cane, coffee, cacao, rice, pimiento, and ginger. The Jamaican historian Edward Long, who was partial to the English occupation at Black River and exaggerated its agricultural potential, noted in 1774 that rice was not produced at Black River. Spanish observers after the British evacuation of the coast claimed that settlers planted rice, as well as wheat, which no English source ever mentions.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the ambiguity, it is certain that Englishmen experimented with rice in swampy lands at Black River and elsewhere. In 1757, Hodgson found that “Rice has been tried and grows well on the low land, that is sometimes overflowed.”<sup>60</sup> In his 1760 report, Jones stated that on the western banks of Pearl Lagoon rice thrives in “admiration, bearing three Crops in the course of a year,” and that although the banks along the lower Rio Wangki were apt to overflow, “where cultivated produce Rice in abundance.”<sup>61</sup> It appears that 18<sup>th</sup> century English residents planted rice for their own consumption, almost certainly with African labor and knowledge, but never in great quantities.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century rice cultivation surrounded the Mosquitia from Honduras in the north, Bluefields in the south, and Nicaragua in the west. Although the Garifuna did not have rice when they first arrived to Roatán in 1797, they were planting and marketing rice west of the Rio Plátano by the 1820s.<sup>62</sup> By 1844, the “Mosquito men” at the mouth of the Rio Patuca, described as “chiefly the descendents of Blacks,” grew “Sugar-cane, Tobacco, Plantains, Casada, Iams, Sweet potatoes, Arrow root and Rice &c but only for their own consumption.”<sup>63</sup> By the 1860s, Creoles and missionaries grew “a large quantity of rice for their own consumption” at Kakabila in Pearl Lagoon.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the apparent success of rice in coastal areas to the northwest in Honduras and in the south at Pearl Lagoon, two 1893 travelers concluded that the Indians did not plant rice, and missionary writings from 1870-1900 imply that the Miskitu grew little or no rice.<sup>65</sup> My interviews as well as the work by Helms suggest that foreigners introduced rice cultivation along the Rio Wangki only in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup> To the extent that it occurred at all during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, rice cultivation remained entirely a European and Creole activity. The failure to transfer rice to the Miskitu suggests, as I point out later, that Miskitu women did not interact much with the Africans producing European rice, and that, in general, Miskitu villages did not lie close to European settlements or their farming areas.



## *Cattle*

How and when the Miskitu came to raise livestock such as cattle, horses, pigs, and fowl, will forever remain unknown. M. W. claimed that the Miskitu raise no stock, but have “in some few places a hog or two, and some poultry, for their delight, and not to eat.”<sup>67</sup> It is possible that M. W. saw native ‘pets.’ When Bell visited an upland Twahka village he saw many cocks, hens, muscovy ducks, tame curassows, quams, parrots, “and other birds,” in addition to agoutis, monkeys, and dogs, indeed:

One might think that some form of millennium had come, when the wild animals of the forest were to live at peace with man; but we know that the Indian women and children are fond of taming the wild animals and birds. They are fond, in fact, of all pets.<sup>68</sup>

The advent of contemporary Miskitu livestock rearing practices can be traced to Moravian teachings and pressures, however, prior to 1850 cattle and horses abounded in the Mosquitia, often in semi-feral herds, and played a very significant role in organizing Miskitu society. Leading Miskitu men maintained ‘ownership rights’ to cattle found in their districts. However, throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Miskitu only kept cattle to trade. Attesting to the availability of wild game, preferred by the Miskitu to this day, is the fact that beef was rarely eaten and cows were never milked.<sup>69</sup> Despite the lack of Western-style husbandry, cattle played an important, if unsung, role in Miskitu ethnohistory.

By the early 1700s, many village headmen ‘possessed’ cattle, and by the late-1800s most Miskitu villagers owned a few cows and horses.<sup>70</sup> The savanna between the western Caratasca and the lower Rio Patuca has always been the Mosquitia’s most important cattle region. The former slave Casarola noted that Captain Hobby possessed “many cattle, horses, goats, rams, and ewes, and every type of domestic fowl” that he had captured along the coast from Trujillo to

Yucatán.<sup>71</sup> The Sambo Miskitu likely ate or sold most of the captured goods since another former slave from the same period noted that the “*zambos*” of the north coast had no mules and only ten cows derived from Trujillo.<sup>72</sup> By 1720, the Twahka Indians up the Patuca brought cattle to Captain Hobby they had acquired from the Spaniards.<sup>73</sup> When Captain Juan de Lara y Ortega made a reconnaissance of the north coast in 1759, he describes the Twahka at headwaters of the Rios Guayape and Patuca trading numerous cattle, horses, and mules to the Miskitu of the north coast.<sup>74</sup> There can be little doubt that by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the maintenance, care, and trade in cattle and horses played an important role in directing Miskitu energies and activities along the north and south coast savanna lands.<sup>75</sup>

With cattle ownership came status, but also social responsibilities. Cows owned by leaders often had to provide meat for village feasts, especially during arrival or trade ceremonies with foreigners. Discussing cattle ownership, trade, and accountability rules were highly regulated by Miskitu customs called “*biep-la*,” or cattle laws. According to missionaries along the Rio Wangki in 1896, discussions concerning ‘*bip-la*’ were of the gravest magnitude and involved the community’s maximum leaders (*wita nani*) and sukias: “*biep-la* is to the Miskitu what investments are to bankers.”<sup>76</sup> Accountability for damaged crops, ownership among feral herds, especially if one man’s heifer joined another’s herd, and trade intricacies, all required serious attention. Traditionally, if a Miskitu bought a heifer, and the heifer later calved, he would owe the original owner something else, often a pitpan. If he could not pay, a village ‘broker’ would step in to cover his costs, and the debtor and broker would settle up later. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries often served as brokers, further increasing their status as political leaders at the community level.<sup>77</sup>

Under the British superintendency, cattle raising was an important activity among European settlers and the Miskitu alike. Cattle moved in trade from Sonaguera to Trujillo and then through Black River to Belize and Jamaica.

Spaniards also brought livestock down the Rio Wangki. Contraband trade took place at the highest levels, and Spanish officials and clergy advocated a direct road from the Honduran city of Comayagua to Black River.<sup>78</sup> The regional trade in cattle also increased Miskitu commercial activities, and the Sambo of the north coast began to raise cattle and horses specifically for the Black River and shipping markets. General Tempest took over where Captain Hobby left off, and, it was said that, black cattle acquired from the Caratasca-Patuca region “would not disgrace Leaden Hall market,” while excellent horses could be had for 30 shillings. Sambo Miskitu communities of the lower Rio Wangki also raised cattle:

To the South of the [Cape] Harbour lies Morgan Town Savannah, in all respects equal to [the Caratasca-Patuca savanna] as to the extent and goodness of its pasture; this Savannah takes its name from a Mosquito Chief, who assumed his from the famous Buccaneer of that name, a Custom still very common amongst these people.<sup>79</sup>

By the late 1700s, English settlers raised cattle from Cape Gracias to Bluefields and Corn Island. When the forced evacuation arrived in 1787, British settlers took 270 cows and 31 horses.<sup>80</sup> These numbers pale in comparison to the animals held at the Corn Islands and the greater Bluefields area at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Robert Hodgson, who remained after the evacuation, allegedly had 3,000 cattle and 10,000 hogs in 1790, and 400 cattle at the Corn Islands in 1793. By 1791, Porta Costas claimed that Pearl Lagoon had more cattle and horses than the rest of the coast combined.<sup>81</sup>

After the British evacuation, Spanish settlers from the Canary Islands settled briefly at Cape Gracias and Black River. According to one observer, the Sambo Miskitu briefly switched their loyalties:

the Musquitomen [Sambo Miskitu] returned to their usual occupations of fishing, making pitpans and dorees, and raising of small stock, which they were in the habit of selling to their Neighbors the Spainards [sic] settled at Black River and Cape Gracias a Dios.<sup>82</sup>

After the Spanish settlers left the Cape for Trujillo and elsewhere until new British settlers arrived just before Central American independence, Miskitu interest in cattle waned. Around 1820, Roberts stated few cattle could be had at Cape Gracias, whereas at Caratasca, “Black cattle were formerly numerous, but the Mosquito men have not been provident enough to keep up the breed, selling all they could lay hold of, to the traders who frequently visit the Lagoon.”<sup>83</sup> Once English settlers returned, beef markets grew and the Miskitu again met the demand. Cattle were said to be numerous and “cheap . . . in the vicinity of the Blue Fields River” in 1830.<sup>84</sup> By the 1840s, at Caratasca, horned cattle and horses could be bought at the “usual price” \$16 each, with young heifers being charged according to their ages. For this same period, Willock found at Caratasca that the Sambo Miskitu were paid \$6-10 to catch “wild horses and cattle on the savannas.”<sup>85</sup> Trade was also substantial via the Rio Wangki with the Segovias by the 1850s:

Some of the Moscos [Miskitus] raise mares in considerable numbers, and some few cows, besides which have a little commerce with Belize, from which place are brought some pieces of clothing, iron pots, guns, axes, and other articles, which are carried to different points in the valley of Pantasma [Jinotega Department], the old Look-out, and to the town of Talpeneca, where they are exchanged for calves of one or two years old, which are carried in *balsas* (rafts) down to the coast.<sup>86</sup>

By the 1820s English settlers also maintained cattle on the savannas, and the Indians ‘hunted’ some wild cattle at the Island San Pio formed at the mouth of the Rio Wangki.<sup>87</sup> For his part, Bell found that between the Rio Wawa and Brewer’s Lagoon large tracts of savanna land provided “excellent pasturage, and the Indians raise a considerable number of fine cattle and horses on them,” but later he noted that the “Indians raise no stock.”<sup>88</sup> The first Moravians to Cape Gracias in 1859 saw cows and horses “in great numbers” near Irlaya.<sup>89</sup> The picture is the same near the Rio Grande and Pearl lagoon, where Europeans, Creoles and Miskitu vied to control feral herds.<sup>90</sup> Reverend Grossmann noted that bigmen, “so-called Biep Dawan

nani,” or cattle owners, frequently had 400 or more head on the savannas, yet “sometimes they did not know where to find their herds.”<sup>91</sup>

From all accounts, livestock roamed freely upon the savannas. This caused several problems among Indian plantations. A typical description from the Rio Patuca of the 1840s reads as follows:

owing to the quantity of Cattle in the Savannah [the Sambo Miskitu] generally make their plantations at short distances up the river, as they would at the mouth have to erect strong fences to prevent the Cattle, trespassing on the plantations.<sup>92</sup>

Even today, Miskitu livestock roam about, while swiddens are fenced off some distance from village locations where the cows spend the night. It is not uncommon to hear men discussing what to do about so-and-so’s cow that destroyed an entire field of maize, or uprooted a field of cassava and yams.

Despite annual savanna burning, ticks and ear mites were a constant problem, and this likely prevented cattle from playing an even greater role in shaping Miskitu society than they already did. Young described the horses at the Cape as disfigured, having their ears eaten away by ticks and sores left from blood-sucking bats. Palmer saw ticks attacking livestock “the size of cherries.” To address this problem, the Miskitu organized periodic “round-ups” and applied an ointment of tar, sulfur, and grease.<sup>93</sup> Even post-World War II mestizo cattle barons and Somoza cronies along the Rios Wangki, Prinzapolka, Grande, and Escondido could not solve the problems caused by ticks and mites. This was the opinion of international development experts in the 1950s who reported that “proper feeding and handling of livestock is not widely known [in eastern Nicaragua].”<sup>94</sup> Still, given the way they acquired their land, many *Somocistas* found it economically more efficient to suffer a few losses than invest money in fencing, pasture improvement, or topical applications.<sup>95</sup> After Nicaragua incorporated the former Mosquito Reserve in 1894, and granted 23 communal land titles in 1915, the deeds

always specified two distinct and not necessarily adjacent titled areas: one for agriculture the other for *ganadería*, or cattle.<sup>96</sup>

Cattle, and to a lesser extent mules and horses, played a very significant but largely unknown role in the Miskitu-landscape relationships over the past 300 years. They provided resources for trade and enhanced the prestige of local leaders. Horses were used for transportation by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the Miskitu were described as excellent horsemen by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cattle (and horses) provided food in times of scarcity, despite the fact that beef was not highly valued compared with venison, white-lipped peccary, or green turtle. The roaming nature of livestock, and the undesirability of maintaining fenced pastures, reinforced the spatiality of dwelling-planting arrangements noted above. The village landscape of today, which is unimaginable without roaming livestock and cow paddies, is probably much older than is commonly assumed.

\* \* \*

Varied land uses and landscape appraisals among the Miskitu are indispensable to understanding geographical, and to a lesser extent Sambo-Tawira, variations during the colonial period. For the Sambo Miskitu around the Caratasca Lagoon, better soils allowed more foods to be grown near dwelling locations. As cattle raising took on greater importance and threatened these same crops, the Sambo were able to rely on relatively amicable relations with the upland Twahka to provide supplementary ground provisions, as well as cattle. For the savanna Tawira of the governor's district, secure permanent upland farm sites headed by women allowed men greater freedoms to pursue long-distance activities without threatening their subsistence base. The same gendered food security applies to a much lesser degree among the Sambo Miskitu at Sandy Bay, who were often cut off from Wangki kaimka relations during floods. Eventually the sea-oriented Sambo communities at Sandy Bay began to share more in common with Tawira

communities at the Rio Grande than their kaimka relations who chose to remain year-round along the Rio Wangki. Although women also oversaw plantations among the expansive Rio Grande Tawira settlements, constant hostility with upland Ulwa and neighboring Kukra Indians made such sites precarious and put greater pressure on male commercial activities.

Except for bananas, plantains, sugar cane, and coconuts, European food crops did not readily affect Miskitu household subsistence security until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This is quite astounding when we consider that the Miskitu had been continually interacting with Europeans for 200 years prior to their wide-spread adoption of foods like rice, and quite interesting given claims of British hegemony during this same period. In my view, this shows that women agriculturalists did not interact much with foreign men, just as would be the case today. With the exception of the expansive Rio Grande and Pearl Lagoon Tawira settlements, the Miskitu did not generally reside in close proximity to British dwellings, and in any case all settler provisioning was carried out by Indian and African slaves. Such spatial bounds prevented a simple transfer of European plants and planting techniques to women agriculturalists. In effect, the presence of Europeans did not dramatically alter Miskitu subsistence economies during the colonial period. This set the stage for radical changes in agricultural production properly attributed to the Moravians in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In contrast to Old World cultivars, cattle affected Miskitu economies and land use more substantially during the colonial period. The north coast Sambo Miskitu quickly began managing semi-feral cattle that they traded to Europeans, as did, to a lesser degree, the Wangki Miskitu and those communities at the Rio Grande. While horses and mules can be considered part of the cattle economy, the Miskitu do not appear to have begun raising domestic hogs and poultry until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

How the Miskitu came to appraise their landscape had a great deal to do with how provisioning activities and settlement were spatially constituted, as well as how

they integrated more traditional notions with *bip la nani* into political jurisdictions. In this sense landscape appraisal and conceptions of political and ethnic jurisdictions are intertwined. Indeed, I believe that cattle helped the Miskitu articulate the spatial conceptions of ‘their lands.’ Indeed, as I show in the next chapter, cattle districts interacted simultaneously with developing notions of tax districts and resource concessions orchestrated at the district level by commissioned leaders. In this context, cattle and *bip la* discussions played a role in shaping Miskitu spatial conceptions of the Mosquitia as a territorial entity symbolized by the Miskitu Kingdom

### Notes to Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup> Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 64.

<sup>2</sup> Mora y Pacheco, “Relación Geográfica,” 45.

<sup>3</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, xvii, xxiii, 3, 42, 52-53. On fire, human activities, and landscape transformation in the Mosquitia see Parsons, “Miskito Pine Savanna,” 36-63; William Denevan, *The Upland Pine Forests of Nicaragua* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Carl L. Johannessen, *Savannas of Interior Honduras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); on the Pristine Myth see Karl W. Butzer, ed., *The Americas before and after 1492: Current Geographical Research*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 82 (1992).

<sup>4</sup> Offen, “The Mythical Landscape.”

<sup>5</sup> Magnus’ work found large coastal shell middens at Pearl Lagoon and near Bluefields, and grinding stones inland near Nueva Guinea in southeastern Nicaragua. From his research Magnus hypothesized that the coastal sites represented temporary fishing stations and that permanent residents remained upland along rivers. Although Magnus likely refers to Kukra or Ulwa ancestors, the model has been applied to the Miskitu; Richard W. Magnus, “The Prehistoric and Modern Subsistence Patterns of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua,” in *Prehistoric Coastal Adaptations*, ed. B. L. Stark and B. Voorhies (New York: Academic Press, 1978): 61-80. For first-hand accounts of Atlantic coast shell middens see, Bell, *Tangweera*, 18, 36; Bell, “Remarks on the Mosquito Territory,” 260; Wickham,



“Journey Among the Woolwa,” 51; Herbert J. Spinden, “The Chorotegan Culture Area,” *XXI Congrès International des Américanistes* 2 (1925), 532.

<sup>6</sup> Helms, *Asang*, 4, 25, 26, 29; Mary W. Helms, “Coastal Adaptation as Contact Phenomena among the Miskito and Cuna Indians of Lower Central America,” in *Prehistoric Coastal Adaptations*, ed. Barbara Stark and Barbara Voorhies (New York: Academic Press, 1978): 121-149.

<sup>7</sup> Newton Wilson, Prinsapolka Annual Station Report for 1936, AMC, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 130; Bell, “Remarks on the Mosquito Territory,” 262, 252.

<sup>9</sup> Wickham, “Journey Among the Woolwa,” 266; Expenditures, FO 53/7, 75-88; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 107-108; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 104, 131.

<sup>10</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 234.

<sup>11</sup> de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 287.

<sup>12</sup> Martin, “Dreissig Jahre,” 58, 93; Martin, “Handel und Kreditwesen der Mosquito-Indianer,” 100.

<sup>13</sup> Evidence suggests that Tawira women also traveled with their men to sea. According to de Lussan, when Miskitu “Indians” make a trip, no matter how short their wives, kids and dogs “and any other small pets they have captured” accompany them. One early 18<sup>th</sup> century writer met Tawira women as far south as Panamá; de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 288; Cockburn, *Journey Overland*, 240-241.

<sup>14</sup> While the women worked the plantations, the men allegedly hunt, fish, or travel with the pirates, as was the case with Dampier’s two informants; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 83, 84. Europeans named Mosquitia’s sweet potatoes and arum ‘yams,’ but Old World yams (*Dioscorea spp.*) did not arrive in appreciable quantities until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dogs, and daily travel with dogs, were synonymous with native Mosquitia hunting from the earliest accounts; M. W., “Mosquito Indian,” 297; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 145, 154; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 103. When Miskitu men were brought to Jamaica to help capture maroons, they were accompanied by “their hunting dogs;” Robinson, *Fighting Maroons of Jamaica*, 40. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sumus traveled to the Matagalpan highlands to trade for dogs. The business was so steady some people there “commenced to rear dogs, to supply the demand. The [Sumus] had a special liking for black ones, and did not value those of any other colour so much. They would barter a gun or a large iron pot for a single dog, if it was the right colour;” Thomas Belt, *The Naturalist in Nicaragua* (1874; reprint, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 204. I raise the issue of dogs because all historical

observations describing daily routines that combined male hunting, female agriculture, and dogs in boat travel inevitably referred to upland Mayangna or Tawira Miskitu. There is much less evidence that the Sambo Miskitu revered dogs so highly.

<sup>16</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 124.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Bernard Nietschmann, "Hunting and Fishing Focus Among the Miskito Indians, Eastern Nicaragua," *Human Ecology* 1, no. 1 (1972): 41-67.

<sup>18</sup> See the results of ethnogeography mapping projects carried out among the Panamahka and Miskitu by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) around Bosawas Reserve of north central Nicaragua, and a similar project that I was briefly involved with carried out by the Central American and Caribbean Research Council (CACRC) among Costeño communities from Rama Cay to the Rio Wangki; Baudillo M. Lino et al., eds., "Mayangna Sauni As. Tradición Oral de la Historia Mayangna," (Managua: TNC, 1994); Francisco Zolano and Anthony Stocks, eds., "Mayangna Sauni Bu. Documentación del Reclamo Histórico de Tierras de las Comunidades Mayangna Sauni Bu," (Managua: TNC, 1995); Anthony Stocks, ed., "Miskitu Indian Tasbaika Kum," (Managua: TNC, 1996); Comunidad Sikilta, "Sikilta. Censo y Estudio Socioeconómico," (Managua: TNC, 1996); Charles R. Hale, Edmund T. Gordon, and Galio C. Gurdian, "Diagnóstico General sobre la Tenencia de la Tierra en las Comunidades Indígenas de la Costa Atlántica," (Austin: CACRC, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 130-133, 243.

<sup>20</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 192-193. Young likely encountered old 18<sup>th</sup> century mahogany passes behind Black River in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but referred to them as hunting passes: "pathways are cut in various directions, called hunting passes, varying in width from three feet and upwards; every obstacle being cleared over head;" *Narrative of a Residence*, 102.

<sup>21</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 296.

<sup>22</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 52.

<sup>23</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 158.

<sup>24</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 161; see also M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 290.

<sup>25</sup> *Between Land and Water*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 120, 121; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 115; Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 50; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 62, 63; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*.

- <sup>27</sup> See for example Haly et al., "District of Patook (1844)," 236-238; Fellechner et al., *Bericht*.
- <sup>28</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 161. This account provides a perfect example of what is likely an aggregated description of several different individual agricultural experiences that may in fact represent no single community.
- <sup>29</sup> "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 426; Fellechner et al., *Bericht*, 167. The castor bush was a ubiquitous feature at coastal villages by the early 1800s; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 118.
- <sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 152; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 80-81; Fellechner et al., *Bericht*, 70.
- <sup>31</sup> Juan Francisco Irias, "Río Wanks and the Mosco Indians," *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society (New York)* 3 (1853), 163-164
- <sup>32</sup> Young also stated that Cape residents depended on produce from "the inhabitants of Poolen Town, a native settlement, rather more than a mile from the embarcadero;" *Narrative of a Residence*, 18, 19.
- <sup>33</sup> Porta Costas, "Relación del Reconocimiento," 54.
- <sup>34</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 152.
- <sup>35</sup> Grossmann, *Costa Atlántica*, 26.
- <sup>36</sup> Tawira Miskitu also provided tribute in coconuts; Bell, *Tangweera*, 158, 83. It is often stated that the india rubber market began in 1860, however, this passage suggests that it began in the 1850s, or earlier; see Offen, "Historical Geography of Chicle and Tunu," 57-74.
- <sup>37</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 142; see also Porta Costas, "Relación del Reconocimiento," 55. The Miskitu word 'hil' is now a common toponym suffix throughout the Mosquitia.
- <sup>38</sup> Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 58, 93; Martin, "Handel und Kreditwesen der Mosquito-Indianer," 100; Peter Blair, Kukallaya Diary from Jan. 1871 to Aug. 1873, Kukallaya Diary Box, AMC; Benjamin Garth, Kukallaya Diary from Jan. 1895 to Aug. 1896, Kukallaya Diary box, AMC; John Fischer, Kukallaya Diary from Jan. 1908 to Aug. 1910, Kukallaya Diary box, AMC.
- <sup>39</sup> Porta Costas, "Relación del Reconocimiento," 56; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 113-115.
- <sup>40</sup> *Between Land and Water*, 18.
- <sup>41</sup> M. W. "Mosquito Indian," 286, 295; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 145, 161; Long, "Mosquito Shore," 318.

- <sup>42</sup> At least one Miskitu word likely became part of the English lexicon. The Old English Dictionary of 1685 states the fish tarpon derived from the Dutch tarpoen of unknown origin. John Holm speculates this derived from the Miskitu *tapam*. Tapam is also the Ulwa, Twahka, and Panamahka word; “Creole English,” 23, 40.
- <sup>43</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 239. Elfryth noted that the Spanish at Trujillo oversaw Indian communities among the Bay Islands by 1631; “Daniell Ellffryth’s Guide to the Caribbean, 1631,” 315.
- <sup>44</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 107-108, 165; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 93-95, 108; Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 76.
- <sup>45</sup> Newson, *Indian Survival*, 69.
- <sup>46</sup> See for example the discussion in Jonathan D. Sauer, *Historical Geography of Crop Plants* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1993), 198-202.
- <sup>47</sup> Vázquez, *Crónica*, 177.
- <sup>48</sup> de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 280.
- <sup>49</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 126, 145.
- <sup>50</sup> Ziock, “Sambo vs. Tawira,” NMHD, 238.
- <sup>51</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 17; Wickham, “Journey Among the Woolwa,” 266. Romero V. states that the English grew “*fruta de pan*” at Black River in 1776, but since the fruit was not yet in the Americas, this must be a poor translation; *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 96.
- <sup>52</sup> Maximiliano Sonnenstern, “Informe sobre la expedición al Río Coco por el ingeniero civil de la República [1869],” in *límites Entre Honduras y Nicaragua*, ed. Republic of Honduras (New York: 1938), 237; Crawford, “Hydrographic Area of the Rio Wanque,” 175.
- <sup>53</sup> Adolph O. Danneberger, “Annual Report of the Mission Province,” PSPG (1943), 53.
- <sup>54</sup> Newson, *Indian Survival*, 203; Conzemius, *Ethnological Survey*, 64.
- <sup>55</sup> M. W., “Mosquito Indian,” 286, 288, 293, 294, 295, 296.
- <sup>56</sup> Uring took great pains to describe how the coconut got there, noting that it probably arrived partially sprouted and took root on its own as he had seen happen elsewhere; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 141. The first reference to coconuts along the northern coast of Honduras derives from the Trujillo area in 1610; Clifton V. Dixon, “Coconuts and Man on the North Coast of Honduras. An Historical Geographical Perspective” (M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1980), ix.

<sup>57</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 40, 101; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 46; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 49, 156; Willock, "Journal of a Voyage," 191; Fellechner et al., *Bericht*, 71; Green to Earl of Clarendon, Woburn, 30 July 1853, PRO, FO 53/31: 127-133..

<sup>58</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 83; Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory," 244; Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 48; Frederic Smith, "Setbacks for the Indian Customs," NMHD, 168.

<sup>59</sup> Francisco Carrandi y Menan, "Los Mosquitos, la Isla de San Andrés y Bocas del Toro," 20 August 1738, LCRC, 66; D. Juan Fernández de Bobadilla, "Sobre el proyecto de los Ingleses," Cartago, 20 June 1776, CRCM, 183; Joseph Otway to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Black River, 25 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33: 68; Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 2 vols. (1774; reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1970), 2: 319; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 101;

<sup>60</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> Suggesting rice was not grown elsewhere, Jones notes that the low banks of the Rio Grande were "proper for Rice," and that those of Sandy Bay were "fit only for Rice and pasture;" "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 423, 424, 425.

<sup>62</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 274; James Wood, *The Adventures, Sufferings and Observations of James Wood* (Ipswich: 1840), 52; British Central America Land Company, *The New British Colony, Province of Victoria in Central America* (London: J. Cunningham, [1840]), 12; Melquisedec Zuñiga E., "Descripción Geográfica del Departamento de la Mosquitia practicada el año de 1875," in *límites Entre Honduras y Nicaragua*, 199; Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean*, 40-46.

<sup>63</sup> Haly et al., "District of Patook (1844)," 236. Cape visitors in 1845 noted that despite the fact that rice "does surprisingly well . . . in Mosquitoland" it is only planted by "a few European settlers;" Fellechner et al., *Bericht*, 105.

<sup>64</sup> Wickham, "Journey Among the Woolwa," 266; see also Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 155; Expenditures and disbursements, PRO, FO 53/7: 75-88.

<sup>65</sup> José Vitta, "La Costa Atlántica," *Revista de la Academia de Geographya e Historia de Nicaragua* 8, (1946), 42; Bruno Mierisch, "Eine Reise quer durch Nicaragua, vom Managua-See bis nach Cabo Gracias á Dios," *Petermanns Mitteilungen* 41 (1895), 66. In 1891, one missionary found at Twappi that "Rice is also raised, but not to any great extent;" Brother Romig, "Official Visitation by Br. Romig on the Mosquito Coast," PSPG (1891), 397. As late as the 1910s, Conzemius found that the Miskitu "rarely cultivate" rice; *Ethnographical Survey*, 63. Meanwhile, the Moravians typically provided imported flour and rice for congregation activities like church construction; "Indians of Dakura and the Wanks River," PSPG 2, no. 20 (1894), 412. By the early 1920s, Moravian missionaries

actively promoted all kinds of structured agricultural activities, including marketing strategies, and rice production; Frederick Wolff, "Would Rice Cultivation Improve the Economic Condition of our People?," PSPG (1928): 98-101; Guido Grossmann, "Annual Report of the Superintendent for year 1927," PSPG (1928): 64; Adolph O. Danneberger, "Annual Report of the Mission Province," PSPG (1941): 40.

<sup>66</sup> Helms, *Asang*, 58, 128, 135. Rice had been widely available for purchase before that because large amounts of rice, beans, lard, and flour had been imported duty-free through Port Dietrick at Cape Gracias by at least 1900; Consul William Penn Henley to Commercial Agency, Cape Gracias, 9 Oct. 1903, Dispatch Book, 1903-1909, Consular Posts, Cape Gracias a Dios, Vol. 11, RG 84, USNA, 16.

<sup>67</sup> M. W. "Mosquito Indian," 296.

<sup>68</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 123.

<sup>69</sup> Miskitu never milk heifers because they do not want to 'rob' the baby of its food, and many Miskitu consider all domestic meats bad eating compared to wild counterparts.

<sup>70</sup> Hermann O. Beck, Yulu Diary from June 1902 to Sept. 1903, AMC; John Fischer, Kukallaya Diary from Jan. 1908 to Aug. 1910, Kukallaya Diary box, AMC.

<sup>71</sup> "Declaración de Carlos Casarola," 88. This is the only mention of goats and sheep until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when British, Creole, and Latino settlers kept a few at Bluefields, Cape Gracias, and Black River; Collinson, "Explorations in Central America," 30; Bell, *Tangweera*, 16, 27, 32; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 67; Palmer, *Through Unknown Nicaragua*, 23; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 108; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 17.

<sup>72</sup> "Relación de una cautividad entre los Mosquitos. Declaración de Micaela Gómez, mulata libre, Nueva Segovia, 2 Jan. 1717," CRCM, 87-92. On Captain Hobby and cattle see also Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 121; Newson, *Indian Survival*, 196.

<sup>73</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 144; Newson, *Indian Survival*, 307. Although these authors considered this exchange 'tribute,' I believe they are overstepping the nature of historical evidence at this period in north coast history. Both authors have assumed the all the Miskitu, both Sambo and Tawira, enslaved all the various Sumu people, a point I strongly challenge in Chapter Eight.

<sup>74</sup> "Relato de una Expedición al costa norte hecho por Juan de Lara y Ortega, Comayagua, 18 Sept. 1759," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 139.

<sup>75</sup> The debate about cattle management among rain forest peoples is only just beginning to accept that cattle transformed cultural and ecological systems by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in the eastern piedmont forests and lowlands of the Honduras Mosquitia, and nobody has looked at this in Nicaragua; see for example Ricardo

Godoy and Nicholas Brokaw, "Cattle, Income, and Investments Among the Twahka Indians of the Rain Forest of Honduras: New Thoughts on an Old Link," (manuscript, Harvard Institute for International Development, 1994); Peter Herlihy and Andrew Leake, "The Tawahka Sumu: A Delicate Balance in Mosquitia," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1990): 13-16.

<sup>76</sup> Leonard G. Reichel, "Cultural Changes on the Rio Coco, Jan. 1896," NMHD, 241.

<sup>77</sup> Personal fieldnotes 1995-1997; Martin, "Handel und Kreditwesen der Moskito-Indianer," 101.

<sup>78</sup> William Pitt to Trelawny, Mosketto Shore, 17 July 1749, PRO, CO 137/57; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 70-72; Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 24, 41.

<sup>79</sup> "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 425, 426; see also Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, 463.

<sup>80</sup> Colville Cairns to James Lawrie, Tebuppy [Twappi], 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73: 197-202; José del Río, "Disertación del viaje hecho de orden del Rey, Trujillo, 23 Aug. 1793," LCRC, 147-148; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 100-101.

<sup>81</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 195; Porta Costas, "Relación del Reconocimiento," 56-57; Del Río, "Disertación del viaje," 147.

<sup>82</sup> Sproat to Barrows, 5 April 1803, PRO, CO 123/15, 61.

<sup>83</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 156.

<sup>84</sup> Frank Cockburn, Government House, Belize, 7 Feb. 1830, PRO, CO 123/41.

<sup>85</sup> "So dexterous indeed are some of the natives, that they rarely miss, especially when they use the hempen rope, as it is heavier than maho;" Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 19, 20; Willock, *Journal of a Voyage*, FO 15/34, 202.

<sup>86</sup> Irias, "Río Wanks and the Mosco Indians," 165; Sonnenstern, "Informe sobre la expedición al Río Coco," 233, 236.

<sup>87</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 18; Land Company, *New British Colony*, 13.

<sup>88</sup> Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory," 243, 252.

<sup>89</sup> F. Edward Grunewald and Gustav Feurig, "Voyage to Cabo Gracias a Dios in 1859," NMHD, 141.

<sup>90</sup> By 1894, many Creoles at Pearl Lagoon possessed extensive cattle and horse herds; *Communiqués of British Citizens, Bluefields, 1899*, PRO, FO, CP no. 7355.

<sup>91</sup> Grossmann, *Costa Atlántica*, 43.

<sup>92</sup> Haly et al., "District of Patook (1844)," 236. In contrast, among the Tawira at the Rio Grande, cattle were kept "in the interior, at the provision grounds," while horses grazed on the savanna; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 114.

<sup>93</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 21; Palmer, *Through Unknown Nicaragua*, 23.

<sup>94</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of Nicaragua* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1953), 303.

<sup>95</sup> Unlike ticks that I was familiar with, those of the Mosquitia take your breadth away with their bite. While participating in a mahogany cutting venture, one of my companions walked into a nest and described the pain as a fire that itches, "tears almost left my eyes." The one or two ticks I suffered support his description. All Mosquitia dogs contain numerous ticks, and I admit my Western sensibilities had a hard time watching ticks the size of peas hanging off dogs' ears and eyelids. Addressing the threat of ticks to local livestock would be a major undertaking.

<sup>96</sup> On post-incorporation indigenous land titling see Nicaragua. Ministerio de la Gobernación, *Leyes sobre Comunidades Indígenas* (Managua: Ministerio de la Gobernación, 1971); Armando Rojas S., "comunidades Indígenas de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua," *Revista de la Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales* 8 (1977): 199-244; Charles R. Hale, "Wan Tasbaya Dukiara. Nociones Contenciosas de los Derechos sobre la Tierra en la Historia Miskita," *Wani* 8 (1992): 1-19; Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Democracia (IPADE), *Listado de Propiedades Comunidades Indígenas de la Regiones Autónomas* (Managua, 1995).



## Chapter Seven

### British Settlement and Economic Activities

The English capture of Jamaica in 1655, sporadic settlement around the Yucatán and at Belize no later than 1660, and periodic settlement at other locales such as San Andrés and the Caiman Islands increased the extent and frequency of Anglo-Miskitu encounters. Compared with Belize, English settlement in the Mosquitia grew rather slowly, with settlement along the Nicaraguan coast slower still. Eventually, British designs in the Bay of Honduras led to the creation of a 'British Superintendency for the Mosquito Shore' based at Black River in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Superintendency constituted a form of territorial administration below the Jamaican governor who was represented on the Mosquito Shore by a superintendent. During the 50 odd years of the Superintendency, some 300 white settlers, 200 free people of color, and their 1,700 black slaves lived within the four Miskitu districts outlined in Chapter Five. The bulk of the colonial economy revolved around trade with the Spanish and the exportation of natural resources, especially turtle shell, sarsaparilla, and mahogany. Settler interests along each of the 'two' Mosquito Coasts (north and south) were typically at odds with one another, a fact which combined with four different, and often competing, Spanish authorities (Honduran, Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, and New Granada) to accentuate variations in Miskitu geopolitics and identity distinctions.

To evaluate the foundations of settler activities and British attitudes, as well as continue my discussion of Anglo-Miskitu relations, I divide this chapter into six sections. In the first section, I locate the formation of the Black River colony within

the historical geography of British policies in the western Caribbean. The British initiated direct relations with the Mosquitia to protect the logwood economy at Belize and fortify an incipient contraband trade with the Spanish. Initial ambitions did not include territorial expansion or control. In the second section I outline Miskitu encounters with missionaries of the Society for Propagating the Gospel on the north coast and at Sandy Bay. Five missionaries, exclusive of day school teachers, resided near Black River for the duration of the superintendency. This development had a disproportionate impact on the Sambo Miskitu, especially General Tempest and King George I. In the third section, I discuss the geography of British settlement and demography during the superintendency. I also discuss the nature of African slavery in the colony. In the fourth section I examine British contraband trade, plantation agriculture, and mahogany cutting. In the fifth section, I examine how the Miskitu interacted with these activities. I show that individual Miskitu leaders utilized resource concessions to the British to expand their own political jurisdictions. In the final section I discuss the construction and significance of British landscape discourses.

### **The British Superintendency**

Although Jamaican officials did not formally recognize English settlement in the Mosquitia until 1742, in all probability a few Englishmen had resided among the Miskitu since the Spanish captured Providence Island in 1641.<sup>1</sup> Still, pirate testimonies do not mention permanent European domiciles in the Mosquitia until 1689 when de Lussan wrote that Englishmen tried to make themselves “masters of country,” for they already had “a number of habitations.”<sup>2</sup> As late as 1700 no Europeans resided on the northcoast, while only three Englishmen lived on the savannas near Twappi.<sup>3</sup> In 1712, twelve white men lived along the coast in northeastern Honduras, and by 1724 some 30 British subjects resided throughout the

Mosquitia, including eight huts on the Miskitu Cays where 3-4 ships were said to arrive each month.<sup>4</sup>

Although the handful of Englishmen kept the Mosquitia fresh in the geographical imagination of regional merchants, the formation of the Black River Superintendency developed as an extension of the logwood colony at Belize. Similar to the Yucatán's swampy and karst landscape, Belize provided the ideal home for the versatile logwood (*Haematoxylum campechianum L.*) sought after by European textile manufacturers as a dye. Europe was first introduced to the valuable dye after Spanish merchants began sending *el palo de campeche* (logwood) to the Netherlands, the European center for cloth finishing. By the time Britain had ended official support for privateering in 1670, twelve English ships were involved in the logwood trade in and around the Yucatán selling their goods for £25-50 a ton. By 1700, the Belizean logwood enterprise employed between 500-700 men, quite a contrast to the handful of Englishmen in the Mosquitia during the same period.<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to the accepted conventions of Central American historiography, I have argued elsewhere that logwood was not cut or extracted from the Mosquitia. Despite the ubiquitous referral to such activities in the secondary literature, superintendency documentation specifically shows that logwood was not a part of local commerce, nor was it available in the Mosquitia. Moreover, with the possible exception of fustic (*Chlorophora tinctoria L.*), modern forest surveys do not locate commercial dyewoods in the Mosquitia at all. Although the British brought logwood to other Caribbean colonies, the plant thrived only in similar karst habitats such as Jamaica and the Bahamas, a landscape not characteristic of the Mosquitia.<sup>6</sup>

Caribbean geography and sailing routes between Belize and Jamaica, however, make it reasonable to assume that English residents along the north coast of Honduras may have formed a relationship with the Belizean logwood economy. Sailing routes from Belize to Jamaica followed the coastal counter current to the south, passing between the Bay Islands and the north coast of Honduras. Belizean logwood ships touched down at both the mainland and the Bay Islands, especially

Port Royal on Roatán.<sup>7</sup> Europeans who settled along the north coast of Honduras before 1730 may have done so as an outcome of the sailing routes associated with the Belizean traffic in logwood, but they did not extract logwood from the Mosquitia.

After Spanish forces attacked the Belize colony in 1730, William Pitt and a few other logwood merchants fled to Black River on the northeastern coast of Honduras. Situated east of Cape Camerón, Black River is geographically separated from Trujillo by a series of rocky ridges that extend to the sea.<sup>8</sup> Although most of the Belizeans eventually returned, Pitt remained permanently at Black River where, with the help of some 400 slaves, he reigned as the “master of trade” until his death in 1771.<sup>9</sup> As Hodgson put it, the north coast of Honduras was populated not because of its “natural advantages,” but because coastal bars offered protection from the Spanish and was a convenient site of retreat from Belize.<sup>10</sup> Although not stated in so many words at the time, a nearby Miskitu presence also helped safeguard the Black River colony from a Spanish attack. By 1768, Richard Jones noted that that without the presence of the Miskitu “the neighbouring Spanish settlements . . . would otherwise soon over run and expel the English.”<sup>11</sup> As with escaping Africans from Providence Island a century earlier, the Mosquitia again acted as a refuge from a Spanish attack that occurred elsewhere. In both cases, the events dramatically changed the course of Miskitu history.

Jamaican Governor Trelawny took serious interest in the Mosquito Shore by the late 1730s. After the Anglo-Spanish War of Jenkins Ear broke out in 1739, Trelawny sent Robert Hodgson, Sr. to Black River. At this time, perhaps 40 Englishmen resided in the Mosquitia. Some of these men were described as mere misfits “who chose to vegetate among the swamps,” others were characterized as traders “of exceptionally low morals.”<sup>12</sup> Hodgson arrived with a salary of £1,000, including £300 for Indian ‘gifts.’ As I showed in Chapter Five, upon meeting Hodgson, the 20 year-old Miskitu King Edward ceded ‘his country’ to Great Britain. All told between 1742 and 1775, the Miskitu King as well as lesser leaders put their

name to at least 14 territorial concessions to British settlers.<sup>13</sup> Most of the concessions were written in the style of British law, naming subsoil rights, navigation rights, and so on. The great majority were written after 1763, when English settlers rushed to establish landed property to justify the need for British protection. Most of the grants referred to areas behind and immediately adjacent to the Black River community, where no Miskitu lived.

Following the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of Aix la Chapelle of 1748, and the required British abandonment of Roatán, Jamaican officials sought to renew their support for the logwood colony at Belize by strengthening support for the Black River colony. After heated debate, Her Majesty's Council in Jamaica authorized the formation of a Superintendency for the Mosquito Shore and approved Robert Hodgson as the first superintendent in 1749. As part of his new duties, Hodgson was instructed to:

cultivate such an Union and Friendship with the Indians in those parts, as my induce them to prefer his Majesty's Alliance & Protection to that of any other Power whatever, which must in all Events be of Advantage to this Nation, but especially in Case of any Future Rupture with the Crown of Spain.<sup>14</sup>

Trelawny pushed the need to send a representative of the Crown because he wanted to insure a law abiding colony from which trade could flourish. He felt Hodgson's presence was necessary "not only to hinder the Mosquito Indians from committing outrages and cruelties against [the Spanish], but likewise the English Merooners there, from being guilty of such irregularities."<sup>15</sup>

The successful formation of the Black River colony was due in large part to the ambitious plans of Governor Trelawny. Although he never visited the Mosquitia, Trelawny painted the Mosquitia's landscape with an ample brush in broad strokes: "the Land being very fertile, fit and capable of producing as rich Product by Agriculture as any in the West Indies; viz., Indigo, Cocoa, Vanillas, etc. many of which grow wild in the Woods." In addition, the place afforded a good base to establish trade with the Spaniards. The new settlement at Black River:

as soon as it could be made known to the Spaniards, would draw such a stream of Commerce from the adjacent Kingdoms of Guatemala and Yucatan, in spite of all the Guards that could be placed, (the avenues to it being so many, and the Spanish Trader running all Risques to get at our Goods,) that in all probability it would become one of the greatest Marts for that Trade of any part of the West Indies. . . . [But we should not delay] some Dutch from Curaçao have given hints of the Design to go to Cape Gracias a Dios . . . under pretense of erecting Saw Mills.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, a Mosquitia settlement at Black River afforded the opportunity to acquire nature's bounty, trade with the Spanish, and impede Dutch designs.<sup>17</sup>

Despite formal recognition after 1749, settlers were never quite happy with Jamaican oversight. On the one hand, they wanted protection for their risky investments, but did not wish to endure Jamaican control or interference.<sup>18</sup> Settlers perpetually clamored for more troops and greater stores of ammunition. From the beginning, William Pitt wrote that the Black River settlement was in eminent danger, and that the Spaniards always threatened "to take the place." More dangerous still, as Pitt saw it, was that the Spaniards might bring presents for the Miskitu, and "it is well known, that [the Miskitu] are people to be easily gained when such methods are taken." In conclusion to his pleading, Pitt writes, that the few soldiers thus far sent "have proved of good effect, in regard to the Spaniards, as also to the Moskito men, and negroes; and [if there was] a reinforcement sent, I am convinced that it might disconcert the Spaniards scheme, and, at the same time, overawe the [Miskitu] Indians, and negroes."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the apparent threat posed by the Miskitu and slaves shaped settler thoughts and actions throughout the Superintendency, a point I return to below.

### **Civilizing the Miskitu**

Trelawny's plans for the Black River colony included efforts to civilize the Miskitu by sending missionaries from the Society for Propagating the Gospel

(SPG). In 1739, Trelawny forwarded a letter he had received from King Edward prior to the 1740 agreement advanced through Robert Hodgson:

Sir, We your lawful subjects do thank you for your care and assistance to us, in offering us commissions . . . We humbly beg you will help us with the following things: a Commission for Edward, King of the Moskitos; a Commission for William Britton, Governor; General Hobby, now lying dangerous sick, we desire a blank for, in case of his death, to make his son General; a Commission for Thomas Porter and Jacob Everson, being captains of his Majesty's Perriaguas; as likewise your assistance in sending us some Powder, shot, flints, small arms and cutlasses, to defend our country and assist our Brothers Englishmen; and a good Schoolmaster to learn and instruct our young Children, that they may be brought up in the Christian Faith. All we beg that he may bring with him is Books and a little salt; as for any thing else we will take care to provide for him and sufficient salary for his pains. . . . Your true subjects and loving brothers.

In 1742, the Jamaican SPG allocated £50 towards the formation of a mission among the Miskitu, “who in testimony of their affection for the English sent five youths of their principal families to be educated in Jamaica in 1743. One was taken care of by Governor Trelawny, the other four by merchants.”<sup>20</sup> In a 1743 letter to the SPG of London, Trelawny states “I had it always greatly in my view to civilize [the Miskitu] and gave it strictly in charge to [Robert Hodgson, Sr.] to use his utmost endeavors to do so. . . He acquainted me some time ago that he had got a Man to teach the children to write and read.”<sup>21</sup> In 1747, £73.6.3 was paid to “Jacob Gibson as School Master for Teaching the [Sambo] Mosquito Children to read, from August 1744 to June 1746 at £40 per annum.”<sup>22</sup>

Trelawny and the SPG agreed that the best site to establish a missionary station would be Black River. Trelawny foresaw little problem working with the Miskitu, “except perhaps some little variance in their humors.” After their first candidate died en route, the SPG decided to send Henry Jones from Newfoundland in 1749, but at Jamaica Jones wrote that since no Indians resided at Black River, nor amongst settlers anywhere, and that the Indian children work in the fields and would not be able to attend schools, he refused to come. Finally, in 1765, a 50 year old

Moravian Catechist named Christian Frederick Post disembarked at Black River and remained for the next 18 years. Immediately upon his arrival, Sambo General Tempest asked Post to build a church at the Rio Patuca, which he did. However, most of Post's work was conducted among the free people of color at Mustee Creek, some five miles west of the Black River colony (see below).<sup>23</sup>

In 1768, Superintendent Hodgson requested that another missionary be sent in addition to Post. He argued that there are 12,000 Indians in the Mosquitia and that "the moral part of their character presents an excellent foundation for Christianity." Hodgson also noted that about 15 months ago the Miskitu King George I had traveled to England where he "very ardently solicited to be christened and to have all his nation likewise and went away assured that a clergyman should be sent to his country." Hodgson recommended the Reverend Thomas Warren, who the SPG accepted.<sup>24</sup> Warren arrived at Black River in 1769, but found "neither a house for worship nor one for himself." The well educated Warren, who informed a good many Mosquitia reports written by Jamaican authors, described his counterpart Post as a pious man, "but not suitable to instruct white inhabitants," and, whose "knowledge of English [was] weak." In 1773, Warren baptized three sons of King George I at Sandy Bay, and several other children of local Sambo Miskitu headmen. He also baptized King George and his wife on a ship en route to Jamaica. The king reportedly told Warren, "Now I am Christian, King of England must send me Parson for live among my people."<sup>25</sup> This was King George's second baptism, as he had been baptized by the Spanish Padre Juan de Solis y Miranda in 1751. Reverend Warren left the coast after four years in 1773 and was replaced by Reverend Shaw (1774-76), who was replaced by William Stanford (1776-77). By 1777 Post was again alone in the Mosquitia, where he continued baptizing "whites, Mustees, [S]ambos, Mulattos, Indians, and Negros."<sup>26</sup> In August of 1777, Post crowned and baptized King George II who assumed this position upon the death of his father.<sup>27</sup>

All told, between 1742 and 1785, five missionaries served in the Mosquitia, predominantly among the Sambo Miskitu and free people of color along the



Honduran coast. This development shaped Miskitu society in at least three distinct levels. First, the SPG and its missionaries exposed the Miskitu to formal education and Christianity that was well connected to the colonial institution of the superintendency. This was the exact same process that took place in a much more integrated fashion during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Moravians held governing positions in the Mosquito Reserve. Surprisingly, excellent studies of Miskitu conversion to Moravian Christianity during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century appear unaware of these earlier, and I would argue significant, Sambo Miskitu encounters with Christianity propagated by the German Moravian Frederic Post during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

Second, there is clear evidence that the Miskitu began transculturating the idea of the Christian ‘God’ in terms of their traditional beliefs over a 150 years before the Moravians arrived in 1849. In particular, the Miskitu viewed the Christian God as the foreigner’s version of ‘woolsaw,’ or *lasa* (spirit). However, these two figures could not be easily reconciled, and indeed are completely opposite. Woolsaw does only harm if he is neglected but does not do good; God does good only if he is worshiped but does not do harm. Hodgson noted that Miskitu *sukias*:

deal with an evil spirit called Woolesaw, who, if he is too much neglected, does mischief, but never any good; and they hold that their Creator does not concern himself about them, except that he places them in countries good for hunting in proportion to their merits.<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, Wright noted, “These people worship evil spirits [the worst among them is the devil Woolsaw]; giving as a reason for doing so, that good ones will do them no harm.”<sup>30</sup> Young, who often spoke with the Sambo Miskitu on this subject, claimed they always replied same: “‘You Christian, Debil praid—me no Christian—Debil must do me bad:’ and their ideas do not at all alter, even if they have been in the employ of the English for years.”<sup>31</sup> This same Miskitu reasoning was heard in M. W.’s time as well:

They seem very willing to believe any matters of religion, and thank you for telling them, [except] that they will not believe there can be any hell or future place of punishment, unless they should fall into the hands of Spaniards; they apprehend whom we call God Almighty to be the great king of the next world, and positively affirm, that he will not punish a poor Indian for nothing (as they use to say) for that they can do him no harm. If a man should affirm the contrary to them, they ask you the question, For what he should do so? without listening to any further answer, looking on you as a fool or madman, or one that designs purposely to mock them.<sup>32</sup>

Roberts found the (Tawira?) Miskitu telling him that Christian dogma was nothing more than “English lies.”<sup>33</sup> Still, this discourse did not stop the Miskitu from recognizing that the Christian God held great power. In separating two feuding Tawira chiefs in 1776, Olaudah Equiano pointed to the Bible, read some passages, and told the two parties that he would “*tell* God to make them dead” if they did not stop: “This operated like magic,” and the two parties quickly reconciled.<sup>34</sup>

Third, Post lived in the northern Mosquitia 18 years and appears to have had a disproportionate impact on the Sambo Miskitu. He interacted quite frequently with General Tempest and built a church in the General’s village at the mouth of the Rio Patuca. Tempest, who traveled to Europe and visited the King of England before 1766, was well respected by British settlers at Black River, and they thought him loyal to their interests.<sup>35</sup> Those who had been in charge of educating Tempest’s youngest son, Luttrell, in England in 1796, described General Tempest as “the most powerful Chief of the Mosquito Nation and the most adherent to the British Crown.”<sup>36</sup> While in Belize in 1816, General Robinson, Tempest’s elder son, impressed the Belizean Superintendent with his notion of Christianity. The Superintendent stated that General Robinson “has shown particular zeal in the cause [of spreading Christianity], and has appeared very touched with important truths which have been explained to him.”<sup>37</sup> Young noted that many Sambo Miskitu “who have at various times been to Balize, know the meaning of God, and often say, ‘Please God, so and so;’ or if they wish to be implicitly believed, they will gravely say, ‘God swear’.”<sup>38</sup> In addition, Post’s influence among the Wangki-Sambo Kings

George I (1755-1777) and his son George II (1777-1800) appears especially strong, and could explain the prevalence of the name 'Frederic' among so many Miskitu kings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, although Post's influence among the Sambo Miskitu was pronounced, said influence extended even more to the many people of mixed Anglo-African, and Anglo-Indian heritage on the north coast who may have assimilated into Sambo society after the British evacuation. I suggest that internal differentiation between the Sambo and the Tawira was facilitated by stronger Anglo-Sambo relations during the superintendency, a fact which made subsequent Tawira overtures to the Spanish that much more intolerable to the Sambo.

### **The Demography of British Settlement**

During the period of formal British oversight until evacuation in 1787, British settlers and their slaves dwelled at specific points along the coast between Black River and Punta Gorda in southeastern Nicaragua: "The settlers are mostly traders with their dependents and servants, and live scattered, as chance, inclination, or private interest directs." The Superintendent and most settlers resided at Black River, a wholly white and mixed race settlement devoid of permanent (free) Indian inhabitants. As a group, British settlers were young and male. In 1773, 75 percent of male settlers were aged between 22-40 years.<sup>39</sup> In 1771, 24 white women resided at Black River, approximately one-half of all 'white' female settlers in the Mosquitia. Meanwhile, several prominent settlers were not English: the important Superintendent James Lawrie (1776-87) was Scottish; the southcoast trader, Colville Cairns, was an Irish Catholic who pledged loyalty to the Spanish Crown and remained in the Mosquitia after 1787; and the master of southern contraband trade from Bluefields, Henry Corrin, proceeded from the Isle of Man. In 1786, up to 300 whites, 1700 African slaves, and several hundred free people of color resided in the Mosquitia (Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1 British Settlement and Population in the Mosquitia, 1748-1786.**

Year	Black River & north coast <sup>a</sup>			Cape Gracias & Sandy Bay			Twappi & area savannas			Pearl Lagoon, Bluefields, Punta Gorda, & Corn Islands			Mosquitia total		
	whites	black slaves	free people of color	whites	black slaves	free people of color	whites	black slaves	free people of color	whites	black slaves	free people of color	whites	black slaves	free people of color
1748	19	100	17												
1750	11	150													
1751	29	55	11	27											122
1757	71	589 <sup>b</sup>	120	11	31	7	11	8	5	11	33		154 <sup>c</sup>	661	132
1759	100	600													
1762															
1764	135		25				25			30		40		398 <sup>d</sup>	903 <sup>e</sup>
1770														201	970
1771	114		111											193	1463
1786	334		45	162						53	238 <sup>g</sup>			206 <sup>f</sup>	900
														448	1677

Sources: Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 51-52, 81, 321; Lawrie to Trelawny, 9 April 1751, PRO, CO 137/25; Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 15; Dawson, "William Pitt's Settlement," 688, 693; Otway, *Inhabitants of the Mosquito Shore*, 21 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33: 168; "Relato de una Expedición, 18 Sept. 1759," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 137-138; Klingberg, "Efforts of the S. P. G.," 316.

<sup>a</sup> Includes small populations at Mustee Creek, the Rio Plátano, and Brewers Lagoon.

<sup>b</sup> Includes Indian slaves; Black river had 213 houses covered with palm roofs.

<sup>c</sup> Includes 50 without permanent residency; slaves include at least 30 Indian slaves.

<sup>d</sup> Includes free people of color, exclusive of 119 children.

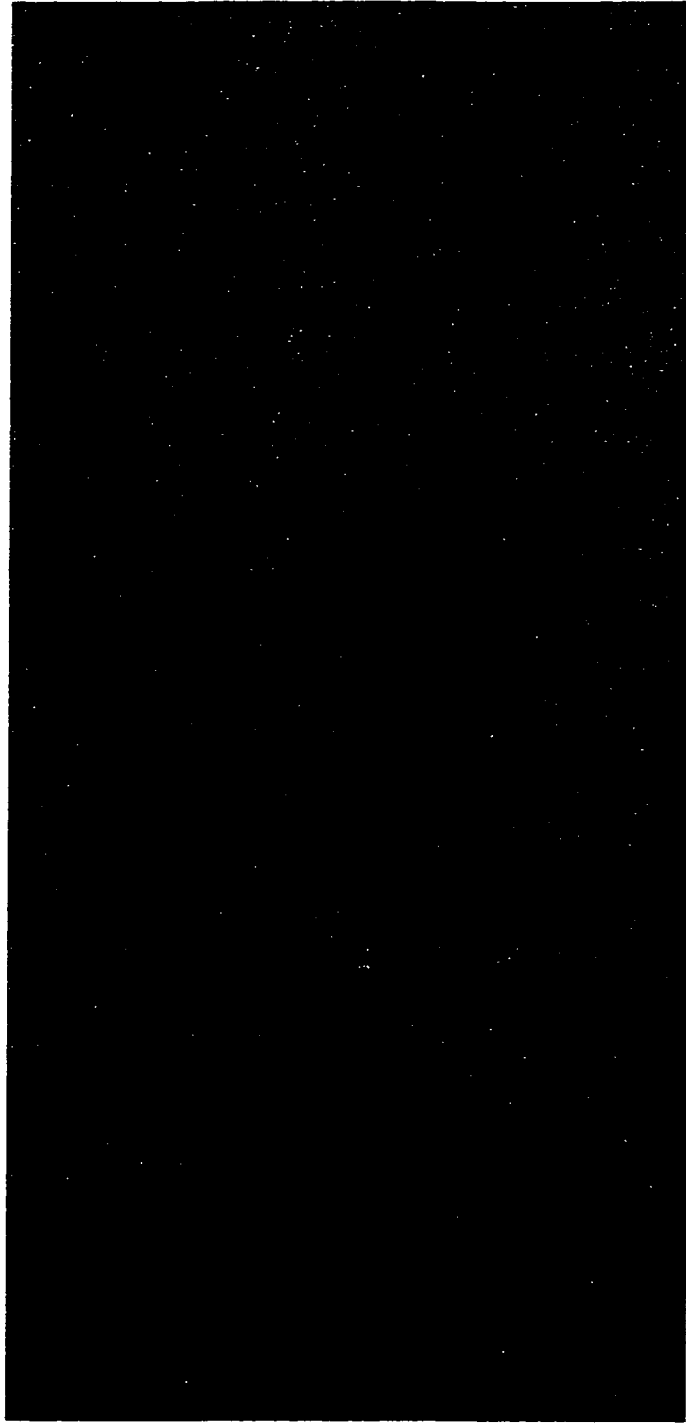
<sup>e</sup> Comprising 364 men, 313 women, and 226 children.

<sup>f</sup> Includes 56 women, 24 of whom resided at Black River.

<sup>g</sup> Figures include 6 whites and 89 slaves at Rio Grande.

Although available population statistics contain innumerable problems, the data suggest at least six general trends that reflect supporting historical events or processes. First, substantial Mosquitia settler growth occurred after 1754, when Spain again roused settlers from the Belizean colony. Second, the figures suggest that many of these new settlers returned home after the 1763 Treaty of Paris protected British logwood cutting rights in Belize, but offered no similar assurances in the Mosquitia. Just the opposite in fact: Anglo-Spanish and internal British debates kept settlers in a precarious position until they were finally abandoned by the British government in 1786. Third, population growth in the 1770s reflects the general peace with Spain and the arrival of Loyalists from North America.<sup>40</sup> Fourth, African slaves variously outnumbered ‘whites’ anywhere from 3 or 5 to 1. At least two-thirds of all Africans lived at Black River, and most of the remainder resided among the Corn Islands, Bluefields, and, in the 1770s, the Rio Grande. Fifth, relatively few white women insured a rapid growth of ‘free people of color,’ which included offspring of white-Indian and white-African unions.<sup>41</sup> I speculate that free people of color formed roughly half of the people at Black River. Finally, Black River was always the most significant British community, the only settlement that even remotely reflected a West Indian plantation-style cultural landscape.

A 1771 British map of the Mosquito Shore, captured and redrawn by the Spanish, shows that British settlers lived close to the coast (Illustration 7.1). Although difficult to view here, the map contains several dots, a few of which are slightly larger and squared, at select points along the coast.



**Illustration 7.1** Coastal map of 1771 showing British and Indian houses; source Mapa que corre . . . , X11-B-5, n.d., Servicio Histórico Militar, Madrid, copy CIDCA, Managua.

Comparing the above map to a 1764 list of settler families provided by Joseph Otway (1762-1767) (Table 7.2), suggests that the squared dots represent the abodes of white families. Evidence suggests that the smaller, round dots are Miskitu houses, with exception of Pearl Lagoon which contained several families of Kukra Indians that the Spaniards called ‘Yarrinces,’ and whom the English often called ‘the commerce Indians.’ Of interest is the fact that no Indians resided at Bluefields: the Kukra or Ulwa having long since left and no Miskitu chose to take their place. Moreover, except for Pearl Lagoon, Sandy Bay, and one house at Cape Gracias, the remaining British houses are not surrounded by Indian dwellings. I suspect that Pearl Lagoon was the most significant, and possibly the only, European settlement anywhere in the Mosquitia that actively drew indigenous neighbors from elsewhere, in this case Kukra from the Rio Kuringwas and Tawira from the Rio Grande colony founded around 1730.

**Table 7.2 British Households in the Mosquitia and San Andrés, 1764.<sup>42</sup>**

<b>Place</b>	<b>White Families</b>	<b>“Mesitze” Families</b>
Black River (area)	45	21
Cape Gracias a Dios	3	--
Sandy Bay	2	--
Tebuppa [Twappi]	1	--
Brangmans [Bilwi]	4	--
Walpasiksa	1	--
Pearl Key Lagoon	--	2
Bluefields	1	--
Punta Gorda	5	--
Corn Islands	2	4
San Andrés	3	3
<b>Total families</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>30</b>

The 'mestizes' noted by Otway, also termed 'mustees' and 'mestizoes' in contemporaneous British literature, refer to free people of color formed from European-African and European-Indian unions. Otway defines "mestizes" as "free People and Christians, they differ but little in complexion from White People, they are useful to the Community, most of them are Possessed of Property and they are, in general, good Handicrafts."<sup>43</sup> The euphemism 'possessed of property' means they owned slaves. Otway's definition shows a slight variation from the racial lexicon of Jamaica in the 1720s: "the first Change by a Black and White, they call Mulatto; the second a Mustee, and the third a Caste."<sup>44</sup> Forbes' work suggests that during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century 'mustees' also referred to the offspring of African-Indian unions.<sup>45</sup> Although we can be sure that mustees were mixed 'free people of color,' they were likely Christian only in name. Otway's comments and figures notwithstanding, when the Moravian Frederick Post arrived at Black River in 1765 he found 200-300 "Mustee people . . . almost a nation" who were uninstructed in Christianity religion.<sup>46</sup> At Black River, most free people of color lived apart in a separate community at Mustee Creek, a few miles to the west of the Black River settlement. The figures provided by Post suggest that many 'whites' in Table 7.1 were in fact people of mixed race, a notion suggested by post-evacuation statistics as well.

When British subjects left the Mosquitia in 1787, most headed for Belize. Immediately after settlers arrived, trouble ensued. In British records cited by Nigel Bolland, wealthy white Belizeans felt their property and color should allow them to discriminate against the "very different" classes coming from the Mosquitia. New arrivals protested their subordinate positions and violence erupted. One Belizean white described the scene: "a few white people of the very lowest class, a number of Mustees, Mulattoes, and free Negroes are running about the streets and assembling under Arms to the infinite terror of the more respectable" community people. Belizean whites apparently refused to accommodate "a set of men of Colour calling themselves the People of the Mosquito Shore."<sup>47</sup> It seems clear that many Britons



listed as ‘whites’ in evacuation statistics were in fact free people of color, and according to the observer just cited, of both white-Indian, white-African, and African-Indian unions. Indeed, I suggest that the majority of ‘white’ Britons residing in the Mosquitia by 1780 were in fact people of mixed race.<sup>48</sup> This would suggest, among other things, that the ‘Anglo culture’ accommodated by the Miskitu on a day-to-day basis reflected a much greater diversity of experiences, opinions, and lexicons than those fitting neatly under an Anglo banner. On the other hand, the categorical and color-coded boundaries of rank, as well as explicit white privilege—even more pronounced among a majority of free people of color—inculcated the Miskitu with a form of ‘race-class’ consciousness they would otherwise have had little exposure to. This ‘race-class’ ranking, incidentally, forced the Miskitu to see themselves among the privileged, or white and Anglo classes within the Mosquitia and beyond. This reflection helped the Miskitu to forge an identity antithetical to enslaved Indians and Africans, as well as the second-class ‘free people of color’ and indentured whites. The Miskitu elite thought of themselves as ‘a free and unconquered people’ and the only comparative people who also fit this description were elites of other powerful nations.

### *African Slaves*

Many Mosquito Shore settlers held both African and Indian slaves: the latter I discuss in the next chapter. Although African slaves provided the bulk of settler labor, they were not distributed evenly among white settlers, nor geographically throughout the Mosquitia. As I showed above, most black slaves lived at Black River, while others concentrated at Corn Islands, Bluefields, and the Rio Grande. By 1787, Bolland calculated that 112 free people owned no slaves and another 42 owned 102 slaves. On the other hand, he reckoned that just 20 people held 774 slaves.<sup>49</sup> As early as 1748, only 2 or 3 people possessed more than 10 or 12 black

slaves.<sup>50</sup> By 1759, William Pitt was said to own 400 black slaves with all other slave holders possessing only 200.<sup>51</sup>

Although the Black River colony emerged as a slave society, it was strongly divided between those who could afford slaves and those who could not. It was in the hopes of preventing this type of internally stratified colonial society that Governor Trelawny had originally attempted to restrict slavery in the Mosquitia:

I would humbly take the liberty to give my opinion that slavery should not be allowed [at the Mosquito Shore] in the same manners it is in our other colonies. . . . As the same affect may be supposed to always flow from the same cause, there will be a few rich men with large tracts of land with a great number of slaves, the rest servants and some very few white artisans. This is the form they will probably fall into, it being thus in [Jamaica] . . . How insecure such a form must be is very apparent; they will soon be crying out to their Mother Country for help, even against their own slaves, as is the case now in Jamaica. . . . [In general, the English] are the worst managers of slaves, [and many slaves will inevitably escape to the Spaniards] . . . About two years ago, the negroes belonging to the inhabitants of this Shore . . . ran away in a [boat] and settled in the neighbourhood, till they were reduced by the [Miskitu], the white men being utterly unable to do it themselves. . . . [In contrast, the settlers will claim] that if the use of slaves is allowed, the woods will be immediately cleared, canes, indigo and coffee will be seen to flourish, and ships will be loaded with the produce of the place. . . . If it is alleged that Europeans cannot work in this country, I answer, the fact is otherwise. True it is, that they cannot stand the sun so long as negroes, but it is likewise true, that . . . while they are at work will do as much in two hours as a negroe will in 3 or 4. . . . I am clearly of the opinion that if white men cannot work here, they have no business here. If the settlement cannot be carried on without slaves, it had better not be carried on at all, and the government should not be put to any expense about it.<sup>52</sup>

It seems like an oxymoron to argue for the ‘relative benign nature of slavery’ on the Mosquito Shore, but several authors make this claim. Most slaves had come from Jamaica where they had been removed for unruly behavior. This, according to Superintendent Lawrie, meant they had to be treated better in the Mosquitia.<sup>53</sup> Like their counterparts at Belize, slaves owned and operated guns, a long-standing tradition observed by Uring as early as 1712.<sup>54</sup> At Belize, Henderson reported that slaves “possess indulgencies which are not granted to their condition in any other

country.” On the whole, Belizean slaves commonly used arms “and possibly a more expert body of marksmen could no where be found.” Allegedly, loyalty was maintained through “the consistent exercise of humanity and forbearance.”<sup>55</sup> While likely an exaggeration, it is true that black slaves in the Mosquitia possessed numerous options for resistance not readily available on West Indian plantation societies.

Apprehension over escaping slaves or a slave rebellion, especially one aided and abetted by the Miskitu, kept settlers alert and fearful. In 1766, Otway reported the desertion of 15 slaves “to the Spaniards by whom they are received and protected.”

The unusual method taken by the Spaniards to avoid complying with any demand made for restoring of runaway slaves is to baptize them as soon as possible by which means they fall under the protection of the Ecclesiastical Authority after which, as I have been informed, the Spanish Commandants allege that it is not in their power of military or civil officer or magistrate to release them. [A spread of this knowledge to other slaves would put the settlement in grave danger, for] without the labour of slaves, matters of commerce could neither be carried on nor improved in these parts, and as persons settled here usually estimate their worth in proportion to the number of their slaves.<sup>56</sup>

By the 1760s, Jones reported that a nearby British settlement had to be abandoned “through the danger the Settlers were in from a great number of runaway Slaves who then infested this part of the Country.”<sup>57</sup> Hodgson wrote that upon Pitt’s death in 1771 that “an immediate danger more than threatens” from his 400 slaves.<sup>58</sup>

When the impending evacuation sank in 1786, settlers feared a slave uprising instigated by the Miskitu. Settlers wrote that the Sambo Miskitu were “enraged at being left to the mercy of the Spaniards [and] will not allow us peaceably to depart.” According to the settlers, since it was common knowledge that slaves are treated better here than in the West Indies:

we have all the reason to think without a sufficient force to awe them, a great part may be induced to join the Mosquito Men, and thus add—with their advice as it is well known they have an amazing influence over them—strength to [the Miskitu], and endeavor to effect our Ruin.<sup>59</sup>

In 1782, when the Spanish tried to occupy Black River during the war, they apparently faced strong guerilla attacks from escaped black slaves “who lived off plantains and wild fruit in the surrounding thickets.”<sup>60</sup> Lawrie noted the settlers were growing scared because “[Sambo General Lee] has of late frequently declared when perfectly sober, but thrown off his guard, his determination to blow out the brains of the first white man who should attempt to desert him and his people and leave them to the mercy of the Spaniards.” After speaking with General Lee “thro [sic] a very good interpreter,” Lawrie stated that Lee held little faith in Spanish promises. Lee promised to assemble Miskitu leaders to discuss the matter. Lawrie wrote that “As those Chiefs will in all probability be numerously attended [by other Miskitu]. . . [one] can see how dangerous it will be for us.” He added that black slaves may join the rebellious Miskitu, and he requested troops be sent: “at least one hundred men will be wanted for Black River, an equal number at Cape Gracias a Dios and fifty men at Bluefields.”<sup>61</sup> The nature of the Mosquitia’s landscape, the vacillations of international diplomacy and British politics, as well as the presence of the Miskitu whom the British could neither fully trust nor control, insured that black slaves enjoyed a great deal of ‘freedom’ and influenced the behavior and decisions of their masters.

### **Settler Economic Activities**

On the most general level, settler economic activities can be ascertained from available export statistics (Table 7.3). However, the figures do not reveal: (a) the trade in Indian slaves since such activities had been officially outlawed in 1741 (see Chapter Eight), (b) the percent of total exports which derived from the Spanish,

nor (c) the percent contributions of products originating from the Nicaraguan portion of the Mosquitia. In general, settlers along the Nicaraguan coast had little to do with those at Black River, and instead maintained direct commercial ties to Jamaica and St. Andrews (San Andrés). Superintendents considered his development detrimental to the colony and they often had to settle inter-coastal disputes. Otway wrote that illicit trade, especially the procurement of Indian slaves by the Tawira:

carried on by some of the inhabitants settled to the southward of Cape Gracias a Dios, and which, although it has been pursued for many years with great advantage to the individuals engaged in it, seems to be detrimental to the general interest of the settlement. [These south coast settlers rarely create plantations, but instead] most of them, have from their first settling here, [been] entirely accustomed themselves to cutting and manufacturing mahogany and procuring of tortoise shell.

Indeed, Otway specifically states that that south coast settlers did not pass their goods through Black River, and in effect did not support the colony with revenue yet expected protection from the superintendent.<sup>62</sup>

**Table 7.3 Exports from Black River during the Superintendency, 1744-1786.**

Year	Mahogany	Turtle Shell		Sarsaparilla		Mules	Cacao	Other*	Total
	bd. ft.	£	lbs.	£	lbs.	£	£	£	£
1744			4,000						
1750	500,000		5,000		40,000				27,000
1757	200,000	5,000	6,000	3,000	120,000	12,000		5,000	25,000
1761	446,000	5,575	12,600	3,150	150,000	7,500	220	5,672	23,317
1763	650,000		8,000		110,000				
1769	789,000	19,737	9,600	3,840	195,300	17,902	12,250	7,069	61,048
1780					120,000	3,500			
1786	1,000,000	15,000							

\* Includes small quantities of some of the following cotton, coffee, indigo, cochineal, pimento (allspice), balsams, gums, tallow, gold, silver, Spanish bullion, deer and cow hides, animal pelts, and fustic, almost all procured from trade with the Spanish.

Sources: Robert Hodgson, Sr. to Lord, Mosquito Shore, 4 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 68; Robert Hodgson to Duke of Bedford, Jamaica, 21 April 1751, PRO, CO 137/57: 550; Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 18-19; Joseph Speer Smith, "An Account of the Mosquito Shore (1765)," *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* (1844): 732-736; Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 116; Joseph Otway to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Black River, 25 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33: 167-168; Richard Jones to W. Trelawny, Black River, 4 April 1770, PRO, CO 137/65: 183; Peter F. Stout, *Nicaragua: Past, Present, Future* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter, 1859), 255; Black River Settler's Committee to Col. James Lawrie, Black River, Mosquito Shore, 14 Oct. 1786, PRO, CO 137/86.

The value of Black River imports typically equaled its exports, but such values were always small compared to Belize. Superintendent Richard Jones (1759-1762) wrote that during his tenure:

the Mosquito Shore was inhabited by 203 white people (the detachment of 30 soldiers included) with 189 free musteas and mulattos, about 3,000 Mosquito Indians and 914 negroe slaves, in all 4,306 souls, besides the friendly indians on the back part of the country. The imports of British commodities on an average amounting to £18,500 a year and exports to £30,792 per year which employed 1,150 tons of shipping and 115 seamen, this exclusive of the affairs of the Bay of Honduras, whose imports and exports are much larger.<sup>63</sup>

Table 7.3 shows that gathered resources such as sarsaparilla and turtle shell accounted for a third or more of the colony's export values, a significance that did not wane throughout the superintendency.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, duty revenues for turtle shell and sarsaparilla alone provided the colony with almost £2,000 in 1757.<sup>65</sup> After the 1763 Anglo-Spanish Treaty, mahogany emerged as the most significant export item, despite the fact that its value per board-foot went down. Since a good portion of livestock, cacao, indigo, and cotton derived from the Spanish, we can assume that Anglo-Spanish trade relations increased rapidly during times of peace, specifically 1763-1779. The increasing cacao exports reflect the fact that the Tawira Miskitu began exacting tribute from the Spanish at Matina in 1769. The governor at Cartago allegedly paid a million pounds annually to insure Miskitu tranquility, yet much of this cacao entered the Jamaican market directly.<sup>66</sup>

In general, settler activities during the superintendency were of four types: (1) contraband trade with the Spanish; (2) crop and livestock production; (3) mahogany cutting; and (4) trade and other arrangements for 'gathered resources,' including Indian slaves. To this last category we might add exploration for gold, especially by the late 1770s at a "deserted Spanish mine" known as Albera Poyer up the Rio Paulaya, a tributary of the Rio Tinto.<sup>67</sup> Except for Indian slaving, which I discuss in the next chapter, the Miskitu labored in these economies very little if at all. In general, like commercial enterprises throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 18<sup>th</sup> century

ventures were plagued by a labor shortage. Settler inability to entice the Miskitu to labor insured the continuance of Indian slavery in the Mosquitia well after it had been officially banned by British law. It is likely that the Miskitu understood that if they would not labor for the British, settlers would continue to buy Indian slaves from them in defiance of official policy.

Trade with the Spanish empire was Black River's initial *raison d' être*. Despite the fact that trade between inhabitants of the Spanish empire and nationals of another foreign power was strictly illegal, illicit trade was supported at the highest levels by Spanish officials and clergy, many of whom were prominent *contrabandistas*. At one point Nicaragua's *gobernador* jailed the *corregidor* de Matagalpa for his involvement in illicit trade. The volume and frequency of trade was so substantial along the northcoast that many "mulattos" from Sonaguera spoke English.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, one author noted that a Sonaguera population of English-speaking "*negroes*" gathered sarsaparilla for the English "as if they were Indians of a Repartimiento," earning eight pesos a month plus food.<sup>69</sup> Spaniards had brought cattle from Guatemala and Comayagua to Roatán during in the 1730s and many were traded to the British. In 1736, several Miskitu sent a letter to Honduran officials asking for free trade rights at Trujillo to procure cattle, horses, and tobacco, a missive likely produced by Englishmen.<sup>70</sup> During the war, a road was built connecting Black River to Trujillo which further increased the trade in cattle, many of which ended up under Miskitu management near the Rio Patuca. In the first dry season after its completion in 1743, some 40-50,000 pesos worth of Spanish cattle, indigo, silver, and gold had passed to Black River.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast, contraband traffic to Nicaragua was always carried out through the Rios Escondido and Grande, and to a lesser extent the Rio Wangki, and thus was governed by climatic conditions. Reflecting British experiences, one trader stated: "January and February are the best months for going up this river [Bluefields], or any other on the Mosquito Shore, for in March and April the rivers in general are too low and abound with rapids and falls. In other months the floods are too



miserable to work against the currents.”<sup>72</sup> Bluefields traders Henry Corrin and Robert Hodgson, Jr. acted as middlemen between Jamaican merchants and the Nicaraguans of Acoyapa and Matagalpa, but the actual transportation and exchange of goods took place through the Kukra-Ulwa Indians.<sup>73</sup> During questioning in 1768, Kukra leader Carlos Yarrince noted that Spaniards sought clothes and “*negros Bozales*,” or recently arrived Africans, in exchange for cattle, mules, and horses.<sup>74</sup> Anglo-Spanish contraband trade through Nicaragua displayed similar characteristics to that of the north shore, both revolving around British textiles and African slaves in exchange for cattle and primary resources such as gold and sarsaparilla.

The commercial activities of the Kukra-Ulwa between 1750-1790 have been greatly discussed in Nicaraguan historiography due to the important ‘defection’ of the Kukra leader Carlos Yarrince to the Spanish in 1768. Prior to having sought protection from the Spanish, Yarrince or Yarrinsen—a Spanish corruption of his English name Captain Garrison—had received a British commission.<sup>75</sup> While I touch on this episode again in later chapters, Yarrince’s switch to the Spanish was a direct result of Tawira Miskitu slave raids and attempts to control the southern contraband trade. In 1762, Henry Corrin lamented Miskitu abuses against the Kukra, or as he called them, the ‘commerce Indians.’ He blamed the Tawira for Yarrince’s defection, and he feared the Miskitu would come to plunder him next.<sup>76</sup> It is around this time that Corrin began cultivating a strong relationship with the Sambo Miskitu colony at southern Pearl Lagoon; indeed the formation of this colony may have had to do with British settlers in the first place. In August of 1766, some 200 or 300 “zambos” attacked Matina and loaded their booty into Corrin’s waiting sloop.<sup>77</sup> If the Spanish accounts of this raid are ‘ethnically’ accurate, they suggest that Corrin began to form an alliance with the Sambo after the Tawira, who remained a supporter of Colville Cairns, Corrin’s south coast rival, upset his relations with the Kukra of the western Pearl Lagoon district (see also Chapter Eight).

In addition to contraband trade, settlers attempted to raise export crops, including cattle. Export statistics, however, do not suggest that livestock or plantation agriculture played a significant role in the colonial economy, although the former probably provided the bulk of local meats. Be that as it may, Spanish writers have always highlighted “*las plantaciones*” of the settlers at Black River, especially those of Pitt, whom they called Piche.<sup>78</sup> By the end of the superintendency, a few settlers had experimented with colonial style sugar, indigo, and possibly cotton ‘plantations,’ yet the scale of these operations was extremely small and relegated at Black River, Corn Island, and, in the late 1770s, at the Rio Grande. However, when the colony disbanded in 1787, Black River had a mile-long street running adjacent to the lagoon, five crossing streets, two sugar mills, and farm and pasture lands stretching several miles up surrounding tributaries.<sup>79</sup>

Slaves provided plantation labor. There is no indication that the Miskitu or free Indians worked as plantation laborers for wages or goods during the superintendency. While the Black River colony provided Belize with the great majority of its fresh provisions, I speculate that much of this derived from small, private gardens worked by free people of color and African slaves. To the extent that settlers invested in plantations, efforts concentrated on sugar production and the raising of cattle. Most all of this occurred at Black River. In the 1770s, three sugar estates and “Penns of Black Cattle and provision grounds” extended up Black River.<sup>80</sup> Roberts and Young encountered the ruins of such plantations 30 and 50 years after their abandonment respectively, and among the feral vegetation “in a great state of forwardness,” they found coffee, cacao, and sarsaparilla. Young remarked, accurately, “wherever a white man sets his foot, he leaves traces that cannot be mistaken.”<sup>81</sup>

In spite of an important attempt to form a sugar plantation and distillery at the Rio Grande during the late 1770s, settlers on the south coast of Nicaragua pursued plantation agriculture less than their north coast counterparts.<sup>82</sup> Although the slaves of Hodgson Jr. did experiment with cotton and indigo at Corn Island,

Hodgson wrote that other settlers “entirely neglect cultivation, except for necessary provisionings.”<sup>83</sup> When Otway toured the coast in 1765, he was shocked to find that settlers had not yet established plantations despite having been ordered to do so:

I should have found Land cultivated for raising such Produce as should be judged most agreeable to the Natures of the different Soils, especially as the [British] Inhabitants, even in the most remote Parts, had been for near a Year informed of the Orders contained in The Earl of Halifax’s letter to me, for increasing the Commerce of the Settlement. . . . instead of the improvements . . . I found large Tracts of Land, which with due care and cultivation would produce the most valuable Articles of South American Commerce, laying waste and unimproved, and which, to all appearance remained in it’s original uncultivated state, excepting where the inhabitants had been obligated to make small plantations for the immediate support of their families.<sup>84</sup>

The sentiments expressed by Richard Jones in 1768 illustrate that things changed little after Otway’s tour:

[T]he soil in many places is very good, and capable of producing Indian corn, sugar cane, plantains, yhams, indigo, ginger, cotton, coffee, pimento, and in short every thing that can be raised in any part of the West Indian Islands. But most of the inhabitants [presumably including the Miskitu] take little or no pains to cultivate any more land than what serves them with ground provisions, which they have in great perfection and plenty, therefore they think of little else then sawing mahogany and other timber for building vessels etc., gathering sarsaparilla and cacao, getting tortoise shell, seal oil, silk grass and sundry sorts of gums etc.; also bartering with the Spaniards, British commodities for silver bullion, mules, horses, black cattle, etc. which they import [sic] to Jamaica.<sup>85</sup>

By the late 1770s, however, it appears that settlers at Cape Gracias had established a sugar distillery in lieu of Rio Wangki plantations. As Bell tells it, settlers and their slaves cultivated land:

on the banks of the Wanx River, which flowed into the sea 6 or 8 miles north of the harbour, and the sugar had to be brought in lighters out of the river, round by the sea, and into the harbour. To avoid delays and inconvenience of such a transit, the settlers . . . cut a canal from the river to the harbour. The river gradually worked its way through the canal, and very soon the whole of it was flowing into the harbour, which was entirely silted up, and a shallow bar formed across the former deep entrance.<sup>86</sup>

A 1788 “Plan” of Cape Gracias shows a “*Casa de Campo* on the banks of the Rio Wangki where they make *asuadas*,” likely meaning rum.<sup>87</sup> Settlers likely cut the canal “after a great hurricane in 1765” had blocked the north channel.<sup>88</sup> Settlers and their slaves probably modified coastal waterways in innumerable ways, however, the Cape Gracias channel and the road between Trujillo and Black River are the only known examples of such landscape modifications.<sup>89</sup>

Rhetorically, plantation style agriculture acts as a signifier that conjures up West Indian style landscapes and a colonial British government. While these two images cannot describe British settlement nor activities during the superintendency, many authors have attempted to extend this colonial landscape to the Mosquitia. While there were some British ‘plantations,’ settlers promoted the utility of plantations much more than they actually created them. Moreover, free indigenous people never resided at Black River, Bluefields, or Corn Island, the predominant plantation sites, and did not labor upon such plantations. Commerce statistics, especially in conjunction with known products that derived from the Spanish, do not suggest that plantation agriculture played a big role in British commerce. In my opinion, the trope of ‘British plantations’ has been overused in representing the Mosquitia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially eastern Nicaragua.

The ubiquitous cutting of mahogany, a defining feature of the Mosquitia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, got underway during the superintendency of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Still, a perpetual shortage of labor hindered logging activities. In contrast to Belize, Mosquitia mahogany cutting was carried out by small gangs of African slaves.<sup>90</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that the Miskitu labored in logging enterprises under British supervision, but they likely sold trees they themselves procured.<sup>91</sup> The extent to which other hardwoods were also cut remains uncertain, but in his 1757 export data, Hodgson noted mahogany “and other hardwoods” had been exported.<sup>92</sup> Settlers shipped small quantities of “zebrawood,” and at least one ship carried fustic acquired from the Spanish.<sup>93</sup> Logging had apparently been so

extensive close to Black River that Young found no mahogany along the banks of the Rio Tinto in the early 1840s.<sup>94</sup> Mahogany logs were generally cut into lengths, squared, and shipped whole, but after the 1770s many planks were cut at hydraulic sawmills.<sup>95</sup>

### **Miskitu Attitudes toward British Activities**

Given that popular historiography emphatically describes the Miskitu as under the figurative thumb of British settlers, it is worthwhile showing how the Miskitu made use of the British to advance their own objectives. The most important point to understand about Anglo–Miskitu economic relations is that the Miskitu did not labor for the British under formal supervision. Evidence for widespread Miskitu wage laboring does not appear until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Miskitu men were forced to enter the labor force after the collapse of annual support from the superintendency and colonial economic activities such as Indian slaving.<sup>96</sup> Although the British inevitably attributed Miskitu labor aversion to innate laziness, they failed to understand that the Miskitu did not intend to become loyal British subjects and, indeed, that they preferred their own lifestyle. The Miskitu might have imitated the British, sought out their manufactures, but they did not want to ‘improve’ or ‘civilize’ themselves in the manner the British assumed to be the objective of all rational people. In expressing his exasperation at Miskitu defiance of the civilizing process, Edward Long summarized the British position by stating that the Miskitu “are rather indolent in temper; and will not labour, unless when indigent and compelled to it by want.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the Miskitu typically only contributed to British activities when such participation maximized their autonomy and their retention of the forces of production.

In the 1770s, the Tawira of the Rio Grande provided turtle oil, shell, a little silk grass, and some provisions “but they would not work at anything for us, except fishing; and a few times they assisted to cut some trees down, to build us houses.”<sup>98</sup>

The description of settler-Miskitu relations by Superintendent Jones expresses much of this same sentiment, but he also notes that the Miskitu provided the British with local handicrafts, including boats:

[The Miskitu] love hunting and fishing etc. otherwise [they are] of a lazy disposition and will seldom work . . . [they] want gay cloaths which they are mostly fond of and for which they will cut mahogany, build canoes, get cocoa, sarsaparilla, silk grass, honey, bee's wax, deer and leopard skins, make fine cotton and silk grass hammocks, cotton cloaths for coverings for beds or tables etc. which they make large and fine, worked in stripes, and figures and dyed of various colors; those they call cavallys, all which they sell and exchange with the English.<sup>99</sup>

The problem of enticing Miskitu laborers with manufactured goods once they had what they needed, apparently changed little over the next century:

It is not always they can be moved from their apathy, even by the inducement of liquor or Osnaburg. I spoke to one huge fellow, requesting he would come and work for me; his reply was, as he lazily turned in his hammock, "Me no want hook, me no want Osnabris;" consequently he refused to leave his hut.<sup>100</sup>

During all historic periods, the Miskitu felt they were above laboring for another. De Kalb's experiences in 1792 continue a trend that the British lamented over a century earlier:

Personal independence is insisted upon with an accompaniment of insolence, which is a great detriment to the progress of the people. . . . [L]ong-continued labor is almost unknown, and service of any sort is usually rendered only as a favor into which one must wheedle the people by infinite cajolery. It is not appearance merely, but in fact, that the money consideration is the less powerful inducement. Imagination can easily picture the indolence and shiftlessness following naturally from this state of things.<sup>101</sup>

Sources from the 18<sup>th</sup> century imply that the Miskitu did not work as plantation laborers nor as laboring woodsmen. In addition, they did not, technically speaking, act as "middlemen" in coastal trade as Mary Helms has argued.<sup>102</sup>

Contraband trade between the Spanish and the British was carried out by the Kukra-Ulwa between Bluefields and Chontales-Matagalpa, the Twahka between the

Olancho Valley and the northcoast, the Panamahka between the Segovia highlands and Cape Gracias, and the Pech and ‘Spanish mulattoes’ between Olancho and Black River. Sarsaparilla gathered by Costa Rican Indians, the Mayangna, or Pech, occasionally passed through Miskitu hands as either tribute or in trade, but generally speaking the Miskitu did not transport British products to the Spanish nor vice versa.

In contrast to the ‘middlemen’ image crafted in regional historiography, individual Miskitu leaders attempted to tax or regulate contraband trade passing through their districts rather than carry out such trade themselves. For example, the Sambo Miskitu of the King’s district levied duty on Spanish traffic passing down the Rio Wangki:

Terms of agreement were actually entered into by the Mosquitos in the year 1761, on condition that the inland traders should not come below the [Rio Wangki] falls (about one hundred and fifty miles from Cape Gracias a Dios), and they should pay a tribute of twenty head of cattle annually, for permission to negotiate with the English through their country.<sup>103</sup>

The Sambo General of the northcoast also oversaw trade conducted by the Twahka via the Rio Patuca, and to a lesser extent among the Pech behind Black River. In 1770 a spat erupted between Superintendent Hodgson Jr. and settler John Christopher over the behavior of General Tempest interference in Christopher’s illicit trade. Christopher had advanced £29.2.6 in goods to “Spanish Mulattoes” to procure some sarsaparilla for him. He complained that General Tempest seized the sarsaparilla and resold it, and that Hodgson had done little to intervene.<sup>104</sup> Hodgson countered that he had in fact intervened, but that he did not secure all the goods Christopher advanced because it “would have endangered a breach with the Mosquito Chief [Tempest],” which would not have been prudent “so soon after the recent revolt” (see Chapters Nine and Ten). Hodgson also argued that since all trade had recently been made illegal between the settlers and the Spanish, a fact “well known to the Mosquito Indians,” it was a “delicate subject” to bring up this

type of settler complaint.<sup>105</sup> In fact, not only did the Miskitu not act as cooperative middlemen, but they often actively hindered contraband traffic.

Most records show that Miskitu leaders of individual districts granted mahogany concessions to settlers for the frontier regions within their respective jurisdictions. In other cases, disputes among leaders often centered on kingly grants within the district of another titled leader. Moreover, with the exception of a prominent and telling case I discuss in Chapter Ten, most known mahogany (and land) concessions occurred well outside of most traditional residential-provisioning areas of the Miskitu. In 1746, Pitt received a concession from King Edward for land and mahogany rights at Sangrelaya, a point west of Cape Camerón where no Miskitu had ever resided.<sup>106</sup> In 1775, Christopher Garrison and Hodgson Jr. received an upper Rio Wangki concession from Sambo Miskitu Captain Morgan, then living at Cape Gracias, on behalf of the king. Henry Corrin received a timber concession for the upper Rio Wawa from the Tawira governor, and Jeremiah Terry struck a deal to cut mahogany along the Rio San Juan from the Tawira admiral in 1778.<sup>107</sup> In one instance, a schooner carrying timber cut without a proper concession was seized by the Miskitu in protest.<sup>108</sup>

Indeed, the evidence shows that the Miskitu provided cutting rights in areas that they did not reside in, nor ‘control’ in any physical sense. Miskitu leaders provided concessions for areas behind Black River, where no Miskitu had ever lived. They did the same for upper Rio Wangki tributaries such as the Rios Waspuk, Rus Rus, Umbra, and Sangsang, as well as above the Wangki rapids, the domain of the Panamahka, up the Rio Wawa, the domain of the Tungla and Twahka Indians, and along the Rio San Juan, the domain of the Rama, and up the Rio Grande, the domain of the Ulwa, and so on. The overwhelming evidence suggests that the Miskitu actually used concessions to extend a *de facto* political authority over lands they did not, nor had they ever, physically lived in, made use of, nor possessed.



In looking back at these concessions and land grants many historians have followed the line of thinking laid down by British consul-general Walker in 1837:

That while the British Authorities have at all times been desirous to preserve the internal independence of the Mosquito King, the Mosquito King has on the other hand been ever inclined to encourage the formation of British Settlements *within his Territories* and to place a confidence in the British settlers amounting almost to a state of dependence. For example, in the most flourishing period of the English settlement on the Mosquito Shore, numerous and extensive grants of land were made by the King to the Settlers. These grants were all evidently drawn up by the parties themselves, altho [sic] signed by the King, and some of them attested by his chiefs and the lots seem to have been selected by the grantees themselves. (emphasis added)<sup>109</sup>

Yet, none of these grants occurred in what could properly have been considered ‘Miskitu lands’ at the time they were drawn up. Nevertheless, many writers have used the historically salient fact that the Miskitu effectively ceded to the British large tracts of land and resource extraction rights to show that the Miskitu were naïve and unconcerned about ‘their territory.’ In contrast, it would appear to me that the grants worked in the opposite way: to expand the territory considered to belong to individual Miskitu leaders who increased their stature through such deals at the same time they effectively expanded the bounds of individual districts and the Miskitu Kingdom. Ironically, the Miskitu practice of granting resource and/or land-right concessions to the British in areas occupied by other ethnic groups exemplifies what the Nicaraguan state did vis-à-vis these same ‘Miskitu lands’ in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Imagined Landscape**

British representations of the Mosquitia’s landscape reflected geopolitical imaginations and landscape ideals more than actual deeds, but that has not weakened the carry-forward effect of what I term the mythical landscape. The 1763 Treaty of Paris created an internal debate about the future of the Mosquito Shore

colony. Those seeking to support the colony published exaggerated claims of soil fertility and the abundance of valuable resources. In 1764, even Benjamin Franklin urged British support for sugar plantations “on the Mosquito Shore, where I am told there is plenty of suitable land; and Numbers ready to go and plant there.”<sup>110</sup> In retrospect, this moment dramatically affected events in the future because these landscape representations have, and continue, to guide regional thought about the Mosquitia and its inhabitants. This is all the more interesting when we consider that contemporaneous landscape imagery was plagiarized from the works of Robert Hodgson, Jr., who, in turn, appears to have borrowed heavily from his father’s documents. The degree to which British ‘knowledge’ produced under these very political and discursive circumstances resurfaced and informed subsequent British actions in the Mosquitia, as well as innumerable 19<sup>th</sup> century travel accounts, 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, and Nicaraguan ideas about its Caribbean coast, baffle the mind. Discussing these topics in the space they deserve is beyond the scope of this study, but it is worthwhile to point out how landscape was used in rhetorical strategies to rally British support for the erstwhile colony. It is important because these mythical landscapes continue to inform Miskitu identity, Nicaraguan nation building, and environmental thinking in Nicaragua.

We know a great deal about Robert Hodgson Jr.’s writings because settlers brought a case against him in 1775 and he defected to the Spanish following his capture around 1780.<sup>111</sup> Of Hodgson’s numerous writings, two memoirs stand out, his 1757 *The First Account of the State of that Part of America called the Mosquito Shore*, and his 1766 *Some Account of that part of the Continent of America, called the Mosquito Shore*.<sup>112</sup> The first work was reprinted as *Some Account of the Mosquito Territory* in 1822 and addressed by the editor to “those who doubt the desirableness of the Mosquito Shore.”<sup>113</sup> Many period writers seeking to generate British support for the Black River colony borrowed substantially from both documents in ways that would make it difficult today to tell that they had never visited the Mosquitia. Three such writers, Thomas Jefferys (1762), His Majesty’s

Council member Bryan Edwards (1773), and Jamaican historian Edward Long (1774), specifically lifted landscape passages from Hodgson's glowing works, as well as from a few other authors such as the SPG Reverend Thomas Warren and Captain Joseph Speer Smith. During the Victorian period when Britain returned to the Mosquitia, consul-general Patrick Walker used these writings to establish a precedent for British authority along the Mosquito Shore.<sup>114</sup>

The reproduction of Hodgson's landscape imagery generates the impression that British activities were, or at least could be, much more encompassing than they actually had been. Contrary to most people's reality then or now, Hodgson portrayed the Mosquitia as a fecund and fertile land, a place that surmounted West Indian potential in both quantity and quality. Hodgson's environmental imaginary provided the first level of a rhetorical gloss which plagiarists spun into an even more virtuous landscape. According to Hodgson, the low coastal land rose gradually up large rivers, "whose regular flowery banks form wide avenues." We learn that the high lands were covered with "large woods," where the soil is "everywhere excellent; being either a deep black mould, or a rich brick clay."<sup>115</sup> Despite its excellence, the place could still be ameliorated. The savannas, for example, "might be greatly improved and made very useful." Although currently not so desirable, the swamps and marshes are full of rich soil, "and if the wood which grows on them were cut down, they would either dry up, or, with a little more pains, might be drained."<sup>116</sup>

The existing cornucopia of available resources, which Hodgson elaborated at length, and others repeated diligently, are said to grow spontaneously even without the benefit of Enlightenment improvement: "The natural uncultivated produce (and indeed there is little other) is of course produced by nature under disadvantages which a little art removes." In addition to cacao, which grows "all about the country," cotton, which "flourishes spontaneously on the worst lands . . . and looks as fine as silk," and indigo, "esteemed the best in the world," the available resources are said to include:

Ipecucuanha, contrayerba, sarsaparilla, china root, liquorice, auoffa [annatto], vaynillas, and numerous sorts of balsamos, gums (some of great fragrance and elasticity) roots and vines for wounds and diseases, varnishes and dyes grow in great abundance, and many of them undoubtedly are very valuable, and probably among them are the balsams of Peru, Tolu, and Capivi as they grow in the Spanish Country.

This prolific pharmacopoeia notwithstanding, “sarsaparilla is the only drug that has hitherto been transported, being chiefly to the want of knowledge in the settlers.”<sup>117</sup>

Among the available products, we again hear of the amazing silk grass, first noted by the settlers at Providence Island over a century earlier. Hodgson considered silk grass “inferior only to silk.” After spending 21 years of service in Her Majesty’s Navy in the western Caribbean, Capt. Speer found the land “extremely fertile,” and he claimed that silkgrass would be a “a great branch of trade [if] encouraged.” Superintendent Otway noted the soil to be so “remarkably fine and luxuriant, [that] many of the above mentioned articles [indigo, sarsaparilla, cotton, cacao, allspice, and ginger] grow spontaneously, but all of them would with proper cultivation be produced in great abundance.” And, “There is great plenty of silk grass in every part of the settlement.”<sup>118</sup> Old World metaphors abounded. The savannas were said to appear like ‘lawns’ or English parks, the rivers were as wide as the Thames. According to Jefferys, rivers that periodically overflowed “like the Nile” contributed to the richness of the soil.<sup>119</sup> In all these passages, the message is clear: the soil is fertile, valuable resources produce spontaneously, and a little improvement would go a long way. For some unexplained reason, settlers chose not to pursue these natural advantages, but instead of reflecting on the paradox, Hodgson just forged ahead:

By fair computation, there are above thirty millions of acres of this fine country, which considering the goodness and variety of the soils, and the experience had of the thriving of such things as have hitherto been tried or noticed, it is more than probable would [sic] produce most articles that grow between the tropics in perfection, and is sufficient to supply *all the markets in Europe* with West India commodities at a very modest rate. . . .

[As if that was not enough, there is] much reason to think there are valuable Mines among the hills, both from the nature of the springs and the earths.<sup>120</sup>

The two Jamaicans Edwards and Long—the latter of whom relied heavily on the former—went one step further in their mythical landscapes. They combined the plagiarized images of a fertile, but so far underutilized, landscape with the civilizing benefits of British commerce into a manifesto for British duty akin to the ‘whiteman’s burden.’ Consider Edwards summation: “Either the native Indians have purchased our protection by the cession of their country, and uninterrupted allegiance of upwards of a century, or they have not.” To support his affirmative support, Edwards argued that the Miskitu deserved nothing less than to made useful to British commerce, to reap the benefits of white direction. The Tawira particularly deserved British attention. For the “pure Indians” are “seldom guilty of positive evil, and often rise to positive good, when positive good does not require much exertion of mind.” On the other hand, the Sambo Miskitu have “inherited some of the worst characteristics of the worst African mind, for they are generally false, designing, treacherous, knavish, impudent, and revengeful,” and will require prior civilizing before they can receive the enlightenment of greater British oversight.<sup>121</sup> It turns out that Edwards lifted these two descriptive passages, word for word, from a 1771 letter from the Reverend Thomas Warren to the SPG. Such plagiarism did not stop Long from also reproducing the same excerpts.<sup>122</sup>

For his part, Long argued that since commerce civilizes and labor generates commerce, employing the Indians will civilize them at the same time it brings benefits to British manufactures. He holds up the example of Henry Corrin who employs the Kukra and Ulwa Indians: “It seems, I think, probable, that they might soon become reconciled to much of the English manners in their dress of cloathing, furniture, implements, and food, from us.” Naturally, Indian “wants will undoubtedly increase in proportion as they grow more civilized.”<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, Long felt that for this formula to work among the Miskitu, “some degree of [prior] civilization [would be] necessary; without which, their consumption of

British manufactures cannot reach to any great extent.”<sup>124</sup> Long’s view seems at odds with many 20<sup>th</sup> century analysts who feel that the mere physical presence of the British had endeared themselves, and their commodities, to the Miskitu.

\* \* \*

If we look at the beginning and end of this chapter we find that accident and the geographical imagination bookend a good deal of British activities and attitudes toward the Mosquitia between 1740-87. Most British officials in Jamaica supported the creation of the superintendency only because it lay close to Belize, was unoccupied by the Spanish, and provided several channels through which British manufacturers could be traded for raw materials with the Guatemalan Audiencia. Receiving substantive and ongoing British support for the colony, however, seemed like pulling teeth from the settlers’ perspective. Settlers felt Jamaican officials abandoned them briefly in the 1750s, after the 1763 Treaty of Paris, and finally after the 1783 Anglo-Spanish Treaty of Versailles. The marginal position of the Mosquitia in British Caribbean designs, including a feeling of insecurity due to a powerful slave population, guaranteed that a heavy dose of imaginative geography was produced to rally British support. Ironically, much of this writing was plagiarized from a few sources, and continues to provide a good deal of polemical fodder for Nicaraguan historiographers and political analysts to this day.

From the beginning of the superintendency, Governor Trelawny hoped to civilize the Miskitu, that is to turn them into a Christian yeoman peasantry who would legitimize and help protect the British colony. Over a 45 year period five missionaries worked among free people of color, blacks, enslaved mulattos near Black River, and among the Sambo Miskitu along the north coast and Sandy Bay. Their influence, especially that of Frederic Post, appears substantial, yet remains quite vague. King George and his son King George II, who together exerted influence from 1755-1800, appear to have cultivated a deep understanding of Anglo

Christianity. Although wide-spread Miskitu conversion to Christianity did not occur until the 1880s, Sambo Miskitu leaders and sukias had learned to manipulate the rituals and rhetoric of Christianity in social settings among the British and their own people in ways that helped sustain their privileged position in the eyes of both. Christian influences played a disproportionate role among the Sambo Miskitu, and helped further distinguished them from the Tawira. I speculate that this incongruity informed the Sambo-Tawira identity boundary in ways that encouraged the Sambo to view the Tawira as more backward and provincial by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as was discussed in Chapter Four.

British settlers and their African slaves settled unevenly along the Mosquito Shore. With the exception of Pearl Lagoon, British settlements generally formed away from all indigenous communities. Settlers and their slaves overwhelmingly concentrated at Black River, and remained geographically closer to Trujillo than Cape Gracias a Dios. The large number of black slaves at Corn Island and Bluefields probably had limited contact with the Miskitu until after 1790. African slaves endured relative liberties within bondage, and settlers lived in constant fear of a slave rebellion aided or abetted by the Miskitu. Few white women insured a growing population of free people of color called ‘mustees,’ and probably many enslaved people classified as black. Many of these mustees remained in the Mosquitia or returned quickly after evacuation, and formed a part of the Creole elite in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The strongly skewed British settlement and disparate influences effectively divided the Mosquitia in two distinct regions. Settlers on the Nicaraguan portion of the Mosquito Shore generally held divergent interests from settlers at Black River, and a the bulk of their trade was carried on directly with merchants at Jamaica and San Andrés. Commercial activities along the southern, or Nicaraguan Shore, concentrated on illicit trade with the Spanish, purchasing and reselling Indian slaves from the Tawira, procuring turtle shell, and extracting mahogany. Evidence suggests that the Miskitu did not labor in British enterprises, and in many cases

impeded the smooth operation of such ventures. Available documentation suggests that Miskitu leaders asserted authority over their respective districts in ways that did not give British subjects special privileges. In particular, Tawira abuses of the Kukra and Ulwa upset contraband trade between Bluefields and Nicaragua. In addition, Miskitu leaders regulated contraband traffic through their domains. They also granted mahogany concessions at the outer margins of their districts in a way that expanded their operative power over neighboring ethnic groups and lands. The fissured geography of the superintendency, as a political-territorial structure, and the manifold interests of individual settlers, came together in ways that fortified the territorialization of individual Miskitu districts as well as the notion of a contextually united Miskitu Kingdom.

### Notes to Chapter Seven

<sup>1</sup> In 1699, M. W. met a 103 year old Englishman named Nicholas who arrived to the coast in 1637 after killing a man on St. Kitts; “Mosqueto Indians,” 288. A single line in the pamphlet *Certain Inducements* also hints that Englishmen from Providence had remained: “Tilboa [tapir] is a Creature, the flesh whereof eateth like Biefe, and is almost as big as an Oxe; there about the Sea coast are somewhat rare but up in the Country by *Indian* and Some *English* relations, much more plentiful,” 5. The English colonies at Jamaica and northern Belize also received contributions from former Providence settlers; Newton, *Colonising Activities*, 315; E. O. Winzerling, *The Beginning of British Honduras, 1506-1765* (New York: North River Press, 1946); Stephen L. Caiger, *British Honduras, Past and Present* (London, 1951); Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 8-9; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 18; Alan K. Craig, “Logwood as a Factor in the Settlement of British Honduras,” *Caribbean Studies* 9 (1969): 53-62; O. Nigel Bolland, *The Formation of a Colonial Society* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Raveneau de Lussan*, 288.

<sup>3</sup> “Relación de una cautividad entre los Mosquitos. Declaración de Micaela Gómez, mulata libre, Nueva Segovia, 2 Jan. 1717,” CRCM, 87-92. Two of the Englishmen living on the savannas had accompanied de Lussan across the Segovias in 1689. Romero mistakenly claims these men lived along the Rio Wangki, *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 27, 129.



<sup>4</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*; “Declaración del mulato Miguel Gutiérrez,” Masaya, 10 Oct. 1710, AGI Guatemala 300; f. 396; “Declaración de Gregorio López,” Cartago, 25 April 1724, AGI Guatemala 455; see also Romero V., *Sociedades*, 36, 99, 100, 136.

<sup>5</sup> John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West Indies* (London: Ward and Chandler, 1735), 227; Pares, *War and Trade*, 102; Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 25-28. On English logwood activities see David Morgan McJunkin, “Logwood: An Inquiry into the Historical Biogeography of *Haematoxylum campechianum* L. and Related Dyewoods of the Neotropics” (Ph. D., University of California, Los Angeles, 1991); Craig, “Logwood;” Michael A. Camille, “Historical Geography of the Belizean Logwood Trade,” *Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers* 22 (1996): 77-85.

<sup>6</sup> Karl H. Offen, “British Logwood Extraction from the Mosquitia: The Origin of a Myth,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 242-43; Thomas Jefferys, *A Description of the Spanish Islands and Settlements on the Coast of the West Indies* (London, 1762), 11, 17; George Henderson, *An Account of the British Settlement of Honduras* (London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1809); Thomas Strangeways, *A Sketch of the Mosquito shore, including the Territory of Poyais* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1822), 42.

<sup>8</sup> The inlet leading to the Black River colony is well hidden and cannot be entered without a knowledgeable pilot; Joseph Speer Smith, “An Account of the Mosquito Shore (1765),” *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* (1844), 734.

<sup>9</sup> Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 41. Pitt married a shipwrecked Spanish woman, and they had five children, one of whom married Robert Hodgson, Jr., making the controversial Superintendent Pitt’s son in law; see Dawson, “William Pitt’s Settlement,” 682-84. Pitt’s tombstone is still visible at the current Honduran town of Palacios and reads “To the memory of the Honourable William Pitt who died March 20, 1771, Age 72 years;” Herbert J. Spinden, “The Mosquito Kings, A Royal Travesty,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 17 August 1924, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Belizeans used Black River as a site of refuge in 1730, 1747, and again in 1754: “it was wholly owing to this shelter that [our logwood traders at Belize] were not totally crushed;” Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 17; see also Pares, *War and Trade*, 102; Offen, “British Logwood Extraction.”

<sup>11</sup> Richard Jones to Gov. Elletson, Jamaica, 3 Aug. 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Pares, *War and Trade*, 101.

<sup>13</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 92-93.

<sup>14</sup> Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 54; Dawson, “William Pitt’s Settlement,” 685.

<sup>15</sup> Gov. Trelawny to Lords of Trade, Jamaica, 17 July 1751, PRO, CO 123/1, 10; see also Pares, *War and Trade*, 541.

<sup>16</sup> Gov. Trelawny to Lords of Trade and Plantations, Jamaica, 7 Oct. 1740, PRO, CO 137/48.

<sup>17</sup> During the war, the British also fortified Roatán and made plans to form a private company; Report to the Lords of the Committee of Council, Whitehaven, 3 May 1744, PRO, CO 123/1: 3; Proclamation of Plantations General (for the Settlement of Roatán), Jamaica, 3 May 1744, PRO, CO 324/12.

<sup>18</sup> Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 5-8.

<sup>19</sup> William Pitt to Gov. Trelawny, Mosketto Shore, 17 July 1749, PRO, CO 137/57; see also Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 321.

<sup>20</sup> C. F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagating the Gospel*, 2 vols. (London: Society for Propagating the Gospel, 1901), 294, 235; see also Frank Cundall, *The Governors of Jamaica in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longman Caribbean, 1937), 193.

<sup>21</sup> Frank J. Klingberg, "The Efforts of the S. P. G. to Christianize the Mosquito Indians, 1742-1785," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 9 (1940), 309.

<sup>22</sup> Gov. Trelawny to Duke of Newcastle, Jamaica, 19 Jan. 1748, PRO, CO 137/58, 44.

<sup>23</sup> Klingberg, "Efforts of the S. P. G.," 311-315; Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 235. Post was born in Germany in 1715 and served as a Moravian Missionary in Labrador in 1752, among Indians in Ohio by 1758. He had twice married Indian women; Andrew S. Berky, ed., *The Mosquito Coast and the Story of the First Schwenkfelder Missionary Enterprise Among the Indians of Honduras from 1768 to 1775*, trans. Selina G. Schultz (Norristown, PA: The Schwenkfelder Church, 1953), 5-6

<sup>24</sup> Klingberg, "Efforts of the S. P. G.," 316; see also Dawson, "William Pitt's Settlement," 690-694.

<sup>25</sup> Klingberg, "Efforts of the S. P. G.," 317.

<sup>26</sup> Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 236.

<sup>27</sup> Klingberg, "Efforts of the S. P. G.," 318.

<sup>28</sup> See for example Lioba Rossbach, "Indian Life through the Eyes of Moravian Missionaries," NMHD, 41-59; Garcia, *Making of the Miskitu People*; Susan Hawley, "Does God Speak Miskitu? The Bible and Ethnic Identity Among the

Miskitu of Nicaragua,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1996): 316-342; Susan Hawley, “Protestantism and Indigenous Mobilisation: The Moravian Church among the Miskitu Indians of Nicaragua,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29 (1997): 111-129.

<sup>29</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, *Memoir of the Mosquito Territory*, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 73.

<sup>32</sup> M. W., “Mosquito Indian,” 295.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 149.

<sup>34</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 174.

<sup>35</sup> “Letter of the Inhabitants of the Mosquito Shore to the late Earl of Chatham, 1766,” in *The Defence of Robert Hodgson* (London: 1779), Appendix V: 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> “Magistrates to Earl Balcarres, 1796,” ABH, I: 218.

<sup>37</sup> Earl Bathurst, Superintendent of Belize to King of England, Belize, 19 Jan. 1816, PRO, CO 123/25.

<sup>38</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 72.

<sup>39</sup> Many Mosquito Shore settlers had suffered great “injustices” in Belize and have been “sobered by misfortunes;” Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 14, 16; Klingberg, “The Efforts of the S. P. G.,” 313; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 99.

<sup>40</sup> Wallace Brown, “Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras during the era of the American Revolution,” *Belizean Studies* 18 (1990): 43-64.

<sup>41</sup> Hodgson believed that: “The proportion of white children being so small, is to be imputed to most of the women having lived with so much freedom formerly;” *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Otway to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Black River, 25 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33, 168.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Otway, Inhabitants of the Mosquito Shore, Mosquito Shore, 21 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33: 168.

<sup>44</sup> Atkins, *Voyage to Guinea*, 244.

<sup>45</sup> Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans*, 221-225.

<sup>46</sup> Klingberg, “Efforts of the S. P. G.,” 314.

<sup>47</sup> Letters from Belize settlers cited in Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 34-35.

<sup>48</sup> On this point see also Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas*, chapter 2.

<sup>49</sup> Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 41.

<sup>50</sup> Gov. Trelawny to Duke of Bedford, Jamaica, 14 April 1750, PRO, CO 137/57, 533.

<sup>51</sup> "Relato de una Expedición, 18 Sept. 1759," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 138.

<sup>52</sup> Trelawny to Duke, 14 April 1750, PRO, CO 137/57: 532-534.

<sup>53</sup> Brown, "Mosquito Shore," 54.

<sup>54</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 125.

<sup>55</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 24, 73. For a very interesting account of slave loyalty and heroism see Steven Forbes' first hand account of black slaves fighting in the battle of St. George Cay of 1798; *The Baymen of Belize* (1800?; reprint, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1915?).

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Otway to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Black River, 20 Jan. 1766, PRO, CO 137/34, 11-12.

<sup>57</sup> "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 430.

<sup>58</sup> Bolland, *Formation of a Colonial Society*, 41.

<sup>59</sup> Black River Settler's Committee to Col. James Lawrie, Black River, Mosquito Shore, 14 Oct. 1786, PRO, CO 137/86.

<sup>60</sup> García Peláez, *Memorias para la Historia del Antiguo Reyno de Guatemala*, 125.

<sup>61</sup> Col. James Lawrie to Gov. of Jamaica, Black River, 14 Oct. 1786, PRO, CO 137/86.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Otway to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Black River, 12 July 1765, PRO, CO 137/33.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Jones to Gov. Elletson, Jamaica, 3 Aug. 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 27. Before 1778, eight ships totaling 1,440 lbs. left London annually for the Mosquito Shore, exclusive of ships from Bristol and Dublin; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 89; cf. Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 116.

<sup>64</sup> Sarsaparilla is just one of many *Smilax* species of the Lily family with medicinal properties. A thorny and climbing vine, the valuable portion of sarsaparilla is its thin and fibrous roots. Europeans used sarsaparilla for skin and venereal diseases, as well as in tonics for digestive disorders, rheumatism, and kidney problems. The plant can be shoot or seed propagated and thrives in sandy soils. Evidence suggests

that settlers cultivated the native plant at Black River, as they did at Jamaica and other Caribbean locations where the plant was not native; see for example Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 93.

<sup>65</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 144.

<sup>67</sup> "Capt. Hodgson to Capt. Lawrie and three other claimants of Albera Poyer, 27 March 1773," *Defence of Robert Hodgson*, Appendix V: 50-51.

<sup>68</sup> Mack, "Contraband Trade Through Trujillo, 48.

<sup>69</sup> "Relato de una Expedición, Comayagua, 18 Sept. 1759," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 139.

<sup>70</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 426.

<sup>71</sup> William Pitt to Gov. Trelawny, Mosketo Shore, 17 July 1749, PRO, CO 137/57; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 70-71; Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 24; Allan Christelow, "Contraband Trade Between Jamaica and the Spanish Main, and the Free Port Act of 1766," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 22 (1942), 309; Mack, "Contraband Trade Through Trujillo," 45-56. Cattle was always the main British interest. Most were taken to feed the logwood and mahogany cutters at Belize. Many were used as beasts of burden in the same enterprises; "Record of Capt. Hodgson's Voyages and Expeditions refuting his Accusers," *Defence of Robert Hodgson*, Appendix V: 83-85.

<sup>72</sup> Charles Irving to Gov. Dalling, [Bluefields,] 18 July 1781, PRO, CO 137/80: 85; see also David Lamb, Map of Moskito Coast, Bluefields, 1780, PRO, CO 700: 9; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 68.

<sup>73</sup> Corrin operated a 30 ton sloop, while Hodgson, at the time of his defection, had several boats, 200 slaves, and 30 European seamen working for him full time; Enrique Sánchez Pedrote, "El Coronel Hodgson y la Expedición a la Costa de Los Mosquitos," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 24 (1967), 1217; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 80-83, 87. The Spaniards typically referred to Corrin as 'Coniguen.'

<sup>74</sup> "Declaración de el Capitán Yarrinse indio de la nación Caribe de edad de 40 años, León, 9 Sept. 1768," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 124.

<sup>75</sup> Yarrinse apparently took his name from a British settler named Christopher Garrison who lived on the southern Mosquito coast for more than 20 years. On Yarrinse see "Autos relativos a la solicitud del indio Carive . . . y se han reconocido como independiente de la Monarquía Española, Leon, 20 Dec. 1766," *Boletín del Archivo General del Gobierno* (Guatemala) V, no. 2 (1940): 113-115; "Declaración

de el Capitán Yarrinse indio de la nación Caribe de edad de 40 años,” *Boletín del Archivo General del Gobierno (Guatemala)* V, no. 2 (1940): 121-126; Julian N. Guerrero, *Cacique Yarrince: Biografía* (Managua, 1993); Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 85-90.

<sup>76</sup> Council Minutes, Jamaica, 17 Nov. 1762, PRO, CO 140/42. Yarrince had operated a trading depot for Corrin at Olama where he kept goods going to and from Acoyapa and Matagalpa; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 85-86.

<sup>77</sup> Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 144; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 78.

<sup>78</sup> “Real orden al presidente de guatemala y a los gobernadores de panamá, El Pardo, 28 Feb. 1776,” CRCM, 180; Juan Fernández de Bobadilla, “Sobre el proyecto de los Ingleses, Cartago, 20 June 1776,” CRCM, 182-183; Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, 462.

<sup>79</sup> Dawson, “William Pitt's Settlement,” 704.

<sup>80</sup> “Report on the Mosquito Shore,” 428; see also Dawson, “William Pitt's Settlement,” 704.

<sup>81</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 164-165; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 93-94.

<sup>82</sup> On the Rio Grande efforts see also Chapter 10 and Estimate of the loss sustained by Misters Blair and Irving by the Capture of the Sloop Morning Star, Black River, 30 April 1770, PRO, CO 137/71: 223; Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 170-175.

<sup>83</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 21; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 95.

<sup>84</sup> Joseph Otway to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, Black River, 12 July 1765, PRO, CO 137/33.

<sup>85</sup> Richard Jones to Gov. Elletson, 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 25.

<sup>86</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 292. This canal is still there today and can be traversed in a pitpan; see also Perez-Valle, *Un Laudo con dos Incógnitas*.

<sup>87</sup> Gonzalo Vallejo, Plano de la Ensenada del Cavo de Gracias á Dios en la Costa de Mosquitos, 1788, Servicio Histórico Militar (Madrid), map X11-B-7.

<sup>88</sup> Lieut. Hans Garden, A Plan of the Harbour of Cape Gracias a Dios and the Mosquito Shore, 1779, map on display at CIDCA, Managua.

<sup>89</sup> However, in 1836, some ten years before Nicaragua proposed the same thing, King Robert Charles Frederic agreed “to cut or make a road from the town at the Cape Lagoon through my territories to the Spanish Line or Town of Segovia, for the purpose of opening a commercial trade with the neighbouring Spaniards;” Grant

from Frederick King of the Mosquito Nation to Messrs. Cox Swasy & Co., Cape Gracias, 4 June 1836, PRO, FO 53/44, 303.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, "Mosquito Shore," 49-50.

<sup>91</sup> Supporting the notion that the Miskitu did not labor under British oversight in timber enterprises during the 18<sup>th</sup> century is the pervasiveness of 19<sup>th</sup> century writings showing that the Garífuna, who did not settle on the coast of northern Honduras until after 1797, were considered "the best woodsmen in the world," and were used much more extensively in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century than the Miskitu; Bedford Pim, *The Gate of the Pacific* (London: Lovell Reeve and Co, 1863), 28; see also Bell, *Tangweera*, 192.

<sup>92</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 18.

<sup>93</sup> A List of Vessels, Black River, Oct. 1770, PRO, CO 137/66; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 90; Offen, "British Logwood Extraction."

<sup>94</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 95.

<sup>95</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, 453, 464-465.

<sup>96</sup> Miskitu motivation to enter the labor market increased after their privileged position eroded due to the presence of Garífuna and a rising Creole population no later than 1850; see for example Michael D. Olien, "After the Indian Slave Trade: Cross-Cultural Trade in the Western Caribbean Rimland," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 44 (1988): 41-66; Michael D. Olien, "Imperialism, Ethnogenesis and Marginality: Ethnicity and Politics on the Mosquito Coast, 1845 - 1964," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16, no. 1 (1988): 1-29. By 1820 the southcoast Tawira hired themselves out to settlers at Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon as hunters and fishermen at the rate of four to five dollars a month, "paid in goods," by the 1840s, the northcoast Sambo Miskitu hired themselves out at 7 to 8 dollars a month, plus an allowance of 50 plantains as bread kind per week or seven quarts flour and a 4 pounds of salt pork; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursion*, 111; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 60. These types of passages are not found among 18<sup>th</sup> century sources.

<sup>97</sup> Long, "Mosquito Shore," 318; see also [Jones], "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 428.

<sup>98</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 172.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Jones to Gov. Elletson, Jamaica, 3 Aug. 1768, PRO, CO 137/35: 25.

<sup>100</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 28.

<sup>101</sup> Courtney De Kalb, "Nicaragua: Studies on the Mosquito Shore in 1892," *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 25 (1893), 264.

<sup>102</sup> Mary W. Helms, "The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe," *Ethnology* 8 (1969): 76-84; Helms, *Asang*, 21-25.

<sup>103</sup> Long, "Mosquito Shore," 323; see also Bryan Edwards, "Some Account of the British Settlements on the Mosquito Shore. Drawn up for the Use of Government in 1773," in *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British West Indies*, 5 vols. (London: T. Miller, 1819), 5: 209.

<sup>104</sup> "John Christopher's to Capt. Hodgson, about Gen. Tempest's robbing and capturing some Spaniards in their own Territory, Black River, 4 Aug. 1771," *Defence of Robert Hodgson*, Appendix V: 41-42.

<sup>105</sup> "Record of Capt. Hodgson's Voyages," *Defence of Robert Hodgson*, Appendix V: 81-82.

<sup>106</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 173.

<sup>107</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 145-147.

<sup>108</sup> "Bill of the Lading [sic] of the Schooner Nicaragua, 22 Dec. 1770," *Defence of Robert Hodgson*, Appendix V: 31-32.

<sup>109</sup> Patrick Walker to ? (England), Court House, Belize, 12 October 1837, PRO, CO 123/50, 8.

<sup>110</sup> Letters and Paper of Benjamin Franklin cited in Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 129.

<sup>111</sup> Documents captured in Hodgson's possession when he was taken by the Spanish were translated, and are now available in AGI at Seville, see José Torre Revello, "Escritos hallados en poder del espía inglés Roberto Hodgson (1783)," *Boletín del Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas* 5 (1926): 76-100; see also Sánchez P., "El Coronel Hodgson," 1205-1235; Robert Hodgson Jr., "Memoria del Coronel Roberto Hodgson al Virrey de Santa Fé, Cartagena, 6 de Marzo de 1787," CRC, 235-237. On the trial and defense of Hodgson see, Robert Hodgson, Jr. to Earl of Dartmouth, Jamaica, 21 September 1775, PRO, CO 137/71: 25; Testimony in Defense of Robert Hodgson, Jr., no date, PRO, CO 137/80: 23-31; Robert Hodgson Jr., *The Defence of Robert Hodgson*; Robert White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having property in and lately established upon the Mosquito Shore in America* (London: T. Cadell, 1789).

<sup>112</sup> The 1766 document is a virtual copy of the 1757 memoir, with some significant organizational and word changes, as well as an epilogue pleading for British support. Interestingly, the trade statistics provided for 1766 are identical to those for 1757, as if Hodgson simply had a clerk recopy the first document and change the dates. Although Hodgson Jr. arrived in the Mosquitia in 1750, and could have written the 1757 memoir, several passages appear lifted from correspondence



attributed to Robert Hodgson Sr.; *The First Account of the State of that Part of America called the Mosquito Shore, 1757*, PRO, CO 123/1: 55-80; Robert Hodgson Jr., *Some Account of the Mosquito Territory, contained in a memoir written in 1757*, second edition (Edinburgh, 1822). Meanwhile, the 1766 document, *Some Account of that part of the Continent of America, called the Mosquito Shore, as at present actually both possessed and used by the Subjects of Great Britain*, signed by Robert Hodgson Jr. October 12, 1766, was filed in the Public Record Office with a letter sent by the Rev. J. Prowells from Belize in 1847 as: *A View of the Mosquito Shore*, Robert Hodgson, Jr., Norfolk Street, 12 Oct. 1766, PRO, FO 53/10.

<sup>113</sup> Anon., "Preface," in *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, vii.

<sup>114</sup> Walker, 12 October 1837, PRO, CO 123/50, 6-19; see also Walker, Belize, 12 Nov. 1838, PRO, CO 123/53, 1-11; see also Eleonore von Oertzen, "The British Protectorate up to 1860," NMHD, 18-40.

<sup>115</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 21, 22. This passage is cited word for word by Bedford Pim in his 19<sup>th</sup> century polemic pleading for the British people not to abandon access to the inter-oceanic canal. From the tone of the writing, Pim makes it appear that *he* found the soil to be like this; Pim, *Gate of the Pacific*, 65.

<sup>116</sup> *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 23. Draining the coast for colonization was also the plan of the influential Frenchman Paul Lévy in the 1870s; Paul Lévy, *Notas Geográficas y Económicas sobre la República de Nicaragua* (Paris: Librería Española, 1873), 135-138.

<sup>117</sup> Robert Hodgson Jr., *Some Account of that part of the Continent of America*, 12 Oct. 1766, Belize, 1847, PRO, FO 53/10, part 5; Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 23-24, 29-30. Perhaps, to make up for this 'want of knowledge,' a scientific expedition was sent to Pearl Lagoon in 1766. The group consisted of 2 mathematicians, 2 carpenters, and a botanist. They spent 30 days collecting herbs and plants with commercial purposes near Pearl Lagoon; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 29.

<sup>118</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 24; Speer, Speer, "Account of the Mosquito Shore (1765)," 736; Otway to Commissioners, Black River, 25 April 1764, PRO, CO 137/33, 168.

<sup>119</sup> Jefferys, *Description of the Spanish Island*, 44.

<sup>120</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 29, 32.

<sup>121</sup> Edwards, "Account of the British Settlements," 5: 212, 210.

<sup>122</sup> Warren's passage is reproduced in Dawson, "William Pitt's Settlement," 693; Long, "Mosquito Shore," 316.

<sup>123</sup> Long, "Mosquito Shore," 324, 319.

<sup>124</sup> Long, "Mosquito Shore," 318.

## Chapter Eight

### Miskitu Economic Activities

From the beginning of Miskitu-European interactions, the Miskitu sought to trade natural resources for manufactured goods. In exchange for providing Europeans with fresh meat, fruits, naval stores, silk grass, sarsaparilla, vanilla, gums, aromatics, honey, hides, parrots, Indian slaves, and turtle shell, as well as artisan goods such as patterned cotton cloth, hammocks, and canoes, the Miskitu received iron pots, tin ware, clasp and table knives, machetes, hatchets, axes, pointed spears, saws, muskets, shot, gun powder, coarse and fine linens, osnaburg cloth, hats, handkerchiefs, locks, hinges, nails, needles, pins, fish hooks, beads, mirrors, fowling pieces, flour, and rum.<sup>1</sup> This was exclusive of the symbolic items commissioned leaders received during annual ceremonies discussed in the next chapter. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Miskitu only accepted European commodities as payment. While the Miskitu interacted with regional Anglo-economies in several different ways, the acquisition of turtle shell, Indian slaves, and mercenary fighting provided the Miskitu with the overwhelming majority of their manufactured goods. In this chapter I explore the geographical and cultural nature of each of these three economic activities.

Individual districts demonstrate distinct relations to the economic activities of hawksbill turtling, Indian slaving, and mercenary fighting. With hawksbill turtling, the south coast Tawira attempted to control—and eventually receive exclusive access with Spanish cooperation—the lucrative sea turtle feeding and

mating grounds off the coast of Costa Rica and northwestern Panamá. Meanwhile, Sambo turtlers based at Sandy Bay and Caratasca controlled the Miskitu Cays and northern banks. In regard to Indian slaving, we have already seen that the Miskitu operated within their respective districts. To emphasize this point, it must be noted that Miskitu leaders rarely attempted to extend their authority across district lines. Just as the Sambo had vague and indifferent relations with the Ulwa, the Tawira never attempted to assert authority over the Twahka or Panamahka Indians; indeed, they specifically noted that these ‘mountain Indians’ were not ‘under their control.’ Meanwhile, the Sambo Miskitu generally directed their slaving activities against frontier settlements (highland *reducciones*) under Spanish control, especially after 1740. Although some Indian slave raids were conducted jointly by both the Sambo and the Tawira, such outings typically occurred only during times of war, and then only occurred when the campaign took place outside all Miskitu districts, such as up the Rio San Juan, at Matina Costa, Rica, or in Panamá. Whenever raids against the Spanish occurred within the Mosquitia proper, the Miskitu operated within their respective districts. While it is appropriate to consider market economies as a holistic system that impacted the region, to properly understand how this system affected Miskitu society, politics, and ethnic identity, we need to examine how the Sambo and Tawira responded in distinct ways.

### **Miskitu Carey Turtling**

Of all the coastal economies, the trade in carey, or the shell of the hawksbill turtle, was one of the most important to the Miskitu, yet paradoxically is among the least well understood.<sup>2</sup> Some of the most generalized errors in Miskitu historiography revolve around the fact that authors have confused the green turtle, traditionally hunted for food at the Miskitu Cays during the dry season (February-May), with the hawksbill turtle, which is not eaten but taken only for its shell at its feeding banks and nesting sites off Costa Rica and Panamá (May-September).

Indeed, the period when green turtles begin migrating en masse to their nesting sites south of the Rio San Juan once signaled the end of subsistence turtling, not the beginning of what became called the (hawksbill) ‘turtle season.’ Failure to delineate the distinct turtle ecologies has led some authors to assume that all Miskitu pursued green and hawksbill turtles with equal vigor in the same areas at the same time of the year. Meanwhile, other scholars equate the coastal trade in hawksbill turtle shell with the beginning of Miskitu sea navigation, a view that grants European contact sweeping powers of cultural change. Scholarly debate on this latter subject has produced two opposing views concerning the origin of Miskitu turtling and sea travel more generally.

According to Bernard Nietschmann, the Miskitu had adapted their subsistence routines to the seasonal movement patterns of green turtles before European market inducements. This would imply that the Tawira Miskitu understood and acted upon the annual migration of green turtles, suggesting that they may have visited nesting sites as far south as Costa Rica before 1500.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Romero implies that the Miskitu acquired their famous fishing and maritime skills only after European contact because the first historical documentation of Miskitu turtling appears in the 1643 account of William Jackson’s voyages. As Romero sees it, maritime fishing was introduced by the pirates, and hence, “sea navigation among the Miskitus was practically non-existent before the arrival of the Englishmen.”<sup>4</sup> This view buttresses Romero’s underlying theme that the British essentially forged the colonial Miskitu culture through the transfer of European technologies such as sails and guns. In contrast to Romero, I find the historical evidence supports Nietschmann’s position, that is a more extended Miskitu-turtling relationship. I showed in Chapter Three that Miskitu canoes visited Providence Island, 100 miles off the coast and 38 miles from the edge of the Miskitu Banks, as early as 1632. On the other hand, it appears certain that with improved technologies, especially sails, and a European demand for carey, the Miskitu quickly adapted their sea prowess to sailing dories and long-distance voyages.<sup>5</sup>

The acquisition and sale of carey furnished the Miskitu with a good portion of their manufactured goods until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Romero, the regional purchase of turtle shell did not start until 1670, yet the 1645 pamphlet *Certaine Inducements* considered the “hankes-bill Turtle (of which is the shell for Combs)” one of the Mosquitia’s primary attractions.<sup>6</sup> Given that PIC seamen provided this knowledge, Providence Island settlers had probably acquired carey during the 1630s. Evidence also suggests that the Miskitu may have valued the shell before European interest and in all probability introduced the shell to the Europeans. M. W. noted that Miskitu decoratively wore turtle shell during ceremonies, both as a plate and as a hook used to hang a brass plate from the chin.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, turtle shell continued its ornamental and symbolic importance into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Isaac Ford, an 1893 visitor to Bluefields, viewed a Miskitu crown that displayed “silver [that] was beaten out into twelve conventional oak leaves, with a coronet clasp in front . . . with spaces in circlet for alternating diamonds and seals of tortoise shell.”<sup>8</sup> I would argue that Miskitu turlers also captured a few hawksbills off the Miskitu Cays while hunting green turtles. Although these turtles were not eaten the shell became part of Miskitu cultural adornment in a way that generated European curiosity. Regardless of its exact initiation, the commercial trade in carey grew rapidly by the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and, after the introduction of nets, tripled during the British superintendency (see Table 7.3).<sup>9</sup>

The high value for all sea turtle products, including meat, oil, lard, and shell encouraged Miskitu strikers to remain away for longer and longer periods.<sup>10</sup> In the 1770s, traders paid a Pound Sterling for a complete ‘turtle back,’ some 2-3 pounds of shell. By 1820, this amount rose to \$2 a pound, and to \$4 by 1850.<sup>11</sup> The Miskitu took green and hawksbill turtles on land and at sea. During the nesting season at Costa Rica, turlers simply turned the aquatic mammals on their back as they came to lay eggs: each man took “possession of his ground, say one quarter or half mile; on which he walks backwards and forwards like a sentry on guard during the night.”<sup>12</sup> As a result, turtle populations declined so precariously by 1840 that the

‘Magistrates of the Mosquito Kingdom,’ a body of British officials and the Miskitu King, legislated that turtle licenses be purchased annually for \$36, and made the vandalism of turtle nests subject to a \$5 fine.<sup>13</sup> The glut in supply was echoed in a 1839 letter from several Pearl Lagoon Creoles by stating that “the very low price of tortoise shell on which we and our people mainly depend for our living [barely allows us to] support ourselves and our families.”<sup>14</sup> To further increase turtle populations, British authorities had promoted the re-release of hawksbill turtles after the shell had been removed. By 1860, Pim claimed:

The turtle is not killed, or there would soon be an end of tortoise shell, but is fastened securely, and fire of grass made on his back; the scale separate at the joints, and are skinned off with a knife. There are many instances of a turtle being caught a second time, but the outer coating is reproduced in one scale instead of thirteen.<sup>15</sup>

Turtle ecologies, combined with known patterns of Indian slave raids, the Tawira settlement at the Rio Grande, and political events in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century all suggest that the Tawira focused their attention on turtle grounds south of the Rio San Juan. In contrast, I speculate that the Sambo Miskitu initially concentrated their efforts at the Miskitu Cays and surrounding banks north and east of Cape Gracias, and only later, perhaps after 1730, sought carey south of Bluefields. In a passage almost identical to the excerpt in Chapter Four, Hodgson Sr. states that:

the Samboes are have more fidelity to us than the other nations of Indians, they are fond of English goods, to procure which they make Expeditions and Voyages in the Turtle seasons for Shell; sometimes southward to St. Johns, Blanco, Bocca del Drago, Cocloo, and over to Darien formerly, sometimes westward to Truxillo, Dolce, the Bay of Honduras and formerly to and beyond Cape Colocho.<sup>16</sup>

I speculate that before 1730—that is before the period when the Sambo Miskitu achieved numerical and political ascendancy at places such as Sandy Bay and Dakura—that Sambo turtlers acquired sufficient hawksbill turtles at the Miskitu Banks to supply initial market demands. After the political turmoil and social unrest

of 1730 the Tawira made a concerted and strategic shift to control the southern hawksbill feeding grounds. Twice before 1725, and again during the 1760s and 1770s, Tawira leaders initiated overtures to the Costa Rican Governor to protect their access to prime turtling areas (see Chapter Ten). After this period, however, shifting power alliances among the Miskitu, including the ascendancy of a new Sambo king, combined with higher demands and declining hawksbill populations off the Miskitu Banks in ways that inspired the Sambo Miskitu to become more assertive in their turtling enterprises. To better appreciate the geographical nature of this development, an understanding of sea turtle ecology proves essential.

There are five genera of sea turtles containing numerous species: the loggerhead (*Caretta*), the ridley (*Lepidochelys*), the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys*), the leatherback (*Dermochelys*), and the green (*Chelonia*). Only the last three currently nest in eastern Central America, although former nesting sites and migration patterns remain uncertain.<sup>17</sup> Loggerheads, ridleys, and leatherbacks are rarely eaten by the Miskitu and provide no shell or calipee, the cartilaginous amber later marketed as the basis for turtle soup by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Green turtles weigh up to 200 hundred pounds and, until recently, formed a staple of the coastal Miskitu diet. Green turtles feed off the Miskitu Cays, neighboring shoals, and the Miskitu Banks that extend in a wide platformed arc around the Mosquitia. As in the past, beginning in April and continuing through June each year, green turtles move off their feeding grounds and head toward the beaches of Tortuguero, Costa Rica where they nest between July and September. Tortuguero is the only known present-day location in the western Caribbean where turtle nesting occurs en masse. After mating offshore, the female turtles come upon the beach to lay their eggs, perhaps 3-5 times a season at intervals of two weeks. Although this event takes place every year, individual female turtles return only every 2-3 years.<sup>18</sup>

In the past, sea turtles came upon beaches in various places along the coast of eastern Central America, including the Miskitu Cays and other small islands, but human predations have virtually ended this phenomenon. While all sea turtles visit



Tortuguero, only green turtles do so in great numbers. According to Archie Carr, the hawksbill turtles have a more diffuse and extensive nesting range than the greens.<sup>19</sup> When demand was lower and populations were higher, I suspect that the Miskitu were able to harpoon a few hawksbill turtles off the Miskitu Banks, either during nesting or as they migrated south. For example, Uring wrote in 1711 that at certain times of the year the Miskitu of the north coast head off:

in a little Fleet of Canows to the Muscheto Kees, which is about Twelve or Fifteen leagues from the coast to take Turtle for the Sake of the Shell; which they send to Jamaica, to sell or dispose of to the Traders that come upon that Coast, for Guns, Powder and Shot, Hatchets, Axes and Iron Pots.<sup>20</sup>

As late as 1841, Captain Owen wrote that at the Caxones Cays, or “Hobbies,” 65 miles north of Cape Gracias, “there is a snug harbor, much used by fisherman from Belize who come here in season to hunt for hawksbill turtle.” The name ‘Hobbies’ suggests the Cays may have been the turtling domain of Captain Hobby who ruled at Caratasca until 1740.<sup>21</sup> These are the only two testimonies I have ever seen relating to hawksbill turtling north of the Río San Juan.

Currently, the Caribbean’s most significant hawksbill feeding grounds cluster off the coast of Costa Rica. The most important are the Greytown Banks, eleven rocks that lie ten to fifteen fathoms underwater 12 miles off the coast at the mouth of the Río San Juan.<sup>22</sup> Nineteenth-century observations verify this geography. In the 1850s, Bell wrote that “The valuable hawksbill turtles do not come to the great coral banks and Cays of the north [coast], but frequent the southern coast from about Monkey Point as far as Charges [Panamá].”<sup>23</sup> By the 1850s, Bluefields turtlers headed south every May and were called “southward men.”<sup>24</sup> According to one trader, after the turtlers left Pearl Lagoon in May only infirm Indians, and “a whole village of women and children” remained.<sup>25</sup> The hawksbill turtle season lasted until September, when the men took advantage of the *mani lupia*, or the September calm, to return home before *prari kati*, or the hurricane month.

Tawira travel to Costa Rica or Panamá for carey in the late 1600s fostered their knowledge of Spanish domains and led to their pronounced pillaging activities between 1700-1722. According to Hodgson Sr., the Miskitu:

often have upwards of 20 Periaguas out, but seldom go in a body, Except when they have form'd a Design upon some place or Town; the Periaguas carry from 10 to 15 Men apiece, they are commonly attended in their southern voyages by 2 or 3 Sloops from Jamaica and one from St. Andreas . . . at Night they pull into secure Creeks and Rivers whose Barrs can protect them, the Barrs upon that Coast being so Dangerous that few but themselves can cross them.<sup>26</sup>

They will loll in their hammocks until they are almost starved, they start up and go a turtling in a pet; and if they have not immediate success, and there happens to be a many boats together, they form a design upon some Spanish or Indian town.<sup>27</sup>

These two pictures are confirmed by Hodgson Jr.:

getting tortoise-shell is their grand employment; from fifteen to twenty peruaguas, (large canoes) with about twelve men in each, are employed in this business from April to August. If they have formed an expedition, they chose this time to execute it, and therefore set out and keep together till it is over; otherwise they straggle from the first, and spread all the way from Blewfields to Boca Del Drago.<sup>28</sup>

The two Hodgsons suggest that turtling expeditions were often explicitly tied to raiding activities, and moreover, that slaving was an afterthought if turtling had been unsuccessful. The Miskitu “set out and keep together” if they plan a raid, otherwise they go as individuals. This distinction did not go unnoticed in Costa Rica.<sup>29</sup> In addition to slaving and turtling in Costa Rica and Panamá, the Miskitu also gathered, vanilla, sarsaparilla, and fruits, much of which was likely acquired from local Indians.<sup>30</sup> Things such as cacao and “moneloes [vanilla], turtle-shell, ambergreese, plate,” were also taken during successful attacks on Costa Rican towns.<sup>31</sup>

The link between southward turtling and Indian slave raids was sustained through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Colville Cairns, who lived at Twappi during the 1770s and interacted exclusively with Tawira Miskitu, wrote that only five Indian

slaves “came this year,” implying that he (a) not only expected Indian slaves each turtling season, but (b) that he expected more than five.<sup>32</sup> The evident pattern suggests that Tawira carey turtling south of the Rio San Juan precipitated and underpinned an entirely new economic system based on long-distance sea voyages. This system not only affected cultural and gendered ecologies back home, but instigated military actions against the Spanish, Indian slave raids, sharper Sambo-Tawira competition for turtle shell, and increasing territorialization between the Sambo and the Tawira. Carey turtling proved the most far-reaching Miskitu market activity during the colonial period. Moreover, as with most Indian slave raids, hawksbill turtling always proceeded under Miskitu direction, that is with a maximum amount of autonomy, a high-priority Miskitu cultural value that employers in Nicaragua lament to this day.

### **Miskitu Slave Raiding**

Few aspects of Miskitu ethnohistory have received more attention than Indian slave raiding by Miskitu men. However, the voluminous Spanish details of such activities, generally ‘after the fact,’ typically contrast with English generalities. Harmonizing the two bodies of primary sources, however, proves less difficult than reconciling historical ambiguities with established historiography and the myth of Miskitu barbarism. Among the scholars treating Miskitu slaving, Mary Helms has been one of the most ambitious. She has suggested that market-oriented Miskitu slaving originated with the end of privateering in 1685 and dropped off substantially with Jamaican legislation outlawing Indian slavery in 1741. During this period, she argues, Caribbean sugar profits were too low to afford African slaves in large numbers, and that the Miskitu filled this void by providing Indian slave labor. Prior to this market-driven boom period (1685-1741) Helms finds that the Miskitu had captured predominantly children or female Indian slaves for “domestic use.” She observes that changing market relations and Miskitu acquisition of firearms acted as

a prerequisite for an increase in Miskitu slaving by 1700. However, she suspects that:

the major impetus [for slaving] lay in the dynamics of Miskito population growth, in the changing ecological relations accompanying this population expansion, in the development of certain aspects of Miskito political life, and in a growing sense of separate ethnic identity [from other native Americans].<sup>33</sup>

Helms' view is based on a modification of the Boserup thesis which holds that expanding populations place stress upon traditional cultural ecological systems and resource uses, and encourage innovative solutions that adapt to new circumstances.<sup>34</sup> In this case the Miskitu adapted to culture contact and increased population by trading in Indian slaves. This makes perfect sense, and Helms supports her position by explaining that expanding Miskitu population resulted from female slaves taken for domestic use before the switch to male slaves after 1700. In this scenario, new coastal communities experienced population growth at the same time they had less access to ground provisions, two circumstances that increased Miskitu commodity dependencies and encouraged slave raids.

Although I admire this argument, I find that Helms overstates Miskitu population growth at the same time she ignores contradicting data. Underpinning Helms' position on population growth are dubious Spanish estimates that show an increase in Miskitu population from 2,000 in 1700 to 5,500 by 1710—a 150 percent increase in ten years—leveling off at 7,000 in 1740.<sup>35</sup> Although the 1700 estimate, based on M. W.'s impressions, appears accurate, the other two figures seem quite exaggerated. Recall from Chapter Four, Hodgson's 1744 first-hand estimate of 850 Miskitu men, as well as the figures in Table 1.1, some of them acquired from later Spanish sources. The figures I have used place the total Miskitu population at 5,000 in 1800 and 10,000 in 1860, a huge discrepancy from those accepted by Helms, and a much slower demographic growth. Of course, the off-spring of white-Indian unions were raised 'Miskitu,' but only a handful of white settlers resided in the Mosquitia before 1730. In further contrast with Helms' position, the record

indicates that the Miskitu also sold female slaves before 1700, and that, in general the Miskitu kept few Indian slaves. In the beginning, the Indian or African slaves the Miskitu did possess were predominantly ‘Christians,’ slaves some Jamaican traders would not purchase before 1740. Indeed, English demand for non-Christian Indians encouraged a shift in raids from Spanish towns during the Wars of the Spanish Succession (1700-1712) to ‘wild Indians,’ particularly in Costa Rica and Panamá, thereafter.

The changing characteristics of Miskitu involvement in Indian slave raiding can be best understood if we divide the chronology into four periods (Table 8.1).

**Table 8.1 Characteristics of Miskitu Slaving in Four Periods.**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
I. pre-1699	possible reciprocal slaving with neighboring Indians, accompanying pirate assaults throughout the Americas.
II. 1700 – 1741	former pirate provocation but autonomous slaving assaults, market driven pursuits, young men preferred, pillaging of Indians under Spanish control to 1711, after Spanish Succession (1712), switch to ‘wild Indians,’ Tawira raiding in Costa Rica and Chontales, Sambo raiding Nueva Segovia and Honduras.
III. 1742 – 1789	formal outlawing of Indian trade in British colonies, compliance nominal among British settlers in the Mosquitia, sinuous Anglo-Spanish relations produce contradictory signals, ineffective British actions to halt the enslavement of Indians.
IV. 1790 – 1830	British evacuation produces need for alternative revenue sources, Miskitu regularize tributary system over neighboring Indians, more desperate and less successful slave raids, especially Tawira raids among the Ulwa of the Rio Grande.

*Period I: pre-1699*

The first documented Miskitu assault upon a Spanish town for the purpose of taking slaves occurred at Nueva Segovia in 1699. Prior to this period, however, individual Miskitu men had participated in numerous pirate assaults against Spanish towns in which slaves were taken.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the assertion by Helms and Olien that the Miskitu exchanged raids with neighboring Indians for women prior to the market-driven shift in 1700 remains unsubstantiated, but possible.<sup>37</sup> However, while several authors detail Miskitu slave raids for women and children, very few Miskitu appear possessing slaves in the historical record. In contrast, all white residents possessed Indian slaves, and many of these appear to be women, suggesting that Indian slaves, regardless of gender, were always sold to foreign residents. Finally, Uring suggests that the men often fled before the Miskitu arrive, suggesting that the capture of women and children was more by accident than by design.<sup>38</sup>

M. W. provides a good example of the ambiguity available in first-hand historical accounts:

On flat ground above these falls, the woods grow thin on the sides of the river . . . The banks are inhabited by a most populous nation of Indians which the *Mosqueto-men* call *Alboawinneys* and *Oldwawes* [Ulwas]; the first name they give to all their Indian enemies. These people are continually, in dry seasons, invaded by the *Mosqueto-men*, who take away their young wives and children for slaves, either killing or putting to flight the men and old women.<sup>39</sup>

According to M. W.'s account, generally only members of the royal family possessed Indian slaves. King Jeremy's 30 year old son, "esteem'd a Succhea," had two wives, one concubine, three kids, besides 50 more people living with him, "to which are added a few wild Indian slaves." He also notes that the King's brother, Ben, living near Ulwas along the Rio Wangki, had an 'Alboawinney' wife. In contrast to this very limited Miskitu possession of Indian slaves, M. W. states that two Englishmen had "40 wild *Indian* slaves and harlots to attend them."<sup>40</sup> Fray de

la Concepción mentions Ben in connection with the 1699 assault on Nueva Segovia, but he implies the slaves were sold to the Englishmen: “with the river low and more navigable, the mulattos and Guaianes [Miskitu] come up to steal the children and women to sell them to the English for muskets.”<sup>41</sup> In 1712, Uring does not mention any Indian slaves among the Miskitu—despite mentioning Indian and African slaves among white residents—he states that Jamaican traders purchased Indian slaves: “I have seen many of these poor Wretches sold [in Jamaica], which have had so pitiful a Look it would soften the most obdurate Heart.”<sup>42</sup> As late as 1757, Hodgson indicated that Indian captivity among the Miskitu was not that common when he stated that if the Miskitu king did not have “a few slaves of other Indians, he would be obliged to do all his own work.”<sup>43</sup>

Evidence also suggests that many Jamaican traders obeyed English law at this time and would not purchase Indians or Africans who had been baptized by the Spanish. This suggests that the Miskitu may have begun retaining Christian Indians and mulattos only after they commanded no market value. Moreover, the Twahka of the Rio Patuca also attacked Spanish towns and traded captured slaves to the Miskitu, while keeping some of the slaves for themselves. Indeed, the Twahka Indians captured, and then traded, highland Indians to the Miskitu.<sup>44</sup> Recounting her 1704 abduction from Nueva Segovia, Micaela Gómez, a “*mulata libre*,” noted that “Jicaques,” that is her Twahka captors, carried her by land to the Rio Patuca where they took canoes toward the sea. After awhile, she and three others—but not all who were taken—were transferred to four Miskitus who continued down to the Caribbean “for many more days” where they reached a “pueblo of *zambos* and Indians named Tacasquira [Tawira?].” She was then taken along the coast to the Miskitu pueblo of “Crabo” where she remained a slave for approximately ten years. The placename ‘Crabo,’ from the Miskitu *krabu*, or nance tree, suggests an open savanna area where this tree flourishes throughout the Mosquitia, likely near modern-day Puerto Lempira on the Caratasca Lagoon. Micaela stated that no Englishmen resided on the north coast, but that they came periodically to trade.

Although the traders did purchase Indian slaves, Micaela stated that the traders would not take Christian Indians or mulattos and that is why they never took her.<sup>45</sup>

M. W. provides evidence that buccaneers did not desire Christian Indian slaves. Pirates who crossed the Segovias in 1688 deposited some *Oldwawes* [Ulwas] slaves taken in the eastern Segovia with the king's brother, Ben. One of these Ulwa men was esteemed a great sukia:

which, he told me, he did first to better his condition when Capt. Wright left him a slave to these heathens. This fellow calls himself a Christian, and can say his *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria*, which he learn'd of the Spaniards, tho' he knows not the meaning thereof; and can likewise name the saints, which, among other feigned words, he uses to sing as charms over sick people.<sup>46</sup>

Before 1740, the Miskitu likely freed several baptized slaves, especially 'mulattos' and 'negros,' because several ended up declaring their experiences to Spanish authorities, although in each case we do not know the circumstances surrounding their release.<sup>47</sup> Work by Conzemius, suggests that if an Indian or mulatto slave "behaved themselves appropriately" they could marry among the Miskitu, with their off-spring being free.<sup>48</sup>

In contrast to a concerted raiding pattern for women, and then a shift to men, after 1700, as proposed by Helms, I find a good deal of ambiguity in the record. Historians have not recognized that at least some British slavers would not purchase baptized Indians or Spanish mulattos, at least before 1740. Moreover, there is little evidence that the Miskitu actually set out to capture slaves with the intent of keeping them. Those they retained appear to be those not desired by the British for whatever reason, and even then only Miskitu leaders appear to have possessed slaves. As we saw earlier, slaving associated with turtling occurred only as an afterthought if turtling was unsuccessful. The origins of Miskitu slaving remain unknown but the evidence suggests that the Miskitu of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century did not intentionally set out to capture female slaves with the idea of keeping them for domestic use.



*Period II: 1700 – 1741*

At the instigation of wayward pirates, Miskitu slaving changed quite significantly during the Wars of Spanish Succession (1700-1712). During period II, 1699-1741, Miskitu slaving illustrates (a) provocation by European residents, (b) prior consultation with sukias before setting out, and (c) a distinctive territorialization governing Sambo and Tawira raiding sites. M. W. took pains to blame Europeans for encouraging Miskitu slave raids, he especially referred to a Capt. Coxsen, who “hath, for many years past, encourag’d [the Miskitu] to such practices, who otherwise are of a very peaceful disposition; he having long traded with them in a sloop of his own, until 1698 when he died here among them.”<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, when the Miskitu set out on a slave raid, with or without European influence, they often came together across Sambo and Tawira lines to consult with sukias and to plan respective routes of attack.

Slaving, like military ventures, was one of the few grave matters of state that brought the Miskitu together before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to the testimony of the returned African slave, Carlos Casarola, when the Miskitu wished to form a military plan of action, the savanna Tawiras convened with Governor Annaby at Dakura, and then traveled as a group to meet with the Sambo Captain Hobby:

And all the population of *indios mosquitos*, up to where Governor Anibel used to live, travel for two days across the savannas, [often] riding horses, until they reached the said pueblo of Dacora [Dakura], where Anibel once lived. [From here] they sail [as a group] in a canoe with a sail [dory] until the place where the said Captain Jabe lives (where the land of the *moscos* [Miskitu] ends) in a day.<sup>50</sup>

The passage demonstrates that the first Tawira Governor Anibel acts as the central figure of political authority for the Tawira of the south coast savanna district. Note this is before 1730 and the rise of the Tawira admiral to his south. Also note that Casarola does not mention the Miskitu king, that ‘Captain Jabe’ is described as the maximum Sambo leader. Although this is probably a simple oversight, as I argued in Chapter Five the king governed only in coalition with the general and the

governor before 1740. The coming together of the Sambo and Tawira during slave raids is perhaps the quintessential expression of unity among Miskitu leaders otherwise divided across Sambo and Tawira lines.

As with related military ventures, the Miskitu generally carried out slave raids only after they had consulted with one another first. Uring, for example, backs up Casarola's above testimony, but he implies that sukias and Englishmen played a greater role in the organization and planning of the raid:

several of the White Men and [northcoast Sambo] Indians were gone to Sandy Bay . . . where their Chiefs and greatest Body of the Muscheto Indians have their Habitations, in order to concert Measures to enter upon an Expedition against the Wild Indians; . . . but first [they] enquire of their *Sookeys*, . . . and will not stir until their *Sookeys* assure them of a prosperous Voyage.<sup>51</sup>

M. W. attended a 'sukia consultation' prior to a slave raid near the Rio Wangki community of Saklin in September of 1699, and he also highlights the gravity of sukia veto power prior to a slave raid. The meeting proceeded as follows:

The guests use no salutation or greeting at the first meeting, tho' they have not seen one another in a twelvemonth before, . . . [they] call for some liquor . . . and then continue tipping and bragging of former exploits, . . . [eventually] the *Succheas* are advised with, and every one intermixes his discourse with foolish songs (containing no manner or sense of meaning in their own tongues or any other) of their own making, whereby they pretend to call up *Wallasoe*, as they call the devil, amongst them . . . [they wait] two days at least before his feigned appearance . . . [but only] to the *Succheas*, whom he kisses, . . . the *Succheas* told me, That *Wallasoe* was come to them, . . . whilst the people round about them sat staring on them with great signs of admiration, all singing with them, and looking as if they expected some mighty events. . . When these doctors are quite wearied . . . they leave off singing, and refresh with more tipple; then deliver the oracle to the impatient herd, who stand on thorns until they hear what success they shall have in their undertaking; nay, they must know how many days they shall be out, and every thing that shall befall them; and from the *Succheas* prediction they either pursue or decline their intended expeditions, voyages, &c.<sup>52</sup>

M. W.'s interesting passage suggests, among other things, that the Miskitu probably aborted many planned slave raids before they were carried out. Despite rapid

cultural change occurring during the early 1700s, I contend that sukias retained their special power over Miskitu military and slaving actions through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 1780 military assault along the Rio San Juan the commanding British officer, General Kemble, complained of Miskitu reluctance to follow orders: “The [Miskitu] Indians who accompanied Mr. Muller could not be prevailed upon to proceed with him up the [Bluefields] river [to assist in the Rio San Juan attack], till they had paid a visit to their friends at Pearl Key Lagoon, which caused a delay of some days.”<sup>53</sup> Given that the Miskitu likely stayed “some days” it seems probable that they consulted with their sukias before agreeing to participate in the military venture. Indeed, as I show below, from the Miskitu perspective, slaving and military campaigns may have held little distinction. Thus, even as late as 1780, the Miskitu employed sukias to plan and guide Miskitu military activities. This is an important counter point to views that the British commanded the actions of Miskitu initiatives during times of war in ways that pushed them to disregard the norms of Miskitu conventions.

As proposed above, before 1721 mostly Tawira Miskitu raided to the south, while Sambo Miskitu pursued Indian slaves and raided Spanish towns to the west and north. Twice, in 1711 and 1721, the Tawira offered to cut deals with the Costa Rican governor, who advocated such an arrangement in communiqués with Guatemala, but such advice was ignored. During this same period, the Wangki Miskitu raided at Nueva Segovia in 1699 and 1701, while Sambo Miskitu also attacked westward up the Rio Ulúa in 1702 and at other Honduran sites in 1704 and 1707.<sup>54</sup> As we saw in Chapter Five, these routes to the interior appear to have a long history. After trying to organize the Miskitu as a body, attacking targeted sites together, Hodgson abandoned such plans and opted to follow Miskitu customs of territorial raids headed by regional Sambo and Tawira leaders. The above testimonies, however, suggest that the Sambo and Tawira planned for slave raids together and followed separate paths thereafter.

*Period III: 1742 – 1789*

Period III of Miskitu Indian slaving begins with new Jamaican legislation that outlawed the sale of Indian slaves in 1741. This date roughly coincides with Robert Hodgson's arrival to Black River, and fits with Governor Trelawny's efforts to reign in rogue settlers and 'civilize' the Mosquito Shore. Although legislation may have slowed traffic in Indian slaves to Jamaica, many slaves continued to be sold to planters at San Andrés and to British settlers in the Mosquitia. Moreover, since 'slaving' was officially illegal, those who participated clandestinely had little reason to respect the rationale which previously (at least in theory) protected baptized Spanish Indians and mulattos. In effect, the 1741 law made all Indians, and especially those congregated in relatively large numbers in poorly protected Spanish towns, more desirable to the Miskitu. Indeed, from this point on the Sambo Miskitu appear to have directed all their raids exclusively against Spanish towns in the Nicaraguan interior.<sup>55</sup> Although the Tawira also directed their slaving patterns against Spanish towns, especially during wartime, they also pursued 'wild' Indians of Costa Rica and Panamá, particularly during times of peace when they sought reconciliation with Spanish officials.

Throughout the Superintendency, as in all other periods, British authorities and settlers sent the Miskitu contradictory signals about the morality and the legality of Indian slaving. While some traders and settlers, including superintendents, bought Indian slaves others tried to end such practices to facilitate contraband trade. Robert Hodgson, Sr. was among those who recognized the value of upland Indians, especially the Pech, in advancing trade with the Spanish, and clearly viewed Miskitu raids as detrimental to the new colony.<sup>56</sup> However, the Miskitu received mixed signals due to the alternating nature of Anglo-Spanish relations. The Miskitu were given the green light to attack Spanish towns and take Indian slaves during the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1748), at the end of the Seven Year War (1756-1763) when Spain joined forces against the British in 1761, and again during the Anglo-Spanish

aggressions of that led to the British evacuation (1779-1783), but were expected to not only refrain from such ventures during times of peace, but also to return slaves in accordance with Anglo-Spanish diplomatic conventions.<sup>57</sup> This caused much strife among the Miskitu, and created a disjunction between Anglo rhetoric and behavior toward the Spanish that the Miskitu often exploited to their own advantage.

Since Indian slavery had an ambiguous legal and moral standing, British records are often silent on the extent of settler holdings. Hodgson Jr.'s 1757 document provides one of the few exceptions. In this year settlers held 8 Indian slaves at Sandy Bay, 20 at Bragmans, 11 at Pearl Lagoon, 30 at Corn Island, 3 at Bluefields, 16 at Punta Gorda, yet only 6 at Black River.<sup>58</sup> And Hodgson ought to know, since according to Sorsby, "[he] had a well-distributed 'harem' of Indian women slaves . . . Every influential Shoreman had at least one Indian slave."<sup>59</sup> As we saw in the last chapter, settlers always confronted a labor shortage, a fact which drove up the value of good Indian slaves. By the late 1770s, traders were paying "the common price" of 20 turtle backs "for a full grown Indian and for one half grown fifteen backs."<sup>60</sup> During this same period, southcoast traders allegedly purchased Indian slaves for £15-20, and sold them at Black River for £30-35.<sup>61</sup>

Tawira slave raids against the Kukra and Ulwa south of the Rio Prinzapolka were especially heinous and several superintendents attempted to curb such abuses with little success. Depositions of former Indian slaves taken at Belize in 1824 revealed that the number of slaves taken by the Tawira on the south coast "must have been considerable, if, as Mrs. Robinson says in her evidence, that almost the whole of the labor of the Southern part of the Mosquito Shore was performed by the Indian Slaves."<sup>62</sup> Although other evidence contradicts this statement, it does imply that Indian slaving on the south coast was particularly bad.

In 1765, Otway placed the blame for Tawira slaving on south coast settlers who aroused these actions. He wrote that south coast settlers engaged in this trade:

procure these Indians with great ease and at a small expense by (filling out pettiaguas [dories]) and sending gangs of [Tawira] Mosquito Indians in them who are paid by their employers at a certain rate in goods, seldom, I believe exceeding the value of three or four pounds Jamaica currency for every Indian they bring in. These poor creatures, who are generally women and children, . . . are commonly disposed of by their owners for twenty or thirty pounds each according to their different ages and services they are capable of performing.

He continues, stating that the people concerned with this business are usually sure of getting 15-20 Indians in a year, and are sure of selling them all. He complained that the people are happy with these profits and hence not motivated to labor or fatigue themselves, “they cultivate no more land than what is barely sufficient to supply their families with plantains, cassada, yams, and corn.” He felt if a stop could be put to this trade, settlers would probably turn their attention to “clearing and planting ground,” and that this might endear the interior Indians to the British; but for now the Indians are “driven to seek protection from the Spaniards by their just apprehensions of being surprised and with their wives and children, carried into slavery, or, should those who catch them think proper, be put to death by most cruel tortures for the entertainment of their tormentors at a drinking bout.”<sup>63</sup>

Otway’s reference to torture applies to the incident at Pearl Lagoon that eventually led to the defection to the Spanish of the Kukra leader Captain Yarrince. In an attempt to extend their authority over the Ulwa-Kukra and the contraband trade network that passed through the south coast, the Tawira Miskitu of the Rio Grande admiralty began enslaving the Kukra and threatening their leader Yarrince. In 1762, two years after superintendent Jones had issued a commission to Yarrince, Henry Corrin wrote to Jones and asked him to try and quell Yarrince’s distaste for British friendship:

I have now to inform you that Capt. Wardlaw with a large gang of Muskito men is coming here to take all the commerce Indians [Ulwa/Kukra]. On first hearing this I sent for the Woolwa Captain you gave the Commission to [Yarrince], who have sent his family and people far into the country to secure themselves. [He has since gone to Jamaica.]

I sincerely hope you will be kind to the Indian Captain who is a valuable man. . . . several of his men have been lately murdered in cold blood near Pearly Key Lagoon and their wives and children sold as slaves, some of them flew to [the Englishman] Hendrich Trenanston for protection who suffered them to be butchered before his face at his own door. It makes my heart bleed to hear the complaints of these poor people and I have it not in my power to assist them.<sup>64</sup>

Jones contextualizes the incident by stating that Capt. Garrison (Yarrince) told him in Jamaica that:

Tilas and Dick Allen (two Musketo Indian Captains) with about 30 of their people in four pitpans had lately been up four days paddle Kringwan [Rio Kurinwas] (or Pearl Key River) a branch of which runs into Blewfields river where they met with a number of Mussasu or Woolwa Indians going to Blewfields to trade. Tilas and Allen took 53 men, women and children carried them to Pearl Key Lagoon and there sold them to Hendrick and Abraham Trenanston as slaves. Soon afterwards (he this Woolwa Garrison) whose tribe had formerly consisted of about 300 was now reduced to only 47 the remainder having been kidnapped and sold as slaves, therefore on his receiving advice from Captain Corrin that some Muskito men and English Privateers from Jamaica was coming to take the remainder of them he by the advice of Captain Corrin says that he sent his family away far enough into the country to secure themselves and came himself to Jamaica to seek for redress. I entertained him for some days and promised to carry him to Spanish Town to His Excellency the Governor the next day . . . but His Excellency the Governor [was] not in the country. . . . Some days past when the Indian heard the small pox was in Kingston (which disorder they all greatly dread) . . . he went on board a vessel to St. Andrews and since I have never heard of him.”<sup>65</sup>

Somehow Yarrince returned to the Mosquitia and switched his allegiance to the Spanish in December of 1766. Some of Yarrince’s relations were likely sold at San Andrés, where in 1768 Reverend Post baptized 22 Ulwa, 3 Rama, and 4 Kukra Indian slaves.<sup>66</sup> In his later report, Jones suggests that even after Yarrince had accepted a Spanish commission he maintained contact with the British:

One of [Indian] Chiefs, who had a Commission from me, has lately accepted a Spanish Commission; he was urged to this defection from the British interest by the Exceeding Ill treatment he met with from the Mosquito Men, who Seized and sold several his relations, amongst whom were two of his

brothers. He has promised to give me a meeting, when I shall do my utmost to make up this breach.<sup>67</sup>

This meeting likely never occurred. In 1778 Yarrince was arrested by the Spanish on charges of treason and spent the rest of his life in a Guatemalan jail cell where he died in 1786. The Tawira of the Rio Grande continued to enslave the Ulwa and Kukra as well as pillage their crops well after the British evacuation.

Following the rupture of regularized contraband trade through Nicaragua, some settlers and the Sambo Miskitu alike pressured Superintendent Hodgson to take action against the enslavement of Indians in general and the Ulwa-Kukra in particular. His eventual failure to do so catalyzed a 20 year period of strong Sambo-Tawira disagreement. In contrast to the Tawira, the Sambo king remained on relatively good terms with the Ulwa well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup>

In his review of Superintendency documents in 1838, Walker believed that the Sambo Miskitu had never held Indian slaves:

This assertion [that the king's people held Indian slaves] is entirely incorrect and has not the slightest foundation in fact. The Mosquito Monarchy is despotic—the King levies tribute and exacts obedience from His subjects, but merely the trifling extent of providing him with the means of conveyance and furnishing him with moderate supplies of game, fish and vegetables. Slavery or anything approaching to it is entirely unknown and has never existed since the discovery of the country in the early part of the seventeenth century. Slavery or anything approaching to it is entirely unknown and has never existed since the discovery of the country in the early part of the seventeenth century.<sup>69</sup>

Although obviously a false statement, it is possible that the Sambo did not possess nor seek native Mosquitian slaves after 1741 in the same manner that the Tawira did. It appears, again, that the Sambo were moving closer to official British positions as espoused at Black River and later Belize, while the Tawira moved closer to an affinity with rogue settlers on the southern shore who flaunted their defiance of official British objectives in the Mosquitia. In any case, the Sambo king eventually did take action against Tawira slaving.



In 1775, the Miskitu King George I sent a delegation to London to denounce Indian slavery in the Mosquitia. A Mr. Terry was “engaged with the Mosquito King to bring over to England his brother and son, for the purpose of laying before his Majesty’s ministers some representations and complaints [regarding] the conduct of the [Indian slave] trade.”<sup>70</sup> In London, the king’s brother Duke Isaac, his son George II, and two Ulwa (or Kukra) Indians named “Richard, admiral” and “John, captain,” sent a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth. Although the letter was likely written by an Englishman, it appears to reflect a genuine interest on the part of the Sambo Miskitu leadership to curtail Tawira slaving on the south coast of the Mosquitia:

[While in England] we were astonished to find that your officer the present Intendant [Hodgson Jr.] not only neglected our friendship, nor paid the least attention to us, but was actually the foremost trafficker of Indian slaves, encouraging us at once to destroy our people, disunite and dishonour our tribes, and render us an easy conquest to our common foe. This, instead of leading us to useful purposes in cultivating cotton, indigo and other articles of natural produce of our country and which would afford us the means of purchasing English goods without the assistance of presents.<sup>71</sup>

The American Mr. Terry was apparently seeking to ingratiate himself with the Miskitu king and to end south coast slavery to facilitate his own mahogany enterprises and contraband trade.<sup>72</sup> (Terry eventually ended up at the center of a Spanish plot to lure the Miskitu leadership away from the British, but wound up being killed instead, see Chapter Ten).

The Miskitu king’s political efforts helped produce a new British law nullifying the sale of all Indian slaves in the Mosquitia made after October 22, 1776. Legislation also established a fine of £40 for anyone who bought or sold Indian slaves after this date, and required owners to free their Indian slaves by March 1, 1777.<sup>73</sup> This legislation, promulgated by Hodgson’s replacement, the Scotchman James Lawrie, ultimately came after Governor Basil Keith lamented the inability to stem growing Tawira abuses on the south coast:

it behooves you to prevent the perpetuation of such horrid murders, as have committed by the Mosquito men, on the three woolwa Indians; and you ought to exert yourself to the utmost, to bring the offenders to justice, and thereby show the several Indian nations on the Shore, in what abhorrence the English hold such villains, and how ready they are to punish them, and protect those who are peaceable and friendly to us.<sup>74</sup>

Enactment of this new legislation allowed Superintendent Lawrie to wrongly state on May 28, 1777 that, “The infamous practice of selling the Indians of the neighbouring nations as slaves, is now entirely at an end.” Meanwhile, he noted the problem of Indian bondage still permeated the Mosquitia:

[There] still remains a number of Indian slaves amongst the Mosquitomen who were in their profession previous to the late regulations; were the funds allotted for this country increased it would enable me to purchase the freedom of these poor people and would give the finishing stroke to that inhuman trade.<sup>75</sup>

Humanitarian concerns aside, Lawrie’s efforts attempted to reimburse Shoremen, including himself, for their ‘loss of property.’ This same idea had been expressed even earlier by a greedy Colville Cairns:

If there is no other way of weaning the Mosquito men from taking the Indians, what would you think of buying all these different Nations from the Mosquito Chiefs for His Majesty conditionally that none of the Mosquito men in future should be permitted to take any of these Indians; to send the Mosquito men into the different Nations, that have not been taken this year and bring a few of each country to return them with proper presents and commissions with assurances from you and the Mosquito Chiefs that you would protect them [in] the future; and these presents to be given yearly.<sup>76</sup>

All told, Lawrie had sought £3,000 to appease slave owners, but the entire issue was dropped during the turbulent years prior to the Anglo-Spanish War of 1779, and the problem of Indian slavery was not resolved until the emancipation of all slaves in 1841.

*Period IV: 1790 – 1830*

The British evacuation, Napoleonic Wars in Europe, and a down-turn in the Indian slave market created a major turning point in Mosquitia developments. The loss of revenue forced the Miskitu to turn to other means to retain their coastal position and customary privileges. Michael Olien has argued that the Miskitu made up for their economic loss by exacting tribute from surrounding Indians.<sup>77</sup> While on one level, this is true, Olien fails to recognize that following the 1790 civil conflict, the Tawira also became tributary to the Sambo until at least 1840 when all coastal residents began paying the king an annual tax. Thus, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the term ‘Miskitu’ needs to be used with the understanding that between 1790-1830 the Tawira became tributary to the Sambo.

According to Orlando Roberts, Miskitu efforts to enslave Panamanian and Costa Rican Indians ended by the early 1800s. He wrote that “The Mosquito-men have repeatedly attempted to acquire an ascendancy over the San Blas Indians, and much blood, in consequence has been shed.” He claims that the last expedition against these Indians occurred around 1797 when “about 300 mosquito men . . . were strongly defeated.”<sup>78</sup> He went on to note, however, that Admiral Earnee, a Sambo Miskitu from Sandy Bay, “a complete black, or negro, without the least appearance of Indian blood,” had been collecting tribute for the king as far south as Boca del Toro. When Earnee reached the Rio Prinzapolka, after having “announced his arrival in advance,” Tawira provided tribute to the sum of:

a single *back* of shell . . . from every canoe employed in turtling during the season. The same value in dories, hammocks, or coarse cotton cloth of the country being exacted from those canoes employed in any other manner.

By the 1820s the Sambo had erected “King’s houses” at various villages along the coast and used them for “the reception of the King, or his officers, when they visit the settlement.” At these houses, village headmen “or one of the three principal chiefs who govern the coast, decide controversies, and frame laws and regulations, which are afterwards sanctioned by the King before being carried into

effect.”<sup>79</sup> Even though the Tawira paid tribute to the king, they continued sporadic raids against the upland Ulwa until at least the 1820s.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, Henderson wrote in 1804 that the Pech and Twahka paid an annual tribute of “a certain number of cattle” to the Sambo Miskitu below General Robinson on the north coast.<sup>81</sup> As I will show in Chapter Ten, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the king had effectively established himself as the single sovereign of the Miskitu Kingdom. This reflects a turning point in Mosquitia history, but also the formal elevation of the Sambo over the Tawira along the Nicaraguan coast.

The volume, regularity, and enforcement of tribute payment to the Miskitu in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is beyond the scope of this study. Still, evidence suggests that regional leaders operated different taxation regimes in their respective districts. For example, Twahka and Tungla Indians established mutually beneficial trade relations, especially in unfinished pitpans, with Tawira leaders in the Wounta-Prinzapolka corridor. Much of this was paid by the Tawira in annual tribute to the Miskitu king who by 1816 had consolidated his regional authority with the help of Belizeans.<sup>82</sup> Even before this period, however, white settlers sent the king annual payment in acknowledgement of his position. For their part, the Panamahka are never mentioned as tributary Indians, nor did the Twahka apparently pay the king directly. For example, Pim lists only the Valiente of Costa Rica, the Rama, Kukra, Ulwa, “Tonga” (Tungla), and Pech as tributary to the Miskitu king in 1860.<sup>83</sup>

A full analysis of the tribute system after the British evacuation awaits another study, but I have attempted to illustrate that the Sambo Miskitu instituted tributary relations with subordinate Indians, including the Tawira, as an adaptation to the new economic forces shaping the region following the British evacuation. This process also reflects the emergence of a ‘free’ labor force represented by the Garífuna, always characterized as hard-workers in the literature, and a rising Creole population. The institutionalization of tribute collection, which included Garífuna and occasionally Creoles, further pushed the idea of the Miskitu Kingdom from the realm of abstraction to one reflecting an actual reality for most coastal inhabitants.

### **The Miskitu as Mercenaries**

From the Miskitu perspective, slaving and wartime excursions against Spanish positions, probably seemed much the same. In both cases the Miskitu consulted with sukias before they set off, they created a plan of action that brought Tawira and Sambo leaders together, yet they each group carried out ventures on the margins of their own districts. In both cases the Miskitu hoped to acquire slaves or products that could be traded for desired goods. It is within this purview that Miskitu military accompaniment of British assaults needs to be viewed. The Miskitu were not 'defending' a territory in any strict sense of the word, because in most cases they were not attacked. Nor were the Miskitu supporting Britain's political objectives against the Spanish. The Miskitu acted as mercenaries, and occasionally for revenge. Individuals chose to fight or abstain on their own. The British could not compel the Miskitu to fight.

In Chapter Five I showed that initial efforts by Hodgson to mold the Miskitu into a fully responsive fighting force did not succeed. Recounting Hodgson's failure, Governor Trelawny noted that the "there was no doing anything of consequence—[the Miskitu] were so very ungovernable when they came to action." Trelawny's solution was to increase the number of "white men to help keep them in better order."<sup>84</sup> Whether this counsel was carried out or not, the record shows the Miskitu never met British expectations as auxiliaries during moments of joint combat. The reasons for this are numerable and telling: the Miskitu did not like to fight in the manner that the British did; they did not follow orders; they held a very different notion of responsibility in cases of battle-related death; they resented returning the spoils of war under any circumstances; and they would not be led by men they did not trust. The comments by Richard Jones summarize numerous frustrating communiqués to the effect that although the Miskitu were "kind and hospitable to the English," they were "jealous of their freedoms," and would not be

“drove by any, but may be led by fair means by those they well know, but not by strangers.”<sup>85</sup> In general, the Miskitu always fought under their own leaders, and only when it served their own best interest. Nevertheless, military actions shaped and strengthened social dynamics legitimating commissioned leaders, and helped strengthen the association between Miskitu authority and Anglo symbolic forms. Before returning to this theme in the next chapter, it is useful to examine how the Miskitu responded to British military and political actions in the Mosquitia.

In the 1750s, several incidents occurred which illustrate Miskitu resistance to British prerogatives. After the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1748), the British and the Spanish established a tenuous peace, but the Miskitu had trouble following the proper vagaries of international diplomacy. In 1750, Hodgson followed up on a request by Governor Trelawny to persuade the Miskitu to return Matagalpan Indians:

[I will use my] utmost endeavors to get as many of the Spanish Indians as possible returned of those taken in the Musquito Men’s expedition to Matagalpa. I am now setting out to Cape Gracias a Dios . . . but as I know they will endeavor to conceal as many of them from me as they can, I expect it will be a work of time and fatigue.<sup>86</sup>

Any idea that the Superintendent commanded Miskitu action would have to be dispelled by the above statement. Moreover, the Miskitu often showed their displeasure with British efforts to even assert such rights. In this same case, the Miskitu were upset with Britain’s willingness to fulfill Spanish requests at their expense. This was the situation after a high level Spanish delegation visited Black River in 1750. In 1751, white settlers insisted on greater protection against the Miskitu, as Hodgson noted:

the Mosquitomen are growing cool and frightened at seeing us give way to the Spaniards. And not withstanding their promises while I am distributing presents among them, keep close upon every alarm.<sup>87</sup>

During the rumor of a Spanish attack in 1754, Hodgson tried to mount a defense, but he lamented the “plan was render’d fruitless by the cowardice or Treachery of

that villain [Sambo General] Handyside.<sup>88</sup> Miskitu discontent with British overtures to the Spanish even produced Sambo Miskitu plans to destroy some British forts at Belize. The situation became so grave that the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations met to deal with “the decline of our interest with the Mosquito Indians, and the bad conduct of Captain Hodgson.”<sup>89</sup> In short, although the Miskitu had technically ‘signed away their country’ they would not become stooges of Anglo diplomatic dances with the Spanish.

The quintessential evidence illustrating British-Miskitu wartime relations comes from the British campaign against El Castillo along the Rio San Juan in 1780. British success in capturing the fort was due in large part to the Miskitu. General Kemble conveniently masks the Miskitu role in his diary, yet a close reading between the lines finds that all Kemble’s references to ‘our boatmen’ or ‘our hunters,’ inevitably referred to the Miskitu. My reading of Kemble’s diary suggests that the British would have starved to death without Miskitu hunting skills supplementing meager provisions, many of which rotted.<sup>90</sup> This view is supported by Bedford Pim who stated that “indeed, but not for [Miskitu] bravery and fidelity, the expedition up the river San Juan, and on to the Lake Nicaragua, under Nelson, would have perished to a man, . . . [Nelson] whose name, by the bye, is as much venerated in Mosquito as in England.”<sup>91</sup>

Despite Pim’s pronouncement, the expedition never went quite right from the Miskitu perspective, and British officials worked hard to correct any lingering resentment on the part of the Miskitu. The document dealing with this British overture, “Proceedings at a General Congress held at Tebuppy the 1st Oct. 1780 by Colvill Cairns and James Thomson, by order of General Stephen Kemble and Chiefs of the two Tribes of the Mosquito Indians,” is of special interest because of its rare presentation of Miskitu voices. Moreover, it is entirely structured around a recognition of Sambo and Tawira difference, referring to them as the ‘two tribes of the Mosquito Indians.’ The document reads as a series of British questions addressing Miskitu complaints and concerns to which the Miskitu provided answers

“after lengthy consultation amongst themselves.” Consider questions 1 and 7 provided by the British interpreter John Young and the Miskitu answers:

[question 1] As you complain much of your dead, and we being authorized to pay you for them, how much a head do you expect for them?

[answer 1] According to the number of men each tribe had upon the expedition, we will take a proportion of presents, and out of that proportion to satisfy the relations of the dead.

[question 7] When you go to war your own way by your rivers, and up the rivers in your own country, in case of any of your nation being killed by Spaniards, or die of natural sickness, do you expect the English will pay you for such as may be killed or die, during you expedition?

[answer 7] No, as we fit out in hopes of plunder, we expect no payment from the English. If any of our country men are killed, we hope to revenge their death, and if any dies, we must pay their relations, out of what plunder we may acquire.<sup>92</sup>

The replies illustrate that along with Miskitu authority comes social responsibility to the relatives of the deceased, often in perpetuity similar to a widow's pension. For example, Uring stated that when the Miskitu carry out a slave raid, “every Man has such a Share, according to what Part he furnished at their setting out. If any of them are killed in the Enterprise, he who had the chief Direction of that Affair must make Satisfaction to the Deceased Relations by making them Presents, in order to pacify 'em for such Loss, and come a continual Rent Charge to 'em.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the Miskitu recognized individual leaders only to the extent that they complied with a host of social obligations, one of which was the continual payment for a family's loss. Wright's 1808 observation reinforces Uring's point, but also shows that the Miskitu fought only within the framework of receiving rewards for services rendered: “they have the idea that if one of them loses their lives in service or another, even in battle, that all such must be paid for, when this demand is not met they have been known to retreat in a most dangerous and disorderly manner.”<sup>94</sup>



The mercenary dimension of Miskitu support of British military campaigns is also brought to light in question 2.

[question 2] Your next cause of complaint is being deprived of the prisoners of colour, you took at the Look-out, and in the two Ruyagers in the Lake of Nicaragua, we desire to know how many you claim, and how much must we pay you a head for them?

[answer 2] As we wish to make all matters easy with the English, who we are now convinced are our friends, we will only charge you at the rate of twenty yards of Osnaburgs, and one Hatt for each prisoner, the number taken in both places we claim are twenty three, no whites included.<sup>95</sup>

Being unable to keep their prisoners, apparently for reasons stipulated by the British, the Miskitu demanded proper payment. This point is also subject of a 1779 raid at Fort Omoa in Honduras, where the total prize taken was valued at £5,000. For at least the next four years, General Tempest, who led the Miskitu troops, pressed the British government to receive an appropriate share of the spoils for the Miskitu. He asked that that he receive the equivalent of warrant officers, and “claimed an ordinary seaman’s share for every Indian engaged.”<sup>96</sup> This legal claim would be in addition to the provisions paid ordinary Miskitu, and the pay Miskitu leaders received according to “their several ranks and for the number of days they may be of service.”<sup>97</sup>

In general the Miskitu disapproved of British military tactics, especially the labor intensive routines of ditch digging, and the seemingly absurd notion of daylight frontal assaults.

[question 5] As the King of England is now determined to drive the Spaniards, (with whose treachery to the English and your own nation you are no stranger to) from all their towns on your frontiers; will you give every assistance in your power to facilitate the endeavor of the King of England and call the English men your brothers?

[answer 5] As we are entire strangers to the mode of fighting practiced by the English, we wish rather to go to war our own way, and if we are furnished with arms and ammunition, the King of England may depend upon our acting with the utmost vigilance against the Spaniards up Great River

and Wanks by which Rivers we have an easy access to the Spanish towns and savannas, and hope to distress them, burning their towns, and carrying off their slaves and cattle.

[question 6] In case of any of the Mosquito nation, choosing to accompany the English army, will they, in case of scarcity of provisions or any other casualty, give every assistance required?

[answer 6] If any Mosquito men are employed in any laborious work, it is only to be upon condition they chose themselves to be so employed, but they are not to be compelled, and are to be paid for their labor, the same as other persons employed in such labor, and are to be at liberty to return, either to the army, or to their homes, without molestation.<sup>98</sup>

The answers suggest the Miskitu preferred carrying out attacks in their own way, especially at the right time of the year, and in the usual guerilla fashion. Recall, that during Hodgson's first military campaign he suggested that the Miskitu attack the Rio San Juan Castillo straight on in the daylight: "But the Mosquito men were so averse to it, that they declared, if I would not them go on in their own way . . . they would proceed no further."<sup>99</sup> Indeed, even 40 years after the 1780 assault on El Castillo the Miskitu were still simmering about British ineptitude during the expedition. Roberts reports that he "saw several of the old Indians who had been with Lord Nelson when he ascended the River San Juan. They uniformly agreed that the expedition had been undertaken at an improper season of the year [July!]; that they had been restricted in their mode of acting, and obliged to conform to habits, discipline, and diet, which dispirited them."<sup>100</sup>

In contrast to views that present the Miskitu as a loyal auxiliary fighting force serving British interests on the Miskitu Shore, I find it is better to conceptualize the Miskitu as mercenary soldiers who fought for material benefits and generally disapproved of, often disrupted, or redirected British strategies. Such uncertainty gave the Miskitu some power to negotiate conditions of alliance. British dependence on the Sambo Miskitu was also supported by the fact that they could not rely on their own subjects nor the Tawira along the south coast. Governor Dalling

noted that the Tawira Miskitu “are little to be depended on, and our own people on the Shore less, most of them being connected with the enemy in trade and uneasy that intercourse with them should be interrupted.”<sup>101</sup> In contrast, the north coast Sambo and British settlers were much more loyal. On August 23, 1782, some 150 Sambo Miskitu from the north coast attacked a Spanish garrison at Black River, losing two men while killing 65 Spanish and taking 9 prisoners. Six hundred Miskitu “under their respective Chiefs,” subsequently assembled at Cape Gracias and continued to defend the north coast after the Spanish regrouped.<sup>102</sup> The strong Miskitu role in British successes in the Mosquitia, made it that much more difficult for the Miskitu, and settlers alike, to accept the British withdrawal specified in the 1783 Treaty of Versailles, and verified in the Anglo-Spanish Convention of 1786.

By stressing periodic Miskitu resistance to Anglo military designs, or the traditional importance of social obligations and sukia interventions, that did not dissipate during the superintendency, I do not mean to suggest that mercenary fighting was unimportant to internal Miskitu social dynamics and identity formation. Quite the contrary. The Miskitu appear to have revered the power commanded by military officers in the British army, and especially the garb that accompanied the rituals of war and its preparation. When Dunham took the king’s brother Tefts and another Miskitu to New York around 1816, the men pressed strongly to see General Jackson who they heard was visiting the city. One of them allegedly said, “Me want to see dat big American ginerel [sic].” At the parade, Dunham tells us that the two Miskitu men appeared rapt by the military officers “forming the procession, with long feathers on their hats, and they begged me very hard to go purchase some of those feathers for them.”<sup>103</sup> It must be recalled, that during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, European sea Captains and military officers wore uniforms containing a whole constellation of symbolic apparel, all of which was transculturated by the Miskitu into their own identity.

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Miskitu identity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century co-evolved with British settlement, market economies, and military ventures, but regional geography and ecology conditioned each activity in turn. The seasonal migration and the Costa Rican convergence of the hawksbill turtle, from which the lucrative ‘tortoise shell’ economy depended, lured Tawira Miskitu turtlers south as far as Panamá from May to September. Such long-distance sea travel was probably not unknown before European contact, but the Miskitu adoption of the sail facilitated their domination of coastal waters. It cannot be proven that Sambo turtlers did not initially turtle south of Bluefields, but I have presented evidence over the last several chapters to the effect that the Tawira understood Costa Rican turtles to be part of their domains and that they tried, on numerous occasions, to protect their access by striking deals with the Spanish. I will argue in Chapter Ten that shrinking hawksbill turtle populations, especially those available at the Miskitu Cays and those off the Miskitu banks to which the Sambo Miskitu generally attended to, combined with Sambo political ascension within the Miskitu Kingdom in ways that encouraged the Tawira to consolidate a more exclusive control over the southern beaches.

Beginning in 1700, possibly with European accompaniment, southward turtling voyages included Indian slaving and pillaging raids at Spanish towns, and after 1720 among non-Christian, or ‘wild,’ Indians living outside Spanish control. Wangki and Sambo Miskitu carried out similar raids, but generally to the west as far as the Yucatán Peninsula. The turn to ‘commercial’ slave raids originated with European provocation, but remained regionally specific as individual Miskitu leaders expanded their authority within their respective district jurisdictions. Only the south coast Tawira pursued and enslaved neighboring Indians, in this case the Ulwa, Kukra, and Rama. That is not to say that the north coast Sambo treated the Pech or Twahka as equals, but relations tended to be more complex and less antagonistic. Moreover, Sambo slaving concentrated on Indians under Spanish authority. Evidence suggests that King George I played a role in trying to curtail

Tawira abuses against the Ulwa. While this could have been for altruistic reasons, it is equally likely that such politics reflected settler efforts to increase contraband trade. The switch to a tributary system after the British evacuation shows the depth of commercial dependence the Miskitu had established on British commodities in reproducing their lifestyles. However, the switch also institutionalized the abstract notion of the Miskitu Kingdom among all Mosquitia inhabitants, including the Tawira.

The Miskitu conducted military enterprises against the Spanish with the intention of receiving payment from the British, acquiring plunder, or both. For the most part, the Miskitu planned or participated in offensive strikes during times of Anglo-Spanish conflict. The Miskitu greatly reduced the frequency of their assaults against Spanish towns during times of Anglo-Spanish peace. In all recorded cases, the Miskitu participated in warfare against the Spanish within the context of their own social customs governed by sukia prevision, leadership obligations to widowed families, and Sambo-Tawira geographic differential jurisdiction. The planning of military activities, often under the auspices of British officers, brought the Sambo and Tawira leaders together in the same way that pre-slaving Sambo-Tawira congresses and sukia consultations appear to have operated. Slaving and wartime preparation was conducted in an atmosphere of supreme spectacle and ritual that oriented Miskitu identities toward Anglo cultural forms and symbolic representations.

### **Notes to Chapter Eight**

<sup>1</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 154; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 300.

<sup>2</sup> In Europe carey, or tortoise shell, was used to make combs, jewelry, and works of art. Carey is the outer covering of the hard and bony carapace of hawksbill turtle shells. The shells contain 13 scales, some of which can be up to quarter of an inch thick; Pim, *Gate of the Pacific*, 74.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Nietschmann, "Hunting and Fishing Focus Among the Miskito Indians, Eastern Nicaragua," *Human Ecology* 1 (1972): 41-67; Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*; Nietschmann, "Costa Miskita," 1-55.

<sup>4</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 25, 40, 136, 146.

<sup>5</sup> The Spaniards always referred to the keeled sailing craft of the Miskitu as *piraguas*; English authors typically used *periaguas*. The Miskitu word these tree-trunk sailing vessels is *dori*, thought to derive from the English word 'dory;' however, at least one dictionary suggests the English word derives from the Miskitu word; *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 418.

<sup>6</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 27; *Certaine Inducements*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 294.

<sup>8</sup> He noted that, "Despoiled of its jewels, the crown was left for safe keeping with a queen mother, and she sold it to a trader." Ford claims that Mr. Spellman, the chief representative of Emery Lumber Company, had procured this crown at one of their mahogany camps, and removed it without Miskitu knowledge; Isaac N. Ford, *Tropical America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 346.

<sup>9</sup> Nietschmann claims that nets were introduced to the Miskitu by Cayman Islanders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; *Between Land and Water*, 138. He apparently borrowed this information from Conzemius who states the same thing, *Ethnographical Survey*, 68. However, nets were in use during the 18<sup>th</sup> century; see for example Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 34, and Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 98-99.

<sup>10</sup> By the early 1700s, green turtle and manatee meat sold for a robust six pence a pound in Jamaican markets, and the Miskitu likely provided a good portion of both; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 170.

<sup>11</sup> During a 7 month buying season in 1818, Dunham purchased 572 pounds of shell, or around 200 turtle backs at \$2 a pound, selling each pound in New York for \$7; Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 80, 102, 108; James Bodie, "Notes and Observations on Greytown Mosquitia," *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* (1851), 272. Meanwhile, Pim claims that each turtle produced 6-7 lbs. of shell, more than double estimated by Dunham; *Gate of the Pacific*, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 98-99.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Commissioners of the Mosquito Nation, 21 Feb. 1840, Government House, Belize, 21 Feb. 1840, PRO, CO 123/57; Proclamation, the Commandants and Magistrates of the Mosquito Kingdom, by order James Stanislaus Bell, Bluefields, n.d. [1844], PRO, FO 53/5: 129.

- <sup>14</sup> Patterson et al. to ?, Pearl Key Lagoon, 4 Feb. 1839, PRO, FO 53/44, 325. Attempts to collect a tax from Cayman Islanders who regularly visited the Miskitu Banks for green turtles, however, proved impossible; S. T. Haly, Commander of Middle District, to Rev. M. Newport, Cape Gracias a Dios, 3 May 1840, PRO, CO 123/57.
- <sup>15</sup> Pim, *Gate of the Pacific*, 74.
- <sup>16</sup> Hodgson, 1 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 67.
- <sup>17</sup> Archie Carr, *The Sea Turtle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 20, 222-229. Some sources mention the loggerhead off the Mosquitia, see for example Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 94.
- <sup>18</sup> Carr, *Sea Turtle*, 7-9, 26, 31; see also, James J. Parsons, *The Green Turtle and Man* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962); Archie Carr, *The Windward Road* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1956); Nietschmann, *Between Land and Water*, 123-126.
- <sup>19</sup> Carr, *Sea Turtle*, 227.
- <sup>20</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 154.
- <sup>21</sup> Owen, "Description of the Musquito Coast," 75.
- <sup>22</sup> Carr adds that "In the former days of good markets [1940s] for tortoise-shell as many as sixty boats, most of them from Bluefields, congregated at Greytown Banks; *Sea Turtle*, 228.
- <sup>23</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 41.
- <sup>24</sup> In *Tangweera*, Bell states the men head off in February and return in May for carey. Since this reflects the season of the green turtle, he is likely in error. His earlier writing considers the carey season May-September; Bell, "Remarks on the Mosquito Territory," 252; Bell, *Tangweera*, 20.
- <sup>25</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 80.
- <sup>26</sup> Robert Hodgson, Sr. to Lord, Mosquito Shore, 4 April 1744, PRO, CO 323/11: 68.
- <sup>27</sup> "Robert Hodgson to Trelawny, Sandy Bay, 8 April 1740," *States of Central America*, Appendix D: 746.
- <sup>28</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 54.
- <sup>29</sup> de la Haya, "Letter from Cartago, 8 Oct. 1722," LCRC, 27.
- <sup>30</sup> Luis Diez Navarro, "Descripción del Reino de Guatemala, 30 de Mayo de 1744," CRC, 180.

- <sup>31</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 288.
- <sup>32</sup> Colville Cairns to James Lawrie, Tebuppy [Twappi], 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73: 202.
- <sup>33</sup> Mary W. Helms, "Miskito Slaving and Culture Contact," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39 (1983): 179-197, citations from pages 184-185.
- <sup>34</sup> Boserup claimed that population density (population pressure on available resources) was the independent variable that led to technological innovation; see Ester Boserup, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965).
- <sup>35</sup> Helms, "Miskito Slaving," 186. Helms never distinguishes between Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. A good example of a Spanish exaggeration that was used by Helms and numerous other researchers is the 1731 Spanish estimate of 7,000 "zambos armados;" "D. Carlos Marengo informa al general D. Manuel López Pintado sobre los indios y zambos Mosquitos, San Felipe de Portobelo, 16 Feb. 1731," CDHCR, 188.
- <sup>36</sup> De la Concepción, AGI Guatemala 297; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 310; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 230; Helms, "Miskito Slaving," 185; Jorge Jenkins M., *El Desafío Indígena en Nicaragua: El Caso de los Miskitos* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1986), 60.
- <sup>37</sup> Michael D. Olien, "After the Indian Slave Trade: Cross-Cultural Trade in the Western Caribbean Rimland," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 44 (1988): 41-66.
- <sup>38</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 157.
- <sup>39</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 291.
- <sup>40</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 288, 290.
- <sup>41</sup> He also claims that Englishmen participated in the assault, noting an Indian called Juana, who "speaks Spanish," who was enslaved by the "indios Guaianes who came up [the River] with some Englishmen;" de la Concepción, AGI Guatemala 297.
- <sup>42</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 157.
- <sup>43</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 48.
- <sup>44</sup> Mora y Pacheco, "Relación Geográfica," 47.
- <sup>45</sup> "Declaración de Micaela Gómez, mulata libre, 2 Jan. 1717," CRCM, 87-92; citations from page 89.
- <sup>46</sup> M. W., "Mosquito Indians," 292.



<sup>47</sup> See for example, “Declaración de Micaela Gómez,” 87-92; Declaración del mulato Miguel Gutiérrez, Masaya, 10 Oct. 1710, AGI Guatemala 300: 396; Declaración del mulato Drego Bonilla, Cartago, 25 Nov. 1737, AGI Guatemala 302: 1016; Romero V. and Solorzano, “Declaración de Carlos Casarola,” 85-90; Garret y Arloví, “Informe de D. Fray Benito Garret y Arloví,” 43-63.

<sup>48</sup> Eduard Conzemius, “Apuntes sobre algunos Nombres Geográficos Mosquitos en Costa Rica y Panamá,” *Revista de Costa Rica* 3 (1922), 301.

<sup>49</sup> “Mosquito Indian,” 287.

<sup>50</sup> Romero V. and Solorzano, “Declaración de Carlos Casarola,” 88-89. Carlos had been captured at Matina and had lived at Awastara as a slave of the Miskitu Indian Captain Yane between 1703-1728.

<sup>51</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 156-157.

<sup>52</sup> M. W., “Mosquito Indian,” 294.

<sup>53</sup> Kemble to Gov. Dalling, Bluefields, 15 Nov. 1780, PRO, CO 137/79, 130-131. Apparently 150 Tawira took part in an excursion up the Rio Escondido; Charles Irving to Gov. Dalling, [Bluefields], [1780], PRO, CO 137/79, 158-160.

<sup>54</sup> See Juan Geronimo Duardo, “Carta a la Presidente de la Real Audiencia de Goathemala,” Guatemala, 26 July 1704,” CDHCR, 6-7; “Carta a la Audiencia de Guatemala sobre los establecimientos de los ingleses en la costa, etc. 1704,” CDHCR, 3-5. Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 64-67; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 157-159; Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 84-87; Sorsby, “British Superintendency, 11.

<sup>55</sup> “Declaración de Athanacio Hernández, indio natural del pueblo de Camoapa de edad de 40 años, León, 13 Sept. 1768,” BAGG V, no. 2 (1940): 126-127; “Domingo Cabello to Pedro Salazar, León, 27 Sept. 1768,” BAGG V, no. 2 (1940): 129-131.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Hodgson to Duke of Bedford, Jamaica, 21 April 1751, PRO, CO 137/57: 550; Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 49.

<sup>57</sup> Hodgson, 21 April 1751, PRO, CO 137/57, 550.

<sup>58</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 207.

<sup>60</sup> Colville Cairns to James Lawrie, Tebuppy [Twappi], 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73: 202.

<sup>61</sup> Dawson, “William Pitt’s Settlement at Black River,” 697.

<sup>62</sup> Superintendent of Belize to His Lord Duke of Manchester, Belize, 3 April 1824, PRO, CO 123/35, Appendix. No. XXII: 88.

- <sup>63</sup> Otway to Commissioners, 12 July 1765, PRO, CO 137/33.
- <sup>64</sup> Extract from a letter from Capt. Henry Corrin at Bluefields on the Musketo Shore to Richard Jones in Jamaica dated 20th July 1762, Council Minutes, Jamaica, 17 Nov. 1762, PRO, CO 140/42.
- <sup>65</sup> Statement of Richard Jones, Council Minutes, Jamaica, 17 Nov. 1762, PRO, CO 140/42.
- <sup>66</sup> Berky, *The Mosquito Coast*, 11.
- <sup>67</sup> [Richard Jones,] "Report on the Mosquito Shore," 422. It is this passage which confirms that the engineer, Jones, penned this unsigned and undated document. After he left the Superintendent position in 1762 he remained a close advisor of the Jamaican Governor regarding Mosquito Shore issues. He was called to quell settler discontent in 1768 and check on settler disapproval of Hodgson in 1770.
- <sup>68</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 87-88; Bell, *Tangweera*, 158.
- <sup>69</sup> Walker Belize, 12 Nov. 1838, PRO, CO 123/53, 2.
- <sup>70</sup> "Meeting 24 May 1776," JCTP, 31; see also Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 169-170.
- <sup>71</sup> Indian Chiefs to Earl of Dartmouth, [England], 10 November 1775, PRO, CO 137/70: 155; cf. Spinden, "Mosquito Kings," 9.
- <sup>72</sup> "Meeting 24 May 1776," JCTP, 31; "Meeting 14 May 1776," JCTP, 27.
- <sup>73</sup> Copy of a letter from John Barry, Black River, 22 Aug. 1776, An old letter book of the Mosquito Shore, Belize, 1822, PRO, CO 123/32: 11-13; Superintendent of Belize to His Lord Duke of Manchester, Belize, 3 April 1824, PRO, CO 123/35, Appendix No. XXII, 87.
- <sup>74</sup> Gov. Basil Keith to James Lawrie, Jamaica, 28 Feb. 1777, PRO, CO 137/72, 110.
- <sup>75</sup> James Lawrie to Germain, Black River, 28 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/72: 147. In the following year, however, Lawrie wrote that a "Capt. Chambers has been murdered at the Head of the Great River by the Woolwa [Ulwa] Indians after having sold his cargo to the Spaniards." This was due to the fact that the Miskitu still held some of the Ulwa as slaves. Lawrie again requested that these people be freed; James Lawrie to Government of Jamaica, Black River, 3 April 1778, PRO, CO 137/73: 185.
- <sup>76</sup> Colville Cairns to James Lawrie, Tebuppy [Twappi], 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73, 201.
- <sup>77</sup> Olien, "After the Indian Slave Trade," 41-47.
- <sup>78</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 49-50.

- <sup>79</sup> The relative luxuriant description of some of these houses leads me to believe that they were structures left by British settlers after their evacuation, but likely refurbished by the Miskitu; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 125, 130.
- <sup>80</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 116, 119.
- <sup>81</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 190.
- <sup>82</sup> Thomas Hegdecock to Lord Stanley, Canterbury, 11 Feb. 1868, PRO, FO 56/22, 149-152; Robert A. Naylor, "The Mahogany Trade as a Factor in the British Return to the Mosquito Shore in the Second Quarter of the 19th Century," *The Jamaican Historical Review* 7 (1967): 1-27.
- <sup>83</sup> Pim, *Gate of the Pacific*, 75.
- <sup>84</sup> Gov. Trelawny to Duke of Newcastle, Jamaica, 20 July 1743, PRO, CO 323/11, 33.
- <sup>85</sup> Richard Jones to Gov. Elletson, Jamaica, 3 Aug. 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 24.
- <sup>86</sup> Robert Hodgson to President of Guatemala, Black River, 3 Dec. 1750, PRO, CO 137/57, 548.
- <sup>87</sup> Robert Hodgson to Duke of Bedford, Jamaica, 21 April 1751, PRO, CO 137/57, 550.
- <sup>88</sup> Hodgson correspondence cited in Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 84.
- <sup>89</sup> "Meeting 11 July 1759," JCTP, 1759-63: 47; "Meeting 14 Nov. 1759," JCTP, 1759-63: 64. Hodgson's bad conduct appears to have been his inability to stem a Miskitu revolt. Robert Hodgson, Sr. died on the Miskitu Shore in this same year, 1759, presumably of natural causes.
- <sup>90</sup> "Journals of Brigadier-General Kemble," in *The Kemble Papers. Vol. II, Expedition to Nicaragua, 1780 – 1781*, ed. New York Historical Society (New York: New York Historical Society, 1884), 3-64.
- <sup>91</sup> Pim, *Gate of the Pacific*, 56.
- <sup>92</sup> Proceedings at a General Congress held at Tebuppy the 1st Oct. 1780 by Colvill Cairns and James Thomson, by order of General Stephen Kemble and Chiefs of the two Tribes of the Mosquito Indians, Tebuppy [Twappi], 1 Oct. 1780, PRO, CO 137/79, 164.
- <sup>93</sup> Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 156.
- <sup>94</sup> Wright, *Memoir of the Mosquito Territory*, 27.
- <sup>95</sup> Proceedings at a General Congress, 1 Oct. 1780, CO 137/79, 164.
- <sup>96</sup> "Order in Accordance with Committee Report 10 Feb. 1783," APCE, 5: 481.

<sup>97</sup> Gov. Dalling to Despard, Jamaica, 23 April 1781, PRO, CO 137/80, 160; see also Irving to Dalling, [Bluefields], [1780], PRO, CO 137/79, 158-160.

<sup>98</sup> Proceedings at a General Congress, 1 Oct. 1780, CO 137/79, 165.

<sup>99</sup> “Robert Hodgson to Trelawny, Chiriqui Lagoon, 21 June 1740,” *States of Central America*, 746.

<sup>100</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 265-266. It was in this fight that Captain Nelson lost his arm.

<sup>101</sup> Dalling to Lord George Germain, Jamaica, 28 Dec. 1780, PRO, CO 137/79, 139.

<sup>102</sup> Arch Campbell to Earl of Shelburne, Jamaica, 10 Oct. 1782, PRO, CO 137/82, 304-305.

<sup>103</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 138-139.

## Chapter Nine

### Miskitu Transculturation of Symbolic Power

The term transculturation refers to the processes by which peripheral ethnic groups appropriate and incorporate cultural forms and ideological suppositions held by dominant societies into their own world views and value systems. Since no social group lives in isolation, cultural systems and identities are always hybridized in that they perpetually accommodate and respond to ideas and practices external to autochthonous understandings or behaviors. In discussing the period of European expansion into the Americas, transculturation has been used to characterize the process of cultural change among native and African peoples who came into contact with European colonial systems that sought their subjugation. Mary Louise Pratt, for example, uses the term transculturation to show “how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.” She suggests that native transculturation occurs within ‘contact zones,’ or colonial spaces where disparate cultures meet and clash, often under asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.<sup>1</sup> Although it has been my intent in this study to show that the Mosquitia did not characterize a ‘typical colonial space’ before 1800—that is the Miskitu were not dominated by, nor subordinated to, colonial rulers—transculturation still provides a useful concept to understand how the Miskitu adjusted to an Anglo-Spanish, or bi-polar, contact zone in which they were subordinated on several social, economic, and political levels during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Colonialists in the Mosquitia before the 19<sup>th</sup> century attempted to compel Miskitu cooperation with ‘presents.’ The use of force by either the British or the Spanish in directing Miskitu activities was never attempted nor an option. In this sense, the Miskitu had a great deal of leeway in manipulating forces seeking their concert. The condition of Miskitu autonomy directed both British and Spanish strategies. In the case of the British, I have shown that officials established a partnership through the use of authoritative commissions complete with attending symbolic trappings such as uniforms, swords, and canes. By the 1760s, the Spanish established a similar relationship among the Tawira who continued accepting commissions from the British as well (see Chapter Ten). The relative Miskitu socio-political autonomy of 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial context allowed the Miskitu to weave several European symbolic representations into an authentic Miskitu culture and ethnic identity. The Miskitu transculturated Western and predominantly Anglo cultural forms and symbolic representations, and turned them into central elements of a Miskitu ethnic identity.

This chapter examines Miskitu transculturation of select European symbolic representations by looking at three social dimensions of this process. First, I contextualize the transculturation of material objects by looking at the British tradition of bestowing presents upon Miskitu leaders. These presents included desired manufactured goods, such as cloth or gun powder, but also symbolic regalia such as uniforms, scepter-like canes, drums, and flags. Second, I examine four different ritualized contexts in which European regalia achieved local meaning. I also trace the development of ritual gatherings to modifications of more traditional practices. Third, I highlight the Miskitu transculturation of two European objects that achieved inordinate power among the Miskitu: encoded papers and walking canes. More than any other material object derived from Europeans, paper and canes came to embody and exemplify esoteric power and knowledge systems that the Miskitu have pursued during every historical period, radically empowering their ethnic identity to the current day. In sum, the chapter seeks to contextualize the colonial dimension of

Miskitu ethnogenesis by looking more closely at the processual transculturation of European symbolic representations.

### **Bestowing Presents**

Throughout the last few chapters I have referred to the fact that the British bestowed ‘presents’ upon Miskitu leaders as part of their commission. What is less well known, however, is that the British doled out presents selectively after the 1760s, and that they were clearly providing presents sought by the Miskitu themselves. Still, without question, the ritual of present distribution formed a spectacle that sustained not only Anglo-British relations and Anglo-affinity within Miskitu symbolic forms, but also helped span the gap between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu by reminding them that they were both Miskitu in the eyes of the British. The context of such ritualized gatherings created a social space and a physical site in which the Sambo and Tawira could and often did assert a shared, if incipient, Miskitu identity. Indeed, expressed identity variance or unity was always socially contextual and geographically conditioned. As I show even more in the next chapter, both the Sambo and the Tawira symmetrically integrated symbolic gifts into their social relations and shared identities as Miskitu. Therefore, gift giving ceremonies reinforced a common Miskitu identity on two levels: physical aggregation and through the acquisition of similar regalia. Indeed, the characterizing symbolism of gifts such as hats, uniforms, shoes, silk stockings, epaulettes, swords, and walking canes emerged as central Miskitu identity markers.

It is unclear exactly when the annual tradition of providing presents began, but ritualized exchanges in small gifts and as part of more formal trade probably began with the first pirate encounters in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In this sense, presents or gifts should be considered any object bestowed meant to win the affection of the receiver. By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century we know that Miskitu leaders formally visited the new governors of Jamaica to complement them on their accession and receive

presents.<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, British presents began accompanying Miskitu commissions on Mosquitia soil with the ascension of King Jeremy II in 1720. By 1743, Governor Trelawny refers to “annual presents” for the Miskitu, and by 1747 £779 of the shore’s annual budget of £1,514 Jamaica currency, went to provide “presents for the miskito.”<sup>3</sup> However, by 1768, Richard Jones noted that the Miskitu no longer received presents annually, but rather in selective moments when the British had a special need to appease individual leaders.<sup>4</sup> For the first 25 years of the superintendency, however, presents were annual and factored into Jamaican budgets.

During the superintendency, the annual budget for the Mosquito Shore consisted of three parts: the superintendent’s salary, contingent expenses, and presents. These components were roughly equal, each approaching £500 annually. For example, in 1763, superintendent Otway received £500 salary “and other sums for presents to the Indians, and contingent services amounting in the whole to a sum, not exceeding fifteen hundred pounds Sterling annually.”<sup>5</sup> All told, between 1744 and 1778 the British government spent £28,530 on contingency expenses and presents.<sup>6</sup> The superintendent used contingency funds at his own discretion. A list of such expenses for 1766 suggests they were used to appease Miskitu leaders, especially the king (Table 9.1). Evidence also suggests that Miskitu dignitaries received the red-carpet treatment, and expected a high degree of pomp and entertainment at all meetings.<sup>7</sup>



**Table 9.1 Account of Contingent Expenses 1766.**

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An Account of Contingent Expenses disbursed for the Use of His Majesty's Service on the Mosquito Shore, by Joseph Otway, Esq. Superintendent from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1766, to the 31 of December.<sup>8</sup>

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Jan.	4	To a Negro named Prince, sold the King . . . . .	£ 45
	31	To cash paid Henry Tonoston one Month Wages, from the 1 <sup>st</sup> of Jan. to this date as Carpenter for Repairs done upon the House belonging	
May	17	To paid Thomas Lock as Receipt, for securing a Negro named Elias, belonging to the King . . . . .	£ 1. 5. 0
Oct.	15	To paid Robert Lowes for a Negro named Prince, bought for the King, as account of receipt . . . . .	£ 45
Dec.	5	To paid Robert Lowes for a Barrel of Pork, bought to victual two Gangs of Mosquito Indians, which came to Black River in October to	
	24	To 17 ½ Yards of Check supplied to the King's Negroes, at 4/4 ½ per Yard . . . . .	£ 3. 14. 4½
	31	To paid Jones Hoy his Year's salary as Clerk to the Superintendent, commencing January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1766 and ending the 31 <sup>st</sup> of December,	
		Carried Over	£ 179. 16. 4½

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In 1768, Richard Jones, on special assignment from Jamaica, debited the contingency account over £49 for trips back and forth from Jamaica to “quell an Indian uprising.”<sup>9</sup> This uprising stemmed from settler strategies to reverse the 1763 Treaty of Paris. Apparently, some north coast settlers had taken General Tempest to England in 1766 as part of their efforts to get the evacuation notice repealed. King George I believed that white settlers planned his demise by having Tempest crowned in London, and he threatened to kill all the settlers involved including General Tempest.<sup>10</sup> Just after several Wangki Miskitu had rebelled against some settlers, King George asked Jamaica to intervene in 1768. When Jones arrived he met first with Governor Briton who told him that “General Tempest assisted by

some white people was plotting to kill him, [and] their king, and carry off their wives and kids for slaves.”<sup>11</sup> The governor left before King George arrived with 200 of his followers, and Jones spent £36 entertaining the group with:

rum, beef, turtle, etc. bought to regale for 2 days the Indian King and his officers and other Indians on the Mosquito Shore, that came down from the country on my sending for them on the above emergent occasion, to the amount of about 100 persons, it being impracticable to treat with them on business of any consequence, so as to make them communicative without first regaling them with strong spirituous liquor, and also some small presents to carry away with them which on the occasion I judged necessary to do amounting to 36. 15. 0.<sup>12</sup>

Jones’ statement shows that entertainment and presents constituted necessary conditions to discuss British interests. For their part, the Miskitu understood British regaling as an act of interested diplomacy. Hodgson noted that the Miskitu “plainly discern” that providing presents “to be interested: this may account for [their] ingratitude.”<sup>13</sup> The Spanish also found that the Miskitu often insisted on receiving rum before any important matters could be discussed: “they are a people very inclined toward this drink, and if it is denied to them they feel you are treating them badly and this disgusts them.”<sup>14</sup> The precedent established in Miskitu-foreigner relations plagued missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1840, when an Anglican minister sought Miskitu attendance at his Sunday services he found he had to first provide each with a glass of grog. On the Sunday the Anglican ended this custom, one headman allegedly rose and said, “All talk, no grog, no good,” prompting an exodus of Miskitu attendees.<sup>15</sup> These excerpts suggest that drinking in a diplomatic, or ritual context, had always comprised Miskitu cultural practices, and puts an interesting twist on analysts, including Miskitu commentators, who use drunkenness to explain Miskitu acquiescence during their signing of the Mosquito Convention in 1894.<sup>16</sup>

Although presents were distributed at Black River during the superintendency by the Superintendent, they came directly from the Jamaican Governor, whose authority the Miskitu greatly respected. In this regard, the

Superintendent received much less respect than the Governor, who in turn received less than the 'King of England.' The Miskitu understood and respected this hierarchy by Dampier's time, "[The Miskitu] have no form of Government among them, but acknowledge the king of England as their sovereign, and hold the Governor of Jamaica as a great Prince."<sup>17</sup> In 1772, Hodgson Jr. made the specific point that providing presents for the Miskitu lay solely in hands of the Jamaican Governors, that the Superintendent had "no official business in this matter." Apparently, even having the Superintendent deliver these presents weakened their value in the eyes of the Miskitu. Hodgson claimed that if he distributed the presents the Miskitu will not believe they are from Jamaica, "as they say the Governors of Jamaica usually so greet them and they get the King of England presents besides."<sup>18</sup> However, Hodgson contradicts himself in this same year by complaining that:

as [the Indians] judge from outward objects only, I find my authority over them going fast away . . . deprived of all sort of authority over the White people, and my power over the Indians more and more sapped by not having the distribution of their presents committed to me, and other people being sent with orders to treat publickly with them.<sup>19</sup>

Although the two letters are somewhat opposed, it would appear that, from Hodgson's perspective, the presents had to come from the governor, but that he would like to distribute them in place of Jamaican officials to enhance his own clout among the Miskitu.

Hodgson's occasional rival on the south coast, Colville Cairns tends to support two of Hodgson's claims as I have reconciled and interpreted them. In appraising the Spanish of how best to deal with the Miskitu in 1786, Cairns noted that it would be necessary for the Spanish to have a single authority who the Miskitu will trust, "the Miskitu will follow the leader," but this leader must command demonstrative authority among his own people, and provide the Miskitu with presents, "this being necessary."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, as Hodgson hinted, the Miskitu viewed the exchange of presents as reciprocal, as an interchange of loyalties among equals, from king to king, from sovereign to sovereign. Miskitu King George I, for

example, sent his “brother King George III” a barrel of soil from the Mosquito Shore and a pledge to send 5,000 Miskitu troops to help put down any revolt that occurred in the North American colonies.<sup>21</sup> Likewise when Henderson gave General Robinson and his Captains some pistols, the General gave Henderson a horse.<sup>22</sup>

During the period of their annual distribution, presents were distributed every October, after the turtle season but before the heavy northers swept the coast. Accompanying the distribution of presents was often a market whereby the Miskitu sold their turtle shell and other products. During this event in October of 1766, Sorsby claims that Black River:

was the scene of a trade fair, the town acquiring the appearance of an Indian congress, bazaar and Octoberfest. The bank swarmed with Indians, Negroes and mestizos; white traders from Jamaica, Curaçao, New York, Philadelphia, London and Guatemala; and the Shoremen and Baymen.

Sorsby also noted that the gifts distributed during the fair of 1766 included:

three dozen blue and red spotted silk handkerchiefs, six dozen highly polished silver ear bobs, two dozen silver rings set with stones, three dozen ivory combs, four dozen jew-harps, forty pounds of small glass beads, seven gold and fir [sic] silver laced hats, twelve fine ruffled shirts for the chiefs, and 226 gallons of rum.<sup>23</sup>

The 1772 ‘inventory of sundries’ given to Tawira Governor Timothy Briton follows this same general pattern of goods and consisted of “[unreadable,] osnaburgs, handkerchiefs, red broad cloth, 2 guns, 2 small iron pots, 25 lbs. powder, 25 lbs. shot, 10 knives, 4 cutlass blades, 3 1/2 lbs. black beads, 14 bushels of salt, 4 ? hats, 6 ? pipes, 6 jews harps and a few fish hooks.”<sup>24</sup>

During the 1770s, the Tawira had made several proposals for peace with the Spanish of Costa Rica, Panamá, and Cartagena. Settler discontent with Hodgson, prompting his recall as superintendent in 1776, stemmed from Hodgson’s inability to have predicted and prevented this Tawira defection. For their part, the Tawira complained that Hodgson had neglected them, swindled them out of due presents,

and given them bad gunpowder. Hodgson claimed he would never cheat the Tawira out of their gifts because "I must have to keep the Indians in goodwill towards me, they being almost my only safeguard in a barbarous country where I have . . . property of above twenty thousand pounds."<sup>25</sup>

In 1777 the Tawira firmed up several agreements with the Spanish. With Hodgson now gone as superintendent, the British felt it necessary to annul discontent on the south coast, especially among the Tawira Miskitu by providing a special set of presents (Table 9.2). Indeed, the only Sambo on the list was Colonel Caesar (César) of Pearl Lagoon.

**Table 9.2 Invoice of Presents to South Coast Miskitu, October 1778.<sup>26</sup>**

Items	£
120 Musquets	270
400 barrels gun powder	60
12 dozen cutlasses	24
1,500 ball and shot	33. 15
2,000 flints	10
Boxing, Packing, Wharfage	2. 05
Fees of Clearance at the Custom House of Freight	30
<b>Regiments for the Following Chiefs, viz</b>	
Prince Eugene	
Governor Briton	
Governor Briton's Ambassador	45
Colonel Caesar	
Captain Jasper Hall	
Captain John Smith	
a Silver Hilted Sword for Governor Briton	10
a Gold Laced Hatt and Cane for Governor Briton	4. 15
a cane	1. 05
4 drums	2
3 Large Jacks (Flags)	15
Bobs and Rings	3. 15
5 Commissions	25
<b>Currency</b>	<b>537. 06</b>

The gifts distributed show that practical items such as muskets and machetes generally combined with items of personal attire which distinguished Miskitu leaders, as well as pertinent Anglo signs such as the Union Jack. I further contextualize the need for these gifts in the next chapter, but they were clearly items requested by the Tawira Miskitu as a condition of their compliance with British demands that they end their dealings with the Spanish.

In his assessment of the British tradition of bestowing presents upon the Miskitu in 1838, consul-general Patrick Walker noted that the custom signified the ‘usual way’ of winning the loyalty of ‘savages’:

I find an ardent and constant desire on the part of the British authorities to conciliate the Mosquito people. . . it was highly desirable for the Settlers to gain the friendship of a fierce and vindictive people . . . Repeated orders appear to have been issued by the Governors of Jamaica to the Superintendent and others administrating the government of [the Mosquito Shore] to adopt every means for ensuring the friendship and alliance of this people. There cannot be a doubt that this end was attained in the usual way that the goodwill of barbarous tribes is secured—viz., by the bestowal of presents—which altho of no great intrinsic value to civilized [men] were novel and important to the savages.<sup>27</sup>

Like many other commentators on this Anglo-Miskitu tradition, Walker views the tradition of gift giving in the Victorian light of British superiority and Miskitu inferiority, a position not likely held in such self-evident terms by the Miskitu of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Walker contrasts civility with barbarity as if all people, including the Miskitu, would understand and accept the British distinction and its inherent hierarchical and evolutionary meaning. However, just as the Union Jack held no ‘intrinsic’ value as a piece of cloth, it embodied inestimable extrinsic value for the people of Great Britain and, in many cases, their colonial subjects. Rather than focus on the intrinsic value of symbolic presents, I suggest we look at how the Miskitu ascribed significance to these objects by examining their use in social contexts.

## **From Gatherings to Ritual Spectacles**

In earlier chapters I have argued that during the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Miskitu assembled socio-politically across kaimka networks to plan slave raids or discuss military actions, that is to conduct matters of state. The Miskitu also united periodically among and across kaimka networks following the turtle season and during *sihkru* celebrations marking the ascent to *Yapti Misri* (heaven, or Mother Scorpion) of a recently departed. In all instances, alcohol appears central to festive gatherings. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, these ritual congregations began to occur in the context of political spectacle, and developed into supreme ceremonies empowering a Miskitu identity.

All-Miskitu congresses and Miskitu-European diplomatic meetings demonstrate the processual incorporation of Occidental cultural forms and symbolic representations into genuine Miskitu custom. Miskitu transculturation of external forms and symbols can be considered a ‘traditional’ Miskitu practice. This point has been lost on commentators who often view the Miskitu solely in terms of external impositions and political hegemony. In this section and the next I examine Miskitu transculturation in terms of symbolic power. I do not attempt a full-blown theoretical treatment of this important aspect of Miskitu social formation, but rather describe how objects of status began to symbolize and incarnate unique powers that constituted a Miskitu ethnic identity.

Miskitu transculturation of European symbolic representations must be understood in the context in which new practices united with and/or subsumed older ones, and as a process whose end result was genuine Miskitu authenticity. For the Miskitu, Occidental symbolic representations were not viewed as intrusive or randomly borrowed from the Miskitu perspective, but rather were seen as part of a holistic Miskitu tradition that has integrated external objects and symbols from time immemorial. Moreover, the Miskitu actively pursued these objects, they were not thrust on them by the British. Viewed internally, the authentic transculturation of

external articles probably did not seem any more ‘foreign’ or ‘unusual’ than bananas did one or two generations after their introduction. Just as with bananas, Miskitu transculturation of European forms took place within a Miskitu landscape that they themselves had symbolically ordered and culturally constructed.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Miskitu did not incorporate European forms on plantations, in churches, in labor gangs organized by race and class, surrounded by mechanistic technology, guided by a time clock, or in subordinate social positions. They borrowed and transformed foreign signs and their meanings in traditional villages, within cosmological landscapes managed by sukias, and in relative positions of social equity. Miskitu appropriation of European symbolic trappings was viewed by the Miskitu as legitimately empowering Miskituness. That said, the Miskitu incorporated only specific European cultural forms and symbols reflecting a very limited set of colonial encounters. The European society that most Miskitu came to know was dominated by men, overwhelmingly military, profit driven, and class based whereby rank and privilege derived from skin color, primogeniture, and opulent displays of wealth and power. It is no coincidence that many of these same social markers became inter-woven with, but did not replace, long-standing values held by Miskitu society.

Traditionally, related kaimka networks came together during sihkru festivals. Such festivals of the dead were held roughly nine days after a death and then a year later, and in each case were directed by one or more sukias.<sup>28</sup> In addition, like the Kuna Indians, the Miskitu also celebrated the end of the turtling season. Traditional practices followed in both of these celebratory circumstances, carried forth and structured newer festivities involving trade or diplomacy. At all traditional events, ceremony centered around getting intoxicated with *mishla*, which women prepared by fermenting pineapple, plantains, ohun palm, cacao, and cassava with honey or mastication. In addition, revelers dressed up for such occasions, typically blending ‘native’ and foreign costumes, danced and played music.<sup>29</sup>



Despite the historiographical presentation of the Miskitu as habitual drunks, evidence suggests that bingeing occurred only in ritualized contexts.<sup>30</sup> Casarola noted that the Miskitu have “*borracheras*,” or in English lexicon, ‘big drunks,’ after the men return from the sea. At these events, women removed arms and machetes from the village as a preventive measure.<sup>31</sup> Before their military campaign against the Spanish, Hodgson noted that the Miskitu “intoxicate themselves with a liquor made of honey, pine-apple, and cassada, and if they avoid quarrels, which often happen, they are sure to have fine promiscuous doings among the girls.” He maintains:

I fell into one of their drinking bouts by accident yesterday, when I found Admiral Dilly and Colonel Morgan retailing my advice to them to little effect, for most of them were too drunk to mind it, and so hideously painted that I quickly left them to avoid being daubed all over, which is the compliment they usually pay visitors on such occasions.<sup>32</sup>

Hodgson’s encounter, before the formation of the superintendency, likely reflects the same big-drunk custom that characterized pre-slaving raids. As we have seen, M. W. attended one of these post-turtling and pre-slaving drinking bouts—a “ceremony of greatest importance amongst them”—which was characterized by predominantly traditional costume:

In the morning betimes, before the drinking-bout begins, the men dress themselves as fine as they can after their own mode, tying some cotton-threads, with feathers, round the small of their legs, their wrists, and above the calf, like garters, and [place] their tonoes and purproys in very good order about their waists like sashes; some of them having *Spanish* dollars and royals of plate beat out very thin and flat, hanging at their breasts on strings that go round their necks (which is all the use they have of money) and a shin-bone pipe dress’d up with feathers, hanging down their back. Their bodies are painted all over black with the burnt coal of pine-wood, or at least their faces, and afterwards sleek’d over with turpentine of the same tree. They wear brass plate or shell hanging at their chin on a hook made of tortoise-shell, which goes thro’ their under-lip, having, it may be, a bone or piece of cane across like a yoke, thro’ their nose, in which they all have holes for that purpose, and a shell or something else hanging at each ear.<sup>33</sup>

While the characterization of Miskitu celebrations and ceremonies remains fairly consistent throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, they begin to transpire under different circumstances with varying degrees of European participation and cultural features. In examining this transformation it is useful to delineate two classes of ceremonial events, each of which contain two main forms. The first class consists of ceremonies that reflect a Miskitu-European meetings comprising (a) the arrival of a trader and (b) a diplomatic encounter. The second class consists of ceremonies that occur without foreigners comprising (a) district level visits by the ranking commissioned Miskitu leader or his messenger and (b) Kingdom level gatherings that bring commissioned or other dignified Miskitu together to conduct matters of state. In all four cases, Occidental cultural forms and symbolic representations blended and extended traditional configurations exemplified by older, more autonomous, conditions. In this sense, the progression of such celebrations mirror the ways in which older ethnic categories became redefined in the process of Miskitu ethnic identity formation, or ethnogenesis. In the remaining part of this section, I describe a few features of each of the above four forms.

### *Miskitu European Meetings*

Whatever traditional celebrations typically accompanied the end of the turtle season, they were likely subsumed within festivities that marked trading fairs taking place at the end of the turtle shell season. Roberts noted that traders had “so identified themselves with the natives,” and established such good relations with the leading men through these seasonal landings, that “their arrival on the coast is hailed with joy by all classes, as the season of festivity, revelry, christening, and licentiousness.” When he arrived at Admiral Drummer’s settlement at the Rio Grande, Roberts was treated, in Miskitu words, “true English gentlemen fashion.”<sup>34</sup> During Dunham’s extended trading tenure on the coast, he refers to numerous festive arrival ceremonies. After one trader arrived at Pearl Lagoon, “The Indian

ladies got up a ball on the occasion.” When Dunham arrived at Cape Gracias the king threw a “ball” and “entertained with other amusements.” On another trip up the Rio Wangki, Dunham woke the king at his house at Kum. Upon awakening, the king ordered his “quarter-masters to bring the women for a dance. To please him I had to put on an Indian dress, have my face painted, and my head ornamented with feathers.”<sup>35</sup>

While trader ‘balls’ appear to have blended native and foreign attire and custom in a genuine attempt to have a good time, diplomatic encounters focused on symbolic postures conveyed through attire. Indeed, the incorporation of Occidental clothes into symbolic Miskitu forms and signs of rank closely mirror the development of Anglo-affinity in Miskitu identity but, as I show in the next chapter, such forms also structured Tawira-Spanish encounters. Among the earliest descriptions of the Miskitu during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we are told that they contextualized their fashion: “When among the English they wear good clothes, but upon returning put only a waist cloth on which goes to the knees.”<sup>36</sup> The access to such clothes was equal among the Sambo and the Tawira Miskitu “[Tawira] clothes are neither more luxurious nor more abundant than those of the mulattoes of the cape.”<sup>37</sup> Good and clean clothes were always donned before a traveling party was set to arrive at a foreign village, especially if this occurred across ethnic lines. Before meeting with upland Twahka Indians, Tawira Miskitu adjusted “their toilet,” combed their hair, changed their waist-cloths, and put on shirts, and a streak or two of red and black paint on their cheeks.<sup>38</sup> Before a Sambo delegation arrived at the governor’s village, they exchanged their travel clothes for formal attire.<sup>39</sup> While this seems a universal custom, to primp oneself before meeting important strangers, it was well respected by the Miskitu as well as European boat captains, traders, and military officers.

When Dunham first arrived at Cape Gracias a Dios he put on his best “go-a-shore suit.” As he pulled into the harbor he could see the “English Island flag flying on shore near the largest house.” Men who had paddled out to ferry him to shore

told him the house belonged to Admiral Dalby. They looked at him in wonder when he did not recognize the name, exclaiming “Don’t you know Admiral Dalby?” Upon landing, he found Dalby “dressed in a clean shirt and white pantaloons, a cotton handkerchief tied on his head, and an old English Admiral’s red vest, with some old lace trimmings, having long skirts extending nearly to his knees, and without shoes.”<sup>40</sup> Dalby apparently thought Dunham was an official, as this type of meeting characterized all diplomatic encounters, especially with visiting Spaniards.

Just after the British evacuation, Spaniard Antonio Porta Costas visited Admiral Alparis Dilson at the Rio Grande. After being led to the Admiral’s living quarters by a reception committee of 20 armed men, Porta Costas found Alparis well dressed with a feathered hat, boots, a sword, and holding a cane.<sup>41</sup> When Dilson’s uncle, Tawira Governor, don Carlos arrived in Cartagena in 1788 he was dressed in an admiral’s uniform of gold with his hair well trimmed and carrying a gold tipped cane. Accompanying the governor were several other Miskitu officers also dressed in uniforms.<sup>42</sup> When a Spanish team overseeing the British evacuation in 1787 visited with Governor Briton (don Carlos) at Twappi, they were led through the “governor’s people formed into two lines, making a pathway to his house, some Indians had halberds, and a large British flag flew on a post, and in another flew a French peace pennant.”<sup>43</sup>

When Belizean Captain Henderson met with Sambo General Robinson at Caratasca circa 1804, the General was dressed in British regiments, with epaulettes, a sword, and a sash. Later, Henderson was treated to a stately dinner attended by several well dressed men:

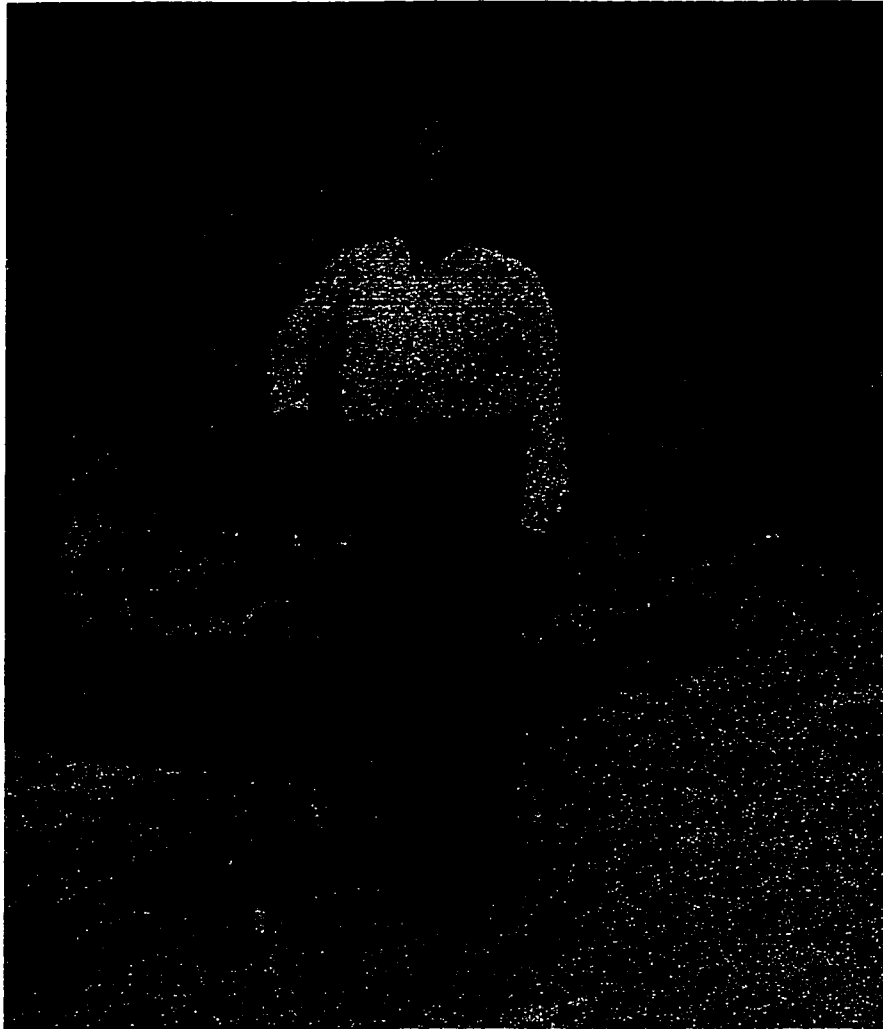
I really believe the entire costume of Europe, civil and military, for the last hundred years, might at one view have presented itself at my table. And whatever was once thought gay and ornamental in the brilliant and refined circles of London or Versailles, might perhaps be now considered equally so on the less polished shore of Caratasca.<sup>44</sup>

Numerous other examples show the importance of clothing and ritual attire associated with diplomatic encounters, a development which only grew stronger

during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1820s, Roberts noted that the common attire of most coastal Indians was a bark-cloth loin cloth, but that the elite possessed:

a complete European suit; and I have seen their traders, and head men, even well dressed, or, in their own words, 'true English gentlemen fashion,' and followed by numbers of their less fortunate countrymen, who had some favour to ask, or were desirous of paying their court to the great man, who, in the mean time was, perhaps, strutting about with a silk umbrella over his head, to protect him from the sun.<sup>45</sup>

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, photographs of the royal family members invariably included some insignia of Miskitu authority, in all probability with their insistence. When Karl Sapper visited the 'Miskitu Chief,' Andrew Hendy, at Rayapura along the Rio Wangki in 1900, Hendy rushed inside to dress in his Nicaraguan General's uniform after the visitors proposed taking a picture.<sup>46</sup> The Nicaragua-recognized Miskitu Chief also posed in 1905 for the Englishman Mervyn Palmer with his sword (Illustration 9.1).



**Illustration 9.1** Wangki Miskitu 'Chief' Andrew Hendy, Rayapura, 1905;  
source Palmer, *Through Unknown Nicaragua*.



**Illustration 9.2** Robert Frederick, Family, and Cane, Sangsangta, Rio Wangki, 1930; source PSPG 1931.

Missionary Schramm captured the heir apparent of Miskitu kingship, Robert Frederick with his cane at Sangsangta in 1930 (Illustration 9.2). Likewise, Reverend Wenger photographed the mayor of Sandy Bay, Manistero Wislat, a descendent of the royal family, with his scepter-cane and a barely visible crown in the early 1950s (Illustration 9.3). (Note the name Wislat corresponds with the ‘superior wita’ of the Sambo from Sandy Bay referred to by missionary Ziock in the introductory chapter.) The small, golden crown on mayor Wislat’s head shows a lion and a unicorn, and was unwrapped for Reverend Nowack’s camera in 1955 (Illustration 9.4).



**Illustration 9.3** Manistero Wislat with Scepter and Crown, Sandy Bay, 1950s; photo courtesy of Warren Wenger.



**Illustration 9.4** Miskitu crown, Sandy Bay, 1955; photo courtesy of Kenneth Nowack.



### *Intra-Miskitu Ceremonies*

The second class of ceremonial meetings occurred among the Miskitu themselves and, although Europeans were often there to record them, their presence was not necessary. Such assemblies took place in two sociopolitical and spatial contexts: a the level of the district and the level of the Kingdom. We have already seen evidence of district level gatherings when representative leaders or quartermasters collected taxes or tribute. However, often the district leader would make his own rounds. Equiano, for example, noted that “The [Tawira] Indian Governor goes once in a certain time all about the province or district, and has a number of men with him as attendants and assistants. He settles the differences among his people, like the judge here, and is treated with very great respect.” During these times the people throw a party. Mishla was prepared, white families were invited, and ritual dancing ensued.<sup>47</sup>

Examples of Kingdom level gatherings have already been discussed, but not in the context of European symbolism and cultural forms. Orlando Roberts attended one of these meetings of state following tribute collection circa 1820 when the hereditary Tawira Governor Clementi was estranged from the Kingdom (see Chapter Ten). Indeed, the Tawira do not appear to have attended at all, but this likely reflects an aberration and not a pre-1790 situation. The congress was hosted by the king’s tribute collector Admiral Earnee at Sandy Bay. After gathering tribute, Earnee called together Sambo Miskitu leaders and “old people [sukias?]” from a wide range of places, including Dakura, Bihmuna “and the neighboring country and Lagoons . . . to meet the King, receive an account of the state of the different tributary settlements, which [Earnee] had been visiting, transact public business, and get drunk.” After several Miskitu dignitaries had gathered, “English colours were hoisted, as the signal of festivity.” When the king arrived, he was met at the landing by several dignitaries including Earnee and “a Sambo chief called General Blyatt.” The two were dressed in “uniforms, with gold epaulettes,” but

there was little ceremony, just a shake of hands and a “‘how do you do, King’ in English” from all classes.<sup>48</sup> Although this gathering occurred at the peak of Anglo-showmanship and Sambo domination in the 1820s, the mimicry of Anglo symbols had probably taken root among the Sambos on this same level by the 1770s.

Throughout the day, Sambo Miskitu arrived from all over the coast and interior. A meeting was held at the King’s house where disputes and other public business was discussed. Like sukia gatherings in the last century, women were forbidden to attend the initial proceedings. After business had been conducted, festivities began. In addition to mishla, the people began to dance “in imitation of country dances, and Scotch reels, learned from the former English settlers.”

The drinking was carried on with great perseverance, during the night, by old and young. The drums were beat, and muskets fired, some of them loaded with powder to the very muzzle, until nearly all the assembly were in a state of beastly drunkenness, and taken care of by the women, who were occasionally called upon for that purpose.<sup>49</sup>

Roberts called “the English drum” the “principal musical instrument of the Mosquito men, who beat it with as much dexterity, as the most practised European drummer.” Flutes and ‘Jew’s harps,’ all of which were received as presents during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, appear to have rounded out the range of musical instruments.<sup>50</sup>

While on the one hand the gathering recorded by Roberts implies that the Miskitu became greatly enamored with British symbols and fashions, but on the other hand this did not necessarily instill a starry-eyed reverence for everything British or British ways. During the above festival, the king’s uncle Andrew, who “spoke good English,” emerged as the life of the party with his mocking stories of Jamaican traders, “and by his satirical and witty remarks upon some of the old Mosquito present” who were attired in waist coats and top hats, and by implication had strayed from their Miskituness. Indeed, Andrew’s remarks made sport of those who “prided themselves upon being ‘true English gentlemen fashion,’” that is, those who had crossed the line in their outward display of Anglo affection. Such mocking appears related to a general discontent with “the arbitrary manner in which the

Jamaica traders exerted the influence they had acquired at some of the settlements.”<sup>51</sup>

Miskitu pride insured that transculturated objects were most effective or acceptable when used as a demonstration of Miskituness, something perpetually subject to negotiation. Stated another way, although the Miskitu mimicked British symbolic fashion they never sought to become British. Although Miskitu leaders had been socialized to accept English costume from an early age, the Miskitu also understood such mimicry subjected them to ridicule from both whites and other Miskitu if taken too far. When the six-year old King George Frederic visited Jamaica with his uncle in 1804, the governor’s wife referred to him as “his little savage Majesty,” and proceeded to describe the depth of his socialization. She noted the boy-king was dressed in a:

scarlet uniform, and wore a crown upon his head, of which he seemed very proud. The crown was of silver gilt, ornamented with mock stones, and was sent from England, some years ago, for his father. Both the little King and his uncle seemed to hold it in high estimation. When it was placed on the table, and little G. and L. [her children] wished to handle it, the uncle got up, and placed it in a little box, brought with him for that purpose.<sup>52</sup>

As the king, however, the adult George Frederic recognized that his position subjected him to mockery from the Anglos. He told Dunham some 15 years later that he would visit the trader’s native New York if one condition was met: “if I go home with you, you may call me major, or colonel, or some other officer; but if you call me king [it] will be the death of you, for I am not going home with you to be made a damned puppet-show of.”<sup>53</sup>

The genuine and authentic transculturation of Anglo cultural forms into Miskitu identity also worked to sediment a sharp boundary between the Miskitu and their indigenous neighbors. As Dunham noted, the Miskitu “residing on the seacoast imagine themselves far superior to the inland tribes.”<sup>54</sup> This position was also held by the British. Hodgson noted, in the last sentence of his monograph, that the Miskitu “are so much superior to the neighboring Indians, that *their* calling *them*

wild, is no great impropriety in the comparison.”<sup>55</sup> This Miskitu viewpoint continues to the present century, as the Sambo Miskitu continue to call themselves “*upla aingeva*” or “real men,” and “[i]ndeed they believe they are superior to all other races. A Miskito Indian may be ever so poor but he is proud of the fact that he has always been a free man.”<sup>56</sup> According to Reverend Hamilton, the Miskitu believe that one comes to the Mosquitia, “according to the Indian phrase, . . . a ‘speechless person’,” the idea being that only their language really counts.<sup>57</sup> Miskitu high self-regard also helped form a hierarchical distinction with local Creoles as well as neighboring Indians. One attentive 19<sup>th</sup> century observer noted that the Sambo Miskitu have an:

ever-increasing notion of their own importance, which is probably the foundation of the legend current to-day among the Mosquito men, that they once held Jamaica in subjection and sent annually to levy tribute from the people of that island. . . . Certain it is that a common Mosquito designation of [black] Jamaicans is, “My Grandfather’s Children,” an appellation which is frequently thrown in the faces of the Jamaicans [Nicaraguan Creoles] who now hold the reins of Mosquito government.<sup>58</sup>

After Spain had established the diplomatic authority to impose themselves upon the Miskitu after 1790 they were advised to allow the Miskitu to maintain their current lifestyle. Indeed, the desire to retain acquired privileges and cultural freedom appears quite strong among the Miskitu at all historical periods. As Colville Cairns noted, “to bother them with this particular issue would create horrendous consequences.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, if one wished to influence Miskitu behavior, Cairns advised that it would be best to deal directly with Miskitu leaders:

It appears that the Miskitu will not tolerate any type of rigorous punishment or scolding by a European. Therefore, once we [Spanish] have established a good relationship with them, in cases where a Miskitu must be reprimanded, it would be best that a European not raise his hand. It would be more effective to inform his chief who could surely undertake the task of punishment with much better results.<sup>60</sup>

Miskitu, and especially Sambo Miskitu, insistence that they have remained a free and unconquered people has always constituted a central component of their

identity, ethnic discourse, political rhetoric, and sustained their desire to maximize their autonomy within the varied colonial and neo-colonial settings that they encountered.

### **Power and Authority**

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Miskitu understood that encoded paper conveyed power and that canes commanded authority. In this section I elaborate the significance of these two points on three distinct levels. First, as a material object of power that was generally part and parcel of the ritual spectacles described above, encoded paper in the form of letters, documents, treaties, ledgers, charts, books, and maps concisely conveyed the power embodied in European knowledge systems that the Miskitu were compelled to transculturate. Second, scepter-like canes symbolized a leader's commission and the internal authority that such commissions generated. Third, sukias incorporated cane-like objects into healing rituals as mimetic devices intended to capture and project the symbolic power such devices held for Europeans. It would be difficult to adequately elaborate the formation of Miskitu identity without understanding Miskitu transculturation of these two important material objects.

It is my belief that the Miskitu held paper and specters, and the power-knowledge they represented, in the highest esteem. Although the power of these two objects was part of a cultural system that the Miskitu had limited experience with, they certainly understood that material manifestations contained hidden and complex capabilities that only select individuals could master. Traditionally, however, only sukias possessed the ability to deal with this hidden dimension of supernatural power. As European encounters grew in regularity and within specific contexts, commissioned Miskitu leaders (who initially were sukias) began to manipulate the power of foreign objects in the same way sukias managed local powers. For this manipulation to resonate meaning within Miskitu society and

affect Miskitu identity, a common understanding had to be built upon existing symbolic systems. Paper fit oracle-like signs that sukias consulted for specific knowledge. Canes or scepters represented symbols of authority or power in the New World and among West African peoples well before Europeans came to the Americas. Among the Miskitu, canes quickly came to symbolize the distinctive ornateness of Miskitu leaders, especially when they supplemented the entire set of commissioned regalia. How these two European objects manifested meaning among, and constituted identity for, the Miskitu is the subject of this section.

### *The Power of Paper*

Few things mattered more to formal British oversight than the legality of authority and its representation. The representation of oversight came in the form of the Union Jack, but the legality of occupation derived from written documents ‘understood’ and ‘marked’ by the Miskitu. These documents, and later books, and the art of their production and preservation in the field, symbolically possessed great power in the eyes of the Miskitu. Documents conveyed knowledge and authority, but also carried ‘the word’ of the British ‘God,’ His Majesty the King of England, to say nothing of the Jamaican governor, the superintendent, settlers, and ship captains. The Miskitu also learned that the Spanish made use of this same power-knowledge system. The Miskitu ascertained that documents and books possessed the power to compel action, demand obedience, form alliances, and divine the future.

Some of the gravity surrounding the use of documents in the Mosquitia can be illustrated by the ceremony of possession conducted by Robert Hodgson in 1740. In the presence of the King Edward and the Governor Bellarwy, Hodgson explained, by reading a document, that he had been authorized by the Governor of Jamaica “to take possession of their country in His Majesty’s name.” After the Miskitu agreed to the proclamation of possession, Hodgson wanted to be doubly sure they had understood all the terms, he “thought the more voluntary and clear the cession was,

the better.” Hodgson then insisted that the Miskitu ‘read’ the document over: “I had them then read [it] over again, in solemn manner, under the colors, and at the end of every article fired a gun, and concluded by cutting up a turf.” Those leaders in attendance then affixed their mark to the treaty reproduced in Chapter Five, which was then carefully attended to and stowed away: “The formality with which all this was done seems to have had a good effect upon them.”<sup>61</sup>

Throughout the superintendency we can assume that the production, transmission, and preservation of documents occupied a great deal of time and energy on the part of British settlers and Miskitu leaders. By 1759, we are told that the Miskitu king had “an English writer [at his disposal] for his correspondence with Jamaica.”<sup>62</sup> We also know that the Miskitu greatly valued letters “which spoke,” in addition to documents and treaties given to them by foreigners.<sup>63</sup> In the 1850s, Twahka Indians wished to verify the truth of a sukia’s pronouncement, and sought clarification from Bell by telling him “you English know all things from your books; tell us, then, if this is true.”<sup>64</sup>

The degree of power that the Miskitu ascribed to documents, books, and writing during the 18<sup>th</sup> century can also be gleaned from Moravian experiences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the time the Moravians arrived in 1849, the Miskitu had been exposed to only a few kinds of books such as the recently produced Law Book of the British Protectorate, tax books, labor/record books, and the Bible. Each of these, however, held a great deal of direct authority over the Miskitu. One missionary implied that the Miskitu understanding of the Bible, as a book, derived from their previous experiences with the English and their texts. He stated that in the past “it was [the] common belief of the Indians that ‘the English have a book which tells about God, so that they know more about Him than we do; [and therefore that] God only loves the English anyhow and doesn’t care about us’.”<sup>65</sup> The power of books and one’s ability to interpret them continue to hold special power in Miskitu society.

My own experiences in 1995-1997 suggest that many Miskitu pastors consider the Bible as a prophetic text. Like sukias of the past, pastors have been

trained to read the bible as an oracle, that is divine future events, and they have been sanctioned by the community to direct courses of action based on these readings. At Wirra Pain, along the Rio Wangki, the Reverend Grossmann encountered a sukia who challenged his power by claiming “that he [the sukia] had direct revelations from the Father, whilst [Grossmann] had everything only out of a big book, and that if this book were thrown into the water [the missionaries] could do nothing.”<sup>66</sup> It is not surprising, then, that if the bible, and the ability to discern its encoded messages, are held in such high regard that the Miskitu would pursue its mastery in extravagant ways. Indeed, according to missionary statements, the relationship between education and books was often “misunderstood” by the Miskitu, as one man offered to pay “the missionary for teaching his boys the ‘secret wisdom’ of books.”<sup>67</sup> One missionary located Miskitu “jealousy to be able to ‘know paper’ as do other people,” on par with missionary problems such as sukias and polygamy.<sup>68</sup> In another instance, the Miskitu tried “to eat the pages of the Bible to acquire its hidden power.”<sup>69</sup> These are but a few of the examples attesting to how the Miskitu understood and integrated the symbolic power encoded in written papers during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Emblem of Authority*

In opening his book *Mimesis and Alterity*, Michael Taussig explores the nature of wooden “curing figurines” used by the Kuna Indians of Panamá. Citing anthropological studies, Taussig suggests that the Kuna carve the figurines to represent Europeans, and judging by the clothes shown in photographs and sketches, from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Taussig wonders rhetorically “why these figures, so crucial to curing and thus to Cuna society, should be carved in the form of ‘European types’ . . . why are they Other, and why are they the Colonial Other?” He speculates that the figurines are meant to embody the power of Europeans, and are employed to capture the “magic of mimesis . . . namely that ‘in some way or



another' the making and existence of the artifact that portrays something gives one power over that which is portrayed."<sup>70</sup> In this section, I suggest that the Miskitu used these types of mimetic figures and other cultural objects such as canes to appropriate external power, but rather than directing their symbolic strength externally against the colonial other as Taussig suggests, the Miskitu directed the appropriated power internally to both heal and command authority among themselves.

Like the Kuna Indians, Miskitu and Mayangna sukias once used a variety of painted sticks, wands, and bark cloth figures to treat afflicted patients. I would like to make the following two claims concerning the use of these devices among native Mosquitians in general and the Miskitu in particular. First, the use of curing figures, although likely 'traditional' in the sense that they represent a pre-European cultural practice, incorporated several European symbols. Second, and in contrast to curing figures, the use of sukia 'sticks' likely reflects the appropriation of the power represented by the European walking cane, known throughout the Mosquitia during the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as an emblem of authority. In the remainder of this section, I discuss these claims by showing that canes represent the quintessential expression of Miskitu transculturation of Occidental symbolic power.

Surprisingly, despite significant widespread notice of Miskitu sukias in the historical record, descriptions of sukia healing with sticks or figures do not appear until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This would suggest, rather loosely, that such healing forms reflect a modification of a traditional belief or practice vis-à-vis the incorporation of extrinsic power symbols, or was a wholly new invention as Taussig suggests. What is clearly apparent is that healing rituals increasingly incorporated Christian themes by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, I am proposing that these latter developments reflect a much longer tradition of appropriating foreign power and directing it internally. That is, just as sukias began using Christian symbolism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leaders and sukias used the power embodied in the European cane to command power and authority in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

centuries. To understand how this may have occurred it is useful to discuss how sukias incorporated Christian symbols in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After the “great sickness” of 1877, one Moravian missionary noted that sukias among the Tawira of Kukalaya made figures of men, women, children, and animals out of wax and bark cloth to partake in a cleansing ritual in which the sukias walked over hot coals.<sup>71</sup> While the custom of making such figurines likely reflects an old practice, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century many of these figures began to embody European representations. For example, Kukalaya sukias often prepared twelve or thirteen figurines to capture the Christian symbolism recently introduced to them through Moravian ‘picture rolls’ showing Jesus and the Apostles.<sup>72</sup> According to missionaries, picture rolls captivated all Mosquitia Indians, and the missionaries considered them essential to evangelical success. In the 1860s, Twahka and Tungla Indians often visited Reverend Martin at Wounta Haulover to examine “biblical pictures.” After Martin’s explanation of the pictures’ meaning, the Twahka would say, “now you be quite, now I want to speak and you watch and see if I got it right.” Martin says they memorized the meaning held in the pictures so they could “repeat the story in the forest to their own people.”<sup>73</sup> When Reverend Grossmann arrived at Twappi in 1902 he acted as the village doctor. The walls of the local dispensary were “adorned with all kinds of appropriate Sunday-school picture cards, illustrating, e. g., The man sick of the palsy, Christ healing the blind, The good Samaritan, etc. These serve the useful purpose of explaining to the people that we cannot give them the help they need unless they come to the great Physician to be healed in both soul and body.”<sup>74</sup>

Reverend Renkewitz noted in 1871 that Miskitu sukias also used wooden figurines: “If the patient is confined to bed and likely to die, a number of wooden figures armed with spears are placed around him to guard him from death.” He also stated that Ulwa sukias made a number of bark cloth figures, “three of which represent the king himself, his chief counselor, and gaoler.”<sup>75</sup> In addition to representative figures, sukias used everything from “magical wands” and “conjugal

sticks” to “painted little sticks” in their healing practices.<sup>76</sup> Among the first Moravian trips up the Rio Wangki at the beginning of this century, the Reverend Grossmann met several sukias. These encounters suggest that some sukia ‘sticks’ would be placed close to the patient, like the wooden figures described by Renkewitz, while others were used to ‘fence off’ or guard the healing site. At Spiri Dingi, Grossmann found a sukia treating a sick child on a table with:

a black little figure painted in each corner . . . On the table stood bottles containing various fluids. In order that no one who was not allowed should approach too near to the table, he had made a fence about it out of bent saplings, either end being fixed in the ground so as to form an arch. These saplings were painted in black and white stripes.

At the village of Puck Puck Grossmann recalled a “Sukia had planted little painted crosses before the houses, in order to protect the women whose husbands were absent at work.”<sup>77</sup> Traditional healing devices, be they wooden figures or bark-cloth dolls began to mimic symbolic foreign power and attempted to channel it internally.

Local Miskitu authority Ana Rosa Fagoth notes that present-day sukia healing often begins by placing three black *bastones*, or canes, each representing the three principle lasas: liwa, aubia, and prahaku (see Chapter Two), in the ground facing east because “the power to heal comes from the direction of the sunrise.”<sup>78</sup> It is the nature of these sukia *bastones* that I turn to now. Are these bastones just another form of curing figures, or are they designed to appropriate the symbolic power of the European equivalent, the walking cane? Conzemius suggests that sukia ‘sticks’ and canes may be related:

Formerly a sort of walking stick or scepter of hard wood, surmounted by a carved human head, was an insignium of office and authority, but this custom has been introduced apparently by the English or Spanish, as there is no native name for it. Similar sticks now belong to the outfit of the Miskito suyka.<sup>79</sup>

In December of 1766, the alcalde of Lobago, Joseph Antonio de Vargas, sent a letter to his superior stating that he had received notice from the Kukra leader Yarrince that he would be willing to meet with him if the alcalde sent meat, some

refreshment, and his *bastón*.<sup>80</sup> In almost the same year, John Roach noted that Ulwa sukias fixed straight, decorated sticks “about two yards in length,” in the ground as part of a pre-hunting ceremony determining the availability of game.<sup>81</sup> The very first time the Miskitu interacted with ‘true English gentlemen fashion,’ the *haut monde* that included a walking cane, they learned that the cane embodied an emblem of authority and power. Two centuries later, after the Miskitu transculturated the walking cane into a symbol of local supremacy, they also learned from biblical picture rolls that the power to heal and the power to baptize Christ himself was represented by John the Baptist’s ever-present shepherd’s staff. Indeed, the scepter appears a universal symbol of power.

The extent to which the Miskitu recognized canes or scepters as authority figures, as did other Native Americans, before the arrival of Europeans remains unknown. It also remains uncertain to what degree, if any, scepters represent an African influence among the Miskitu. Despite the uncertainty, my reading of the record suggests that sukia ‘sticks’ constituted part of sukia retinues (a) either as a modification of curing figures only after the cane became emblems of privilege in Miskitu society, or (b) that the traditional and existing power ascribed to sukia ‘sticks’ paved the way for the acceptance of the cane. The latter option would have aided the rapid transculturation and fits with my contention that early Miskitu leaders were all sukias. Either way, along with the Miskitu crown and flag, canes have come to symbolize the Miskitu nation.

### *Canes and the Colonial Encounter*

The earliest recorded use of walking canes as signs of indigenous authority among the Miskitu comes from the Spanish priest Fray de la Concepción. He claimed that the English “make bad people a Captain by giving them their own silver-headed *bastón*,” or cane.<sup>82</sup> During her captivity among the Sambo Miskitu below Captain Hobby circa 1707, the mulatta Micaela Gómez told her inquisitor in

Nueva Segovia that Hobby walked around “carrying his insignia, a *vara* [staff] just as the mayors here carry.” The tradition of bestowing canes, or scepter-like staffs, however, was not limited to the English because M. W. noted that the Spanish gave an Indian named “Diego of Darien,” who had dealings with the Miskitu, a:

black stick with a silver head, which he calls a Spanish commission; it being the custom of the Spaniards to send such a staff to those whom they would have bear rule over the rest, as a badge of their authority, without further power.<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, the Spanish also played this same tune with the Tawira. Before agreeing to sign a six point contract with the Governor of Costa Rica in 1769, Tawira negotiators insisted on a seventh provision, “that the governor of Cartago send Admiral Dilson a silver tipped cane as a sign that he will fulfill all that has been stipulated in this agreement.”<sup>84</sup> As in Yarrince’s dealings with the Spanish, the Tawira felt a *bastón* symbolized commitment and materially verified the power of documents. The Spanish also recognized this:

it is important to realize that [Dilson’s] communication appears consistent with that made by Captain Yarrinsen the previous year in 1768 to the Government of Nicaragua: in both cases the two men insisted on being entertained and requested the same thing, [that canes be sent to them] as a sign of their commission.<sup>85</sup>

When Admiral Dilson’s son, Admiral Dilson II, visited with the new Costa Rican Governor Bobadilla in 1778, the governor gave the Admiral “a complete silk uniform, a sword with silver trim, [and] a cane with a silver knob.”<sup>86</sup> According to the governor, Dilson had insisted on these gifts “in faith of our agreement.”<sup>87</sup> Canes, however, represented more than simply a symbol of friendship and loyalty for the Miskitu: they represented power. Once canes were acquired from the foreign party, they could be used to command authority among whites or Indians within the Mosquitia itself.

Recall that while residing at the Rio Grande in th 1770s, Equiano noted that the “Indian [Tawira] Governor goes once in a certain time all about the province or

district.” On one occasion, the governor visited Equiano and his employer Dr. Irwin, but prior to his arrival he sent ahead “his stick as token, for rum, sugar, and gunpowder, which we did not refuse sending.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed, foreign residents always felt the need to appease the leader in whose district they resided or, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the king.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, when Admiral Drummer wished the American trader Jacob Dunham to visit him circa 1818, he sent “an Indian slave with a gold headed cane, which he considered as a badge of his office.”<sup>90</sup> When among the Tawira Miskitu in 1789, Fray Navarro noted that “the remission of the *bastón* is the custom of this nation [Tawira] and the nation of the Zambos, this is now they call their officials and ask them to provide them with what they need.”<sup>91</sup> During his time at Twappi and Walpasiksa in 1788-89, Fray Barrueta noted that it was the custom of Governor Briton to “send his insignia” with a trusted subordinate to call people for a meeting.<sup>92</sup>

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, individuals called quartermasters carried canes or other ‘tokens’ around the leader’s district to insure subordinates carried out the king’s orders. For example, Porta Costas noted in 1790 that the king communicated his orders by “sending out his *bastón*” with those in charge of carrying out his wishes. Upon receiving this sign, the king’s followers “promptly executed his wishes.”<sup>93</sup> The practice of sending out one’s emblem of authority carried on. During his effort to erect a fort at Cape Gracias in advance of a Colombian attack, the Sambo Miskitu worked 1, 2, or 3 days according to the king’s order “expressed by one of his tokens, either a silver medal . . . or a gold-headed stick, a sword, or something known to belong to the king. These tokens [were] never disavowed.”<sup>94</sup> In 1840, three years before he signed away his domains to Honduras, General Robinson would send a token with his quartermasters to the Pech to secure their labor for specific projects. If the Pech did not comply, he would seize hostages until payment was made.<sup>95</sup> The king would also loan a “king token” to privileged foreigners so they could command

assistance throughout the district. This token was typically a “gold-headed cane, a spyglass, or any other article known to belong to him.”<sup>96</sup>

A cane or some other token represented the authority of Miskitu leaders and gave them the power to command goods and services from their people and resident foreigners during and after the Superintendency. It should therefore come as no surprise that a 1984 letter of protest denouncing Sandinista policies by someone calling himself Robert Henry Hendy Jeremia Clarence, who many Wangki Miskitu recognize as the present Miskitu king in exile, included a photocopy of a picture showing seven Miskitu holding a royal scepter, or cane (Illustration 9.5).

Emblems of authority from *king taim*, the period before 1894 when the Miskitu view themselves as a sovereign nation, buttress Miskitu identity discourses at the same time they legitimate calls for autonomy. On October 17, 1996 a small group of Miskitu Indians filed into Bilwi’s Moravian Church to bless the flag of the Miskitu nation. Afterwards, and from that day forth, the flag was hoisted upon a make-shift pole tied to the outstretched arm of *la statua del indio*, or the statue of the Indian, near the main plaza in Puerto Cabezas, or Bilwi (Illustration 9.6). The Miskitu flag first appears in the historical record in 1816 with the Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner. Today, the lower right corner also displays a dory, a turtle, and a crown, as well as words that I am unable to decipher. The canoe is said to represent the 1981 war-time evacuation across the Rio Wangki into Honduras, the turtle represents the commonplace lifestyle of the Miskitu and the crown the political sovereignty of the Miskitu Kingdom. Whatever the symbolic power the flag represents for lay-Miskitu, it grew substantially on May 4, 1997 when Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Aleman—making his first trip to the east coast since being elected—ordered a Nicaraguan flag to fly in its place. Several threats and armed skirmishes have followed because Miskitu leaders have successfully mobilized discontent. Whatever symbolic power objects such as the Miskitu flag may have held for the Miskitu historically, today they represent emblems of a nation in struggle against a state that they feel does not represent them.



**Illustration 9.5** Miskitu displaying the royal Miskitu scepter-cane, Kum, Rio Wangki, 1980s; photocopy courtesy of Virgilio Hendy Padillo.





**Illustration 9.6** The Miskitu Flag above the *statua del indio*, Bilwi, 1997.

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The objective of this chapter has been to show that the British tradition of bestowing material objects of status to hereditary Miskitu leaders was partially inspired by Miskitu demands and played a inestimable role in transforming the symbolic system of ethnic identity markers among the Miskitu people. Traditional rituals such as *sikhru* or ‘state gatherings’ for slave raids or post-turtling drinking ceremonies expanded to include new types of formalities and proprieties that transculturated European cultural forms and symbolic representations into defining characteristics of Miskitu identity. The Miskitu of the 18<sup>th</sup> century transculturated the hidden power of documents and canes, and stowed their meanings into the foundational sanctums of Miskituness. While this may be a universal dimension of colonial encounters, the Miskitu case offers a rare example of transculturation in the absence of force or colonial hegemony before 1800. This is why I have stressed the need to view Miskitu acceptance and integration of European symbolic representations within the context of continual modification of older Mosquitia practices—to the extent they can be ascertained. I have also emphasized the need to view the Mosquitia as an atypical colonial space, one in which power was diffuse but not necessarily ambiguous. I have argued that Miskitu cultural change took place relatively slowly within a commonplace landscape that insured a lengthy and complex set of negotiations. Miskitu accommodations subsumed and built upon past understandings and wove these into a changing awareness that empowered an emerging Miskitu ethnicity that cut across but did not erase Sambo and Tawira identity distinctions.

## Notes to Chapter Nine

<sup>1</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4-6; see also Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*.

<sup>2</sup> Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, 76; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 161.

<sup>3</sup> Gov. Trelawny to Duke of Newcastle, Jamaica, 20 July 1743, PRO, CO 323/11, 33; Gov. Trelawny to Duke of Newcastle, Jamaica, 19 Jan. 1748, PRO, CO 137/58, 44. Jamaican currency was valued at roughly 7 to 5 with Pounds Sterling.

<sup>4</sup> Account of the late Expected Insurrection of the Indians, 25 July 1768, PRO, CO 137/64, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Gov. Lyttelton to Earl of Egremont, Jamaica, 30 August 1763, PRO, CO 123/1, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Account of Government with his Majesty's Treasury, Kingston, 8 Oct. 1778, PRO, CO 137/73, 235.

<sup>7</sup> Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 178-180.

<sup>8</sup> An Account of Contingent Expenses, Mosquito Shore, 31 Dec. 1766, PRO, CO 137/63, 20.

<sup>9</sup> His Majesty's Treasury on Account of the Contingencies for the Mosquito Shore to Richard Jones, July 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 56; Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 156-157.

<sup>11</sup> An Account of the late Expected Insurrection of the Indians on the Mosquito Shore, Jamaica, 25 July 1768, PRO, CO 137/64, 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> His Majesty's Treasury on Account of the Contingencies for the Mosquito Shore to Richard Jones, July 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 34. The author noted that the total expenses to quell the uprising totaled some £86. 13. 1½ Jamaica currency, or £61. 17. 11¾ Pounds Sterling.

<sup>13</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> "Joseph Nava a Don Pedro Salazar, Cartago, 14 de Julio de 1769," CDHCR, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 29.

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of drinking and the memory of drinking during the Miskitu Convention see Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction*, 43-45, 64-67.

<sup>17</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 17.

- <sup>18</sup> Robert Hodgson, Jr. to Gov. William Trelawny, Mosquito Shore, April 1772, PRO, CO 137/68, 18.
- <sup>19</sup> Robert Hodgson, Jr. to Earl of Hillsborough, Mosquito Shore, 15 Dec. 1772, PRO, CO 137/69, 72.
- <sup>20</sup> "Plano de Colville Cairns," CRC, 253.
- <sup>21</sup> Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 203.
- <sup>22</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 149.
- <sup>23</sup> Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 154.
- <sup>24</sup> Colville Cairns, Inventory of Sundries Timothy Briton, Governor received from Capt. Robert Hodgson Superintendent for the Mosquito Shore on 3 March 1772, Twappi, 20 Aug. 1772, PRO, CO 137/70.
- <sup>25</sup> Robert Hodgson, Jr. to Earl of Dartmouth, Jamaica, 21 September 1775, PRO, CO 137/71, 25. Hodgson blamed his problems on a frame up that was orchestrated by discontented settlers including Colville Cairns who was politically close to the Tawira and lived at Twappi.
- <sup>26</sup> Invoice of Presents for the Mosquito Indians, brought on board the Schooner Enterprise William Collins Mastered by Campbell Galbraith by Order of His Excellency John Dalling Esquire, Captain General Governor & Commander in Chief etc. etc. and Consigned to James Lawrie Esquire Superintendent General of the Mosquito Shore, Kingston, Jamaica, 8 Oct. 1778, PRO, CO 137/73, 231.
- <sup>27</sup> Walker to ?, Belize, 12 Nov. 1838, PRO, CO 123/53, 3.
- <sup>28</sup> Sihkru celebrations mark the passing of the soul to *yapti misri* (mother scorpion), or the world beyond, and also appear much like drinking ceremonies. Indeed, their outward appearances are so similar I am convinced that many drinking bouts witnessed or mentioned actually reflect sihkrus, which are probably related to so-called *yapti* (mother) celebrations; see Heath, "Bocay," 424; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 29-32.
- <sup>29</sup> Esquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 235; M. W., "Mosqueto Indian," 293.
- <sup>30</sup> Dunham for example was shocked when he introduced two Miskitu in New York to many new spirits, yet the two refused to drink; *Journal of Voyages*, 139.
- <sup>31</sup> Romero V. and Solorzano, "Declaración de Carlos Casarola," 87; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 17; Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 78.
- <sup>32</sup> "Hodgson to Trelawny, Sandy Bay, 8 April 1740," *States of Central America*, 745-746.
- <sup>33</sup> M. W., "Mosqueto Indian," 293, 294.

- <sup>34</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 110, 114.
- <sup>35</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 97, 107, 111, 116, 130.
- <sup>36</sup> Dampier, *New Voyage*, 17.
- <sup>37</sup> de Lussan, *Raveneau de Lussan*, 287.
- <sup>38</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 120.
- <sup>39</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 139.
- <sup>40</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 52-53. This is almost certainly the image that Squier plagiarized for many of the prints in his imaginary novel *Waikna*; Samuel A. Bard [Ephraim G. Squier], *Waikna: Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (1855; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1965).
- <sup>41</sup> Porta Costas, "Relación del Reconocimiento," 55.
- <sup>42</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 505.
- <sup>43</sup> "Diario de Ocurrencias Particulares, Trujillo, 15 July 1787," BAGG VI, no. 2 (1941), 139.
- <sup>44</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 148, 145-147.
- <sup>45</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 76; on clothing and the Miskitu see also Earl Bathurst, Superintendent of Belize to King of England, Belize, 19 Jan. 1816, PRO, CO 123/25; George Frederic to Major General Codd, Cape Gracias a Dios, 8 March 1824, PRO, CO 123/35; Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 25.
- <sup>46</sup> Karl Sapper, "Reise Auf dem Rio Coco (Nordliches Nicaragua): Besuch Der Sumos Und Mosquitos," *Globus* 78, no. 16 & 17 (1900), 275.
- <sup>47</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 173-174.
- <sup>48</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 128-130.
- <sup>49</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 134-135.
- <sup>50</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 136.
- <sup>51</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 134, 131; see also page 77.
- <sup>52</sup> Philip Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal of her residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1966), 211.
- <sup>53</sup> Although the king did not make the journey, two other Miskitu did, and indeed, the king's fears were more than realized. The two were taken to a professor's college lecture where the "doctor felt of their heads, looked down their throats, &c. and said they belonged to the same species as those who inhabit the Sandwich Islands and a part of Asia;" Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 150, 138.

- <sup>54</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 75; see also Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 57.
- <sup>55</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Account of the Mosquito Territory*, 55.
- <sup>56</sup> H. Schubert, "Some Experiences of a Missionary Among the Miskito Indians of the Miskito Coast of Nicaragua," PSPG (1926), 94.
- <sup>57</sup> Hamilton, *Meet Nicaragua*, 43.
- <sup>58</sup> De Kalb, "Nicaragua: Studies on the Mosquito Shore in 1792," 239.
- <sup>59</sup> "Plano de Colville Cairns," CRC, 254.
- <sup>60</sup> "El Marqués del Campo a Condé de Floridablanca, London, 24 Oct. 1786," CRC, 249.
- <sup>61</sup> "Robert Hodgson to Trelawny, Sandy Bay, 8 April 1740," *States of Central America*, 744-745.
- <sup>62</sup> "Relato de una Expedición al costa norte, 18 Sept. 1759," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940): 138.
- <sup>63</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 142; M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 288.
- <sup>64</sup> Bell, *Tangweera*, 139.
- <sup>65</sup> Hamilton, *Meet Nicaragua*, 19.
- <sup>66</sup> Hamilton, "Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Guido Grossmann, 358.
- <sup>67</sup> Mueller, *Among Creoles, Miskitos and Sumos*, 106.
- <sup>68</sup> Newton Wilson, prinzipolka Annual Station Report for 1936, AMC, 12.
- <sup>69</sup> Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 166; see also his statements on books in general, 49, 60, 81.
- <sup>70</sup> Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3, 7-8, 13.
- <sup>71</sup> Wilhelm Sieboerger, "A Sukia's ceremony at Kukallaya, 1878," NMHD, 173.
- <sup>72</sup> "The Mosquito Coast," SUB (1871), 23.
- <sup>73</sup> Martin, "Dreissig Jahre," 66, 61. Miskitu and Mayangna Indians visiting Rev. Sieboerger at Kuamwatla in 1891 would flock to his house, "For the Indians are great lovers of pictures (colored of course they must be)." Gazing at the posters, the Indians would exclaim, "*saura pain polli* (very fine indeed);" "Letter from Sieboerger to Rice, Quamwatla, Jan. 20 1891," *The Moravian* 36, no. 8, (1891).
- <sup>74</sup> "The Mosquito Coast," PA 5, no. 54 (1903), 260.
- <sup>75</sup> Ferdinand E. Renkewitz, "The inhabitants of Pearl Lagoon [1871]," NMHD, 160. The king, in this case, refers to "King Asampacca," that is the king of the mountain

spirit (*pamka asang*). Gaoler refers to a jailer in contemporaneous English usage, and in Miskitu became known as the king's quartermaster, or *kuatamasta*, responsible for tax collection and punishments;

<sup>76</sup> Wenger, "Culture of the Miskito Indians," 14; Frederic Smith, *Diary of Yulu and Wangks River District for 1891-1894*, Yulu Diary box, AMC, 20 May 1891; Collinson, "Explorations in Central America," 153.

<sup>77</sup> J. Taylor Hamilton, "Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Guido Grossmann, whilst making a tour of Exploration and Evangelization on the Wanks River and its Tributaries in Nicaragua," PA 6, no. 66 (1906), 358.

<sup>78</sup> Fagoth M., "Medicina Tradicional," 45.

<sup>79</sup> Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 53. Note how Conzemius shows little interest in the scepters since they were apparently introduced, that is they were not part of 'traditional material culture' which he was so fond of collecting.

<sup>80</sup> "la solicitud del indio Carive, 1768," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 114. Apparently Vargas was later accused of contraband trade with Yarrince; "Pedro Salazar, Guatemala, 11 Nov. 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 341.

<sup>81</sup> Roach, *Surprising Adventures*, 19.

<sup>82</sup> De la Concepción, "Relación del viaje." This version of colonial manipulation was reformulated by Salvatierra who noted that at ceremonies in Jamaica the English Governor would give the new Miskitu king a "bastón which would symbolize his authority;" Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, 426.

<sup>83</sup> "Relación de una cautividad," CRCM, 91-92; M. W., "Mosquito Indian," 289. Throughout Spain's American empire, colonial officials or priests gave silver-headed canes or staffs to indigenous council leaders. In researching Western Nicaragua, Field terms these *varas* (cane), and calls the individual leader possessing it, the *alcalde de vara*; Field, "Post-Sandinista Ethnic Identities," 434. In Central Mexico, Taylor found that priests gave "staffs of office" to Indian mayors (*alcaldes*), and notes that these Indians wielded such staffs symbolically in confrontations with colonial officials; William B. Taylor, "Santiago's Horse: Christianity and Colonial Indian Resistance in the Heartland of New Spain," in *Violence, Resistance, and Survival in the Americas: Native Americans and the Legacy of Conquest*, ed. William Taylor and Franklin Pease (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 167-168.

<sup>84</sup> "Gobernador de Costa Rica Joseph Nava a Don Pedro Salazar, Cartago, 14 de Julio de 1769," CDHCR, X: 18. This important letter is also printed in "Joseph de Nava to Pedro Salazar, Cartago, 14 July 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940): 337-340.

<sup>85</sup> "Pedro Salazar, Guatemala, 11 Nov. 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 341.

- <sup>86</sup> “Correspondencia entre el gobernador de Costa Rica y el presidente de Guatemala, relativa á negociaciones de paz con los indios Mosquitos, 1778,” CDHCR, X: 66.
- <sup>87</sup> “Título de Capitán Real de la Costa de Mosquitos en favor del Almirante Alpáez Talan Delze, 1778,” CDHCR, X: 64; see also Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 230.
- <sup>88</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 173.
- <sup>89</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 130; Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 97.
- <sup>90</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 64.
- <sup>91</sup> “Navarro to Hurtado, Guatemala, 27 June 1790,” BAGG VI, no. 3 (1941), 185.
- <sup>92</sup> “Manuel de Barraeta to Juan Hurtado, Guatemala, 1 May 1790,” BAGG VI, no. 3 (1941), 180.
- <sup>93</sup> Porta Costas, “Relación del Reconocimiento,” 55.
- <sup>94</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 12-13. During a previous Colombian threat at the Cape, King George Frederic hoisted the “national flag” and enclosed a drawing of it in his letter to the Belizean Superintendent Codd; George Frederic to Major General Codd, Cape Gracias a Dios, 8 March 1824, PRO, CO 123/35.
- <sup>95</sup> Young, *Narrative of a Residence*, 81.
- <sup>96</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 270.



## **Chapter Ten**

### **The Miskitu Kingdom, Part II:**

#### **4 Regions Divided**

In this chapter I re-examine the notion of the Miskitu Kingdom by focusing on Miskitu-Spanish relations, and the inter-Miskitu regional dynamics crafted by such relations, at three conjunctures in the historical record: 1768-1769; 1775-1778; 1787-1791. Each of these periods is marked by a coming together of regional processes that inspired some leaders, but not others, to seek out friendship pacts with the Spanish of Costa Rica, Panamá, Nicaragua, and/or Nueva Granada (Colombia). We find that such overtures were almost exclusively orchestrated or promoted by the Tawira Miskitu. Each of these developments occurred during times of Anglo-Spanish peace when the British sought to increase their authority over Miskitu independence. This is significant because it shows that the Miskitu primarily supported the British during wartime, but sought to go their own way in times of peace. At each conjuncture, Miskitu overtures to Spanish representatives sent waves of resentment among other Miskitu leaders and British authorities, and always culminated in some form of violence in which the Tawira leaders lost their lives. While this can be viewed as an illustration of Anglo power, the known circumstances in each case suggest that competing struggles between the Tawira and Sambo, as well as temporal ethnic unity during invasive moments, cross-cut outward adherence to Anglo prerogatives.

At each of the three conjunctures Miskitu diplomatic propositions illustrate consistent patterns in Miskitu thinking. These patterns can be grouped into three core elements: a) to secure manufactured goods through exchanges in primary resources; b) to receive training in European knowledge/power systems such as reading, writing, and religion; and c) to be left alone while receiving special privileges and symbolic favors. It is my belief that these same three core elements effectively characterize Miskitu aspirations, and guide their diplomatic strategies with powerful outsiders to this day.

It will be shown that at each conjuncture, the Tawira Miskitu sought secure passage to hawksbill turtle grounds off the coasts of Costa Rica and Panamá and privileged access to Spanish markets for their carey. Such strategic thinking reflects a shrinking turtle population and increased competition from other indigenous turtlers, including the Kuna Indians and the Sambo Miskitu, in addition to white, mulatto, and black turtlers from places like Jamaica, San Andrés, the Cayman Islands, and Colombia. The Tawira also sought lands at Matina, Costa Rica for both commercial and subsistence crops, and the Sambo requested permission to hunt, fish, travel, and trade in Spanish domains. Although the Tawira consistently asked that their youth receive an education, views were mixed on the extent to which such instruction should occur in the Mosquitia itself. Although the Miskitu sought favors and recognition they did not wish to see more foreigners settle the Mosquitia.

At each of the three conjunctures we see consistent patterns of Miskitu philosophical guidance. While in most cases leadership judgements and behaviors are difficult to separate from individual vanity, I believe Tawira leaders genuinely felt their movements toward the Spanish would benefit their people. However, this does not imply that the Tawira sought to 'remove the English yoke,' as the Spanish believed, but rather that the Tawira viewed fortified ties with the Spanish as a way to form alliances of equality across territorial and sovereign spaces. Tawira leaders did not wish to lessen their autonomy or freedoms by 'capitulating' to a hostile neighbor, rather they sought to receive recognition of their spatial integrity and

expand their market opportunities by establishing peace. Evidence also suggests that Miskitu efforts hoped to check the special privileges and influence many British settlers had acquired. Although Spain always injected the condition that priests and/or settlers be sent to live amongst the Miskitu, this was not generally proposed by the Miskitu themselves, nor welcomed by the Miskitu after the fact, and indeed led to profound inter-Miskitu conflict.

Obstinate leadership in the pursuit of regional (e.g., admiralty) or ethnic (e.g., Tawira) treaties with Spain always caused the Miskitu Kingdom to fracture along Sambo-Tawira lines, but also along district or regional lines. For example, although the Sambo rallied to thwart Tawira overtures to Spain in 1768-1769, the Wangki king and the Rio Grande admiral joined forces to overthrow the Tawira governor in 1790 for the same purpose. Likewise, the north coast Sambo distanced themselves from the Wangki-Sambo Miskitu following the British evacuation and oriented their future away from the south coast Miskitu. Dispersed British settlers, generally harboring distinct and competing regional interests, also played a role in shaping how Miskitu leaders responded during each historical conjuncture. Although the amalgam of complex forces and the mosaic of geographic and ethnic responses seems difficult to sort out, it is possible to detect an incipient and unifying Miskitu identity that asserted itself temporally across Sambo-Tawira, or regional, lines when the ethnic space of the Mosquitia became transgressed, that is when invasive developments and regional processes violated a sense of ethnic autonomy.

Before describing events and processes during each of the three conjunctures, and elaborating the 19<sup>th</sup> century continuation of such processes in an epilogue, I need to make two further points concerning the textual analysis upon which this chapter is based. First, my description pays close attention to the dates of the available texts and the chronology of the processes described therein. The narrative, which admittedly will appear tedious at times, had to scrutinize the sequence of events closely to rectify some common misperceptions in the historiography and to tease out the chain of transactions inspiring specific Miskitu

actions. Second, to make sense of who was doing what, especially across space and Sambo-Tawira lines, I have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to make sense of titled markers such as admiral, colonel, general, and captain among Miskitu actors. Contrary to the laudable efforts by Michael Olien to delineate the line of descent of such titles, their virtual explosion in the historical record and the ambiguity of their geographic contexts after 1785 make such efforts tenuous and dangerously misleading. For example, Olien's discussion of a "triumvirate" of generals 1790-1797, including his overview of the previous decade, do not account for General Malchin, General Maltize, General Walton, General Marshall Wayatt (or Blyatt), General Perkins, General Chismi (or possibly Smith), nor General Pedro Moguel appearing in the record before 1800. His attempt to reconcile the admiral title is even more precarious, completely ignoring at least five leaders among the Sambo using the admiral title in the 1780s, and overlooking the fact that, initially, the Tawira admiral was strictly an 'envoy' of the governor in the Rio Grande-Pearl Lagoon district. Sambo colonels and/or admirals, however, never on par with the Tawira admiral, also appear later as 'envoys' of the king within the Wangki-Sandy Bay district and elsewhere. I do not wish to direct criticism at Olien's work so much as to challenge the notion that the record provides an unambiguous set of possibilities. Only the king's line of descent demonstrates clear continuity into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Conjuncture of 1768-1769**

In 1768-1769 the governor of Costa Rica established formal relations with the Tawira of the Rio Grande and northern Pearl Lagoon. This historical event must be understood as the 50 year culmination of several truncated Spanish efforts to make peace with the Miskitu. Indeed, at least three recognizable Spanish efforts preceded the successes of 1769. First, in 1720 the Tawira Governor Hannibal met with the Costa Rican governor de la Haya following the turtle season. Hannibal

offered to accept peace with the Spanish in exchange for mutually beneficial trade relations, and coastal access to pursue hawksbill turtles. Hannibal promised to return the following year with King Jeremy II and General Peter, but this never happened. Instead, some 400 Miskitu attacked Matina in 1724 and carried off a major portion of the cacao harvest. Spanish writers believed that British traders intervened and prevented what would have been an historic meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Second, following the Anglo-Spanish peace in 1748, the Spanish again tried to make friends with the Miskitu. In 1751, Padre Juan de Solís y Miranda visited Black River and Sandy Bay. Solís had substantial trade relations with Pitt and had been to Black River previously. While at Sandy Bay, Solís baptized King Edward and several of his family members. During their meeting, Edward asked that a missionary be sent to teach Miskitu children and that Miskitu men be able to hunt and fish in Spanish territory. According to Sorsby, Edward agreed to send a yearly tribute of one tortoise shell, some cacao and a bunch of bananas.<sup>3</sup> Although there is no evidence that this tribute was ever paid, King Edward's overture caused a split between him and General Handyside, who, like all subsequent generals, was strongly inclined to support English settlers and Anglo prerogatives on the north coast. Such apparently innocuous Miskitu-Spanish meetings, which reflect a genuine Miskitu interest to expand trade and political ties, always raised the ire of the British who took such threats seriously and greatly influenced Miskitu responses, especially among the generals and the north coast Sambo populations.

Solís' efforts were repeated during the next cycle of Anglo-Spanish peace. According to the Spanish interpretation of the 1763 Treaty of Paris, English settlers had an obligation to leave the Mosquito Shore. At the very least they had to dismantle their military installations at Black River. From the settler's perspective, the treaty dealt only with the Belize colony. To help expedite British compliance, the Guatemalan Audiencia sent Luis Díez de Navarro to Black River in 1764.<sup>4</sup> The fear of a British evacuation order, symbolically brought home by Navarro's well-timed visit, placed settlers in a precarious position. Along the south coast, settlers

grew restless as rumors spread about Navarro's visit to Sandy Bay. Superintendent Otway felt the best way to thwart a Spanish-Miskitu union was to strengthen the Anglo-Miskitu relations, so he set out to visit:

every place inhabited by the [Miskitu] in order to do all in my power towards cultivating a strict union and friendship with them . . . and I found each different tribe of them entirely dispossessed to maintain and abide by the friendship established.

During his visit with King George at Sandy Bay, Otway noticed "trifles among them . . . the King in particular had a cane with a gold head, [while] one of his Chiefs had a long silver cross which he wore about his neck."<sup>5</sup> After Navarro's foray, subsequent Spanish efforts to strike peace with the Miskitu focused almost exclusively on the Tawira.

At some point in the 1760s, Admiral Dilson I, a. k. a. Trelawny 'Alparis' Dilson (1760-1770), met with Costa Rican Governor Joseph de Nava and agreed to send a commission to Cartago.<sup>6</sup> This meeting took place in July of 1769. Olien believes that Nava invited Dilson to send a delegation, which is what Dilson later claimed, but Guatemalan president Pedro de Salazar wrote that Dilson's "communication appears consistent with that made by Captain Yarrinsen the previous year in 1768," implying that Dilson had sought out Nava first.<sup>7</sup> Before discussing Nava's meeting with the Tawira delegation, it is worthwhile to digress into the context of Spanish thinking about the Mosquitia at this time. The Spanish, including many interpreters such as Troy Floyd, felt that Yarrince's defection and Tawira advances to Governor Nava were part of the same anti-British movement among indigenous peoples of the Mosquitia. However, we have already seen that Yarrince's defection was, in all probability, the outcome of Tawira abuses against his people. While British slave traders activated this Tawira pastime, other traders hoped to protect Yarrince's Kukra or 'commerce' Indians. Meanwhile, on January 14, 1767 Yarrince had participated in a Sambo instigated assault headed by a "zambo" captain called Pangil or Pabón against the Spanish settlement of Camoapa

in Matagalpa.<sup>8</sup> I would speculate that this assault was led by the recent Sambo colony formed at Pearl Lagoon and aligned with Henry Corrin. However, Pearl Lagoon in the 18<sup>th</sup> century remains difficult to interpret.

During his testimony in September of 1768, Yarrince was asked to discuss the strength of the Miskitu, the differences between the *zambos* and the *indios moscos*, and their relations with the *caribes*. Yarrince told his inquisitor, Domingo Cabello, that the “*zambos y moscos*,” (Sambo and Tawira) live from Pearl Lagoon to Rio Mettapa, “which in the zambo language is called Quiguasca [Caratasca?].” When asked about Miskitu arms, Yarrince stated that Miskitu “from both nations” use them equally. Yarrince found it impossible to estimate the population of “the two nations,” but he stated “that the *Zambos* are greater in number than the *Mosquitos*, and that this nation is more valiant than the nation of *Mosquitos*.” When asked if the *caribes* were aligned with the Miskitu:

He responded that the Caribe Indians are of two classes, one being those who are tame (*mansos*) below his command [Kukra] and live on the coast of the mountain (*en la costa de la Montaña*) which borders this province [Chontales]; and the other group is aggressive (*alsados*) and are called *Caribes Sumies* [Twahka-Panamahka], and dwell in the center of the mountains until the lands of the *Zambos* and *Mosquitos*, with whom they are aligned, and below the orders and direction of a Zambo called Captain Failles.

Yarrince further claimed that he had 500 men under his command, and that the *caribes sumuies* (Twahkas) lived near the Rio Buca (Patuca or Bocay) which ends at the Pantasma Lagoon.<sup>9</sup> Yarrince’s testimony, combined with Admiral Dilson’s efforts to make peace with Governor Nava in Costa Rica, had the Spaniards believing that the entire ‘indigenous population’ of the coast sought to end the tyranny of Anglo-zambo rule.

On July 14, 1769 Nava wrote from Cartago that he was entertaining three Captains of Admiral Dilson: his brother Yasparal (Jasper Hall), Yani, and Bersa. Over the course of their one month visit, Nava explained to his guests the notion of Spanish sovereignty to which the Tawira responded that “they are all ready to be

vassals of His Majesty and that if they had not made this move earlier it was because the English who had assured them that if they fell into the hands of the Spanish they would get their heads cut off.”<sup>10</sup>

The Tawira emissaries provided seven terms under which peace could be established between them and the Spanish:

1: That Admiral Dilson, who is an *Yndio Mosco*, their Governor, be allowed to continue with this commission from the Royal Audiencia, or that the President allow him to rule with the same amplitude and facility that he currently enjoys with the British.

2: Given that the Indians have no other commercial means than to hunt hawksbill turtles or to enslave *los Caribes*, which they trade to the English for clothes to dress their families, [in addition to] rum, arms, powder and shot; for them to repulse English domination, it would be necessary that the Spanish provide them with the same goods in trade, otherwise it would be impossible for them to maintain themselves.

3: [Since they will have no one to buy their goods, they wish] to have free passage to sell their products in Granada, in the Province of Nicaragua, . . .

4: [Given that they will be leaving English domination] they ask to be allowed to plant cacao haciendas in the valley of Matina, that is that His Majesty provide them with land as he does all his people.

5: That Miskitu children be allowed to come to Cartago to learn Spanish, to read, to write, and to be educated in the Christian doctrine and to be baptized.

6: That the government give them a license which will allow them to pass unmolested along the Rio San Juan to Granada and in return they will do no harm.

7: That the Governor of Costa Rica send Admiral Dilson a *bastón* with a silver tip as a sign that he will conform with all points stipulated here.<sup>11</sup>

Nava agreed to the treaty draft, and provided the delegation with a cane for Admiral Dilson, but submitted the treaty to the Capítan General of the Guatemalan Audiencia, Pedro de Salazar for ratification. The seven terms, having been proposed by the Tawira themselves, show that Tawira interest in peace with the Spanish contained the three core elements I mentioned in the introduction: trade, foreign knowledge, and autonomy.



Before crafting his response to this historic possibility, Guatemalan President Pedro de Salazar assembled several Spanish officials who had dealings with the Miskitu over the years. In a letter of invitation expressing the gravity of the moment, Salazar warned that the Miskitu must not be thought of as ordinary Indians:

It is now very clear that to think of obligating [the Miskitu] to pay taxes, or to even raise this question with them, will completely jeopardize our friendship. The laws [dealing with Indians] speak of other classes of Indians, those that have not established treaties with the nations of Europe, those that do not possess arms, and those who do not possess such skills as these [Miskitu] have in their ability to defend themselves and to eschew the domination of Spain.<sup>12</sup>

Among those offering testimony was Luis Díez de Navarro. Navarro had a great deal of trouble accepting the agreement because:

the *Yndios Moscos* do not possess the necessary force to separate themselves from the English in this situation. If we knew that they were united with the *Zambos*, who are distinct from the *Mosquitos*, and of distinct inclination (*de distinta parcialidad*), and more united and closer to the English, and are a fierce people of war, . . . [then things might be different.]<sup>13</sup>

Combined with Yarrince's testimony, the Spanish now clearly began to view the Miskitu as two distinct groups who had to be conceptualized in separate terms. In the end, Salazar accepted numbers 1, 2, 5, and 7 but was against providing the Tawira with land at Matina and allowing them unrestricted access to Spanish domains. In reporting this to Governor Nava in December of 1769, Salazar asked Nava to establish whether "the sambos are united or not with the *Mosquitos* in their desire to shake off the yoke of the English, and if they are not united would the *Mosquitos* be capable of subjugating the sambos."<sup>14</sup> This latter question answered itself when Admiral Dilson I and at least one of his supporters mysteriously died in March of 1770.

Tawira overtures to the Spanish occurred at a time when Superintendent Hodgson had been away in Jamaica. Recall from previous chapters that 1768 was also the year of the 'Indian insurrection' on the coast in which "General Tempest assisted by some white people" threatened to kill Governor Briton and King George I.<sup>15</sup> With the mid-1769 news that Jasper Hall and John Chord, two Tawira of Dilson's family, had been to Cartago and received presents, factional discontent ran at an all time high.<sup>16</sup> This conjuncture amplified settler complaints against Hodgson into a crescendo that could not be ignored in Jamaica. Although settlers, especially those at Black River were upset with Hodgson for trying to nullify some of the king's land grants, the real catalyst for the current discontent was that Hodgson had been asleep at the wheel during Admiral Dilson's treaty with the Spanish. In an attempt to fix the matter, Hodgson rushed back to Bluefields and conferred with Dilson on December 22, 1769, threatening "violent measures" if Dilson did not toe the British line.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, Jamaican Governor Trelawny sent Richard Jones as his special envoy to check on the situation and to keep tabs on Hodgson. Jones landed at Cape Gracias where he sent for the king and governor, a sign of their maximum leadership and ultimate accountability for the actions of their subordinates, in this case Admiral Dilson. The king met with Jones:

accompanied by one of his wives, several others of the chief females and about 200 of his officers and men, after some necessary prepatory [sic] conversations with him, and his chiefs, I distributed among them a proper proportion of the presents, which your Excellency had ordered for that purpose. . . . I then acquainted them with the sundry complaints which were lodged against them [the Miskitu] by several of their people, by the white inhabitants of the Shore, many of whom were to come several miles to prove their charge.

From Jones' excerpt we can assume that the dissenting Miskitu were Sambo Miskitu, and likely those below the general.

After their meeting, Jones then sailed to Bluefields, "the furthest southern settlement of any English white inhabitants." From here he sent for Admiral Dilson

at Pearl Lagoon. Dilson arrived in January of 1770 “with his flag flying in the bow of his boat.”<sup>18</sup> After this point things get confusing. By March of 1770 both Admiral Dilson and a “Sambo” Admiral Israel were dead. I do not know where Admiral Israel fits into the picture, but he allegedly supported Dilson’s overtures to the Spanish. Admiral Israel was possibly at the head of the Sambo colony that takes shape at Pearl Lagoon by 1760, and was later headed by Colonel César, but he also appears to have maintained a presence north of Sandy Bay.<sup>19</sup> Before he died, Dilson claimed that he had only made his overtures to the Spanish because he wanted to protect his access to turtle grounds along the shores of Costa Rica.<sup>20</sup>

After news of Dilson’s death reached Nava, the Governor asserted that Dilson’s people had feared the English were going to establish 10-12 soldiers at each river mouth, and that this had prompted their desire to seek Spanish protection. Whatever the exact circumstances, the Spanish believed Hodgson put Dilson to death.<sup>21</sup> I have no knowledge of any British plans to establish sentry posts, but if Nava’s statement that the Tawira “feared” this development can be trusted, it suggests that the Tawira did not relish an increase in the presence of more Englishmen. Indeed, the planned arrival of an English colony in circa 1775-1776 appears to have prompted Dilson’s son, Alparis Tylas Dilson, or Admiral Dilson II (1772-1791), to follow his father’s lead and seek out the Governor of Costa Rica. However, this time Miskitu overtures to the Spanish were more complicated and far reaching.

### **The Conjuncture of 1775-1778**

The conjuncture of events initiating high level Spanish-Miskitu contacts in 1775-1778, and generating inter-Miskitu and Miskitu-British conflicts, can be traced to an English plan to establish a large plantation or settler colony on the south coast in 1775. On October 29, 1775, King George I issued a large tract of land to an Englishman named John Bourke. From the placenames I cannot ascertain the exact

location of the grant, but it lay south of Sandy Bay, inland from the coastal lagoons, and was clearly in Tawira domains.<sup>22</sup> This highly unusual grant for the 18<sup>th</sup> century was likely the outcome of a visit King George I had made to Jamaica for the purpose of “acknowledging himself and his subjects to be under the sovereignty of His Majesty.”<sup>23</sup> By granting lands in Tawira domains, King George I attempted to make himself the single sovereign of the Miskitu Kingdom. This is something that many British settlers probably assumed to characterize the existing situation, but in actuality was a negotiated process with the Tawira.

King George’s land grant and his visit to Jamaica took place in the context of Robert Hodgson’s removal as Superintendent and the appointment of the Scotchman James Lawrie. Governor Germain removed Hodgson for many reasons, but among them were his efforts, in Germain’s words, “to prevent as much as possible the disputes and matters of discussion, which are likely to arise concerning tracts of lands said to be purchased from or given or granted by the Mosquito Indians.” Indeed, Hodgson claims he wanted to protect the Indians by insuring “that no future Indian grants should be valid without the ratification of the superintendent . . . [because] some of [the Tawira Miskitu] complained of being cheated out of their country; and there was great appearance of alarm and discontent amongst them.”<sup>24</sup> Although Hodgson shows little concern for anyone buy himself in most of the record, many British officials did defend Indian interests at the expense of settlers if their was good reason. In 1768, Jones noted that many people had “a long time back” claimed to possess large tracts of land near Black River which they had purchased by plying the Indians with:

3 or 4 gallons of rum to intoxicate those poor ignorant Indians, who would then put their mark to any instrument of writing that might be brought to them and acknowledge (in their way) to be done with their free consent, and all this without their ever knowing or having explained to them the contents or meaning of it and this some people call lawful purchase.<sup>25</sup>

Hodgson's removal as Superintendent and Lawrie's nomination in 1776 signaled a shift in Jamaican priorities. In his appointment of Lawrie, Germain told Lawrie to promote the prosperity of colony, to improve commercial advantages, and

to prevent any attempt which might tend to disturb the public peace, whether it should arise, on the one hand, from any irregular conduct of his Majesty's subjects, or, on the other, from the enmity said to be entertained by the Mosquito Indians to the Spaniards.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, Lawrie's commission exemplified British concern with the re-formulation of Miskitu-Spanish relations, especially among the 'Mosquito Indians,' or Tawira of the south coast, especially if these threatened the large-scale plantation project being orchestrated by John Bourke.

The Spanish were aware that a "Juan Burch" had purchased land to advance the English settlement project for the south coast headed by Dr. Charles Irwin.<sup>27</sup> Irwin had hired the freed slave Olaudah Equiano to help oversee these plantations, and together the two sailed from London in November of 1775, reaching the coast in February 1776. From Equiano's account, the settlement site remained undetermined upon arrival, but that the party eventually selected a spot just inside the mouth of the Rio Grande where they immediately began to clear lands. Equiano implies that Governor Britton was happy with, or at least accepted, their presence, but that there was a dispute between him and local chief, who could have been Admiral Dilson II or one of his captains.<sup>28</sup> Although Equiano mentions that the Miskitu would not labor for them, he does not note the importation of African slaves. Nevertheless, it appears that Africans provided the bulk of the labor and that many inter-married with local Indians. The site of Irwin's Rio Grande plantation project is undoubtedly the spot just inside the mouth where Fray Barrueta saw a cacao plantation of 40,000 trees in 1787 inhabited by mixed people described as "*negros azambados y aindiados*."<sup>29</sup> The Spanish had been tipped off about Irwin's plans and had ordered the Cartagena Captain Juan Antonio Gastelu to intercept Irwin's sloop, the *Morning Star*, in November of 1775. Gastelu captured the ship

after it had left off Equiano and Irwin on April 30, 1776.<sup>30</sup> The ship was carrying iron boilers, five copper tanks of 300 gallons, 13,000 bricks, “a plough and sundry implementations for husbandry,” among many items designed for trade such as muskets and cloth, and items already purchased such as 72 deer skins and 36 lbs. of turtle shell, for which Irwin and his partner Blair sought immediate compensation from the British government. They stated, likewise, that without their sloop they could not pick up slaves in Jamaica, “the only thing keeping their great river plantation active.”<sup>31</sup>

Around the same time that King George I signed away Tawira lands to the Irwin project, Governor Timothy Briton, the enigmatic Tawira leader, Prince Eugene, and the Irish trader Colville Cairns (all residents of Twappi) sent letters to the Governor of Panamá proposing peace. Ascertaining the details of this overture is complicated by the small-pox related deaths of King George I (1755-1776) and Governor Timothy Briton (c. 1775-1776) at the beginning of 1776. Nevertheless, a Captain Potts of Pearl Lagoon suggested that Cairns was going to write to the Panamanian governor because the Spaniards had seized one of his boats, and that the king and governor “requested that Cairns [also] write a letter for them.” In Potts’ words:

The purpose of these letters were this, that the King and Governor would permit the Spaniards to work in their mines in and about Gold River [unmolested], if they would permit the Mosquito men to fish for tortoise shell on the coast, this friendship to continue as long as there should be a peace between England and Spain.<sup>32</sup>

From the Gold River mining area a road extends to a point on the coast named, King Buppan, which in Miskitu means ‘where the king anchors.’ This is one of the many present-day Miskitu toponymies in Panamá and Costa Rica. Ironically, this toponym may not refer to the Sambo king per se but to Prince Eugene who had declared himself king following the death of his brother, George I.

Although King George I may have written a letter to the Panamanian governor, along with Cairns and Briton, it is more probable that any letter attributed

to him was written instead by his brother (or nephew) Prince Eugene, a Tawira who lived at Twappi, and who often referred to himself as the Miskitu king. For example, Superintendent Lawrie stated that Prince Eugene, “being much older [than George II] and on better terms with Cairns, and some of his followers [Tawira] wanted Eugene to succeed to king” after King George’s death in early 1776. Lawrie went on to note that this “title is sometimes given to him [Eugene] by some of his followers, for which reason Robert Major (without knowing better) means Prince Eugene whenever the Mosquito King is mentioned in his affidavit.”<sup>33</sup> The same can probably be said about Captain Potts’ statement above. In another letter, Lawrie notes that the Spaniards treated Prince Eugene as “King in this affair.”<sup>34</sup> Further evidence suggesting that King George I did not write a letter to the Spanish is that when the Spaniards came to Twappi to sign a deal in April of 1777, they only sought out Governor Briton and Prince Eugene, and did not make any effort to visit King George II at Sandy Bay. Most evidence suggests that Tawira proposals for peace were closely tied with the commercial agenda of Colville Cairns, and that King George I would not have jeopardized his relationship with the British to support Cairns, nor Tawira turtling access off the coast of Panamá. Whatever the exact circumstance, on July 31, 1776, the Panamanian Governor Pedro Carbonel y Pinto advised the President of the Guatemala Audiencia that he had received a letter from the “*Rey*” of the Miskitu Indians asking for peace.<sup>35</sup>

In response to Miskitu offers of peace, the viceroy of Bogotá sent Captain Francisco Javier Vargas to visit the Tawira and make a reconnaissance of the eastern coast of Central America in January of 1777. In April, while sailing among the islands outside Portobelo, Vargas met with Colville Cairns and several Tawira Miskitu. One Tawira Indian had come aboard Vargas’s ship and asked if he had received notice of the peace that their “*Rey*” had sent to the Spanish “through the Englishman Colville,” and if the Spaniards had agreed to the terms specified therein. Vargas claimed that he was also waiting to hear an official response, which he expected promptly from Panamá. After he received word from Panamá that peace

had been established, two other Tawira Miskitu, sailing “with flags of peace,” offered to pilot him to the governor’s residence at Twappi.<sup>36</sup> Sorsby and Floyd believe that Cairns not only authored all the Miskitu letters but instigated Tawira willingness to make peace with the Spanish to monopolize his control of the southern turtle trade. While Cairns’ intentions are clearly self-serving, this view ignores current Sambo-Tawira disputes while obscuring Tawira agency in promoting their own agenda with the Spanish.<sup>37</sup>

After visiting and mapping the mouth of the Rio San Juan in April, Vargas continued north to Twappi where he met with the new Governor Colvil Briton.<sup>38</sup> Here, however, Vargas could not get the new governor’s signature on the treaty terms submitted to the Spanish by his late brother. In his statements to Lawrie, Governor Briton declared his innocence in meeting with the Spanish, stating that his late brother had sent the initial letter, and that Spaniards “had simply come to talk.” Indeed, Briton lay the blame on Lawrie, stating that when he had received his commission Lawrie had told him “to treat the Spaniards well in peaceable times.” Although cordial, Briton told the Spaniards, in his words, that “his forefathers had delivered up the country to the King of England, and therefore that he neither could, nor would, sell any part of it nor admit their people amongst them.”<sup>39</sup> In a letter to the Governor of Jamaica, in which Briton also proclaims his unyielding loyalty to the English, he asks to receive arms, shot, and powder to help repulse an eminent Spanish attack. Signing the letter, “Commander of the Mosquito Indians,” Briton implies that without the arms he and his people cannot properly protect the English settlers.<sup>40</sup> Such requests, or threats, were part of a pattern that the Miskitu used to achieve desired objectives from the English. In retrospect, the 45 year-old Colvil Briton appears a master of deception and a crafty diplomat: within a decade Briton was on a ship to Cartagena to profess his loyalty to the Spanish.

On leaving Twappi, Vargas stopped at Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields where, according to the testimony of an “Admiral Patterson,” whose ethnicity is unknown, he apparently sank several boats, stole several cattle, a bell, a grinding stone, and



sounded the harbour.<sup>41</sup> The Spanish account only mentions that Vargas fired his canon once in self defense.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the circumstances, King George II, General Tempest, and several English settlers were infuriated at the Tawira and Cairns for having made any signs of friendship to the Spanish. In a letter written by several Sambo Miskitu to Jamaica they traced Vargas' visit at Twappi back to Gastelu's sojourn the previous year, indeed, they established a pattern of unwelcome Tawira advances to the Spanish at the same time they sought to encourage further English settlement:

[In April, two sloops came again to Twappi,] to a part of the Governor of the Mosquito Indians Country . . . and went to the house of a White Man named Colvill Cairns and made or pretended to make a peace with the Indians giving Prince Eugene and the Governor a Gold headed Cane each with other presents which imediatly [sic] by express we informed our superintendent . . . [furthermore] we your petitioners pray that your Excellly [sic] and Council would authorize John Campbell to settle Sackland [Saklin] and his other lands on or near the River Wanks which would be a great benefit to the country in general and we apprehend would facilitate the settlement of that valuable river with white inhabitants.<sup>43</sup>

Once the details of Tawira overtures became better known, Lawrie stated that King George II and General Tempest could barely be contained:

I shall find some difficulty in saving Cairns from the fury of the Mosquito men [Sambo], so much are they incensed against him. They are likewise extremely disgusted with the conduct of the Indian Governor, and Eugene the late King's brother, with whom the Spaniards treated as King in this affair. I apprehend I shall find it a hard matter to prevent their making incursions on the Spanish territories to show their abhorrence of forming any connections with them, however your Lordship may rest assured I shall take every step to prevent them from disturbing the Subjects of Spain.<sup>44</sup>

In his own statement, Cairns professed his innocence, and castigated the Spanish for their "treacherous behavior." He even promised that Governor Briton and Prince Eugene would "deliver up their canes that they got in exchange from the Spaniards, at making peace with them."<sup>45</sup> Like Governor Briton, Cairns defected to the Spanish within a decade.

Simultaneous to the above events, Admiral Dilson II was making arrangements to establish peace with the Governor of Costa Rica. One day before Vargas anchored at the Rio San Juan, two “*indios moscos*” arrived at Matina seeking peace with the Spanish. In all probability these were the same two pilots escorting Vargas to Twappi. The Indians had asked Costa Rican Governor Juan Fernández de Bobadilla if they could come live with the Spaniards, become vassals of the King of Spain, and receive land.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Tawira delegates from the Rio Grande had solicited peace with Costa Rica at the same time those at Twappi had sent letters to Panamá. In subsequent communications Governor Bobadilla insured the Tawira that they would receive land, be allowed to receive commissions from the King of Spain, and retain all their current privileges, including the distribution of presents.<sup>47</sup>

In February of 1778, only a few months after Lawrie thought he had squashed Tawira plans to negotiate with the Spanish, Admiral Alþarez Talan Delce (Dilson II) was named “Capítan Real de la Costa de Mosquitos” in Cartago by the Governor of Costa Rica. Upon accepting his new title, Dilson had made a special plea to receive lands “along the river margin, or in some other fertile place” to plant cacao and sugar, but also lands to plant “*Milpas y Yucales*,” suggesting he sought land for both subsistence and commercial crops. As I stated earlier the Tawira of the Rio Grande and Pearl Lagoon remained susceptible to subsistence food shortages due to having established antagonistic relations with neighboring Ulwa and Kukra Indians. The arrival and settlement of Irwin and his slaves, must have made the Rio Grande landscape an even more precarious place from Dilson’s perspective.

Following the Miskitu tradition of telling each side what they wanted to hear, Dilson implied that he was angry with the British and preferred to have the Spanish come and live amongst his people. He also asked that the Spaniards teach his children to read and write. According to Bobadilla, Dilson was also upset with the “English who sell them things at higher and higher prices, while buying their

products for less and less.”<sup>48</sup> As a sign of Spanish faith, Dilson asked to receive a new suit and a cane. Bobadilla complied: “I gave the Capitán Real a complete silk uniform, a sword with silver trim, a cane with a silver knob; and for his wife a silver plated necklace and pendants that he had asked for. I gave the Indian who accompanied him a pair of crimson taffeta pants and an English shirt.” Bobadilla also gave Dilson four cows, a bull, and a horse, to which Dilson replied that he would return the following year with turtle shell for the Spaniards to buy. In summing up Dilson’s character, Bobadilla wrote “This Indian is of good presence: he would be about 28 or 30 years old, and exhibits a subtle rationality and tenderness toward the Spanish. All that he wants is that the Spanish remove the English and come live amongst them.”<sup>49</sup>

The Spanish knew that to secure a lasting peace with the Miskitu, they would have to provide the Miskitu with the same quantity and quality of manufactured goods that the British had. To this end, they made use of an American named Jeremiah Terry to (a) assemble the Miskitu leaders at the Rio San Juan in August of 1778 and have them sign a declaration of peace with Spain, and (b) remain there as a trader to purchase their products and provide them with necessary goods. In exchange Terry would receive privileged access to the mahogany forests along the Rio San Juan. It will be recalled that Terry was the same man who carried young George II and Duke Isaac to London in 1775 to protest Indian slaving and to denounce Hodgson.<sup>50</sup> It is unclear if Terry had been in the services of Spain at this point, but from London Terry traveled directly to Spain.

Terry arrived at the Rio San Juan in August of 1778 and did manage to assemble the Miskitu leaders. Superintendent Lawrie got wind of this activity and insisted on attacking. King George II was reluctant to proceed and Lawrie decommissioned him temporarily, the only time such an event ever occurred. Meanwhile, Governor Briton insisted on acting alone in the matter, but Lawrie insisted on going.<sup>51</sup> Most analysts believe that the Miskitu murdered Terry, but it is unlikely that the Miskitu participated because on September 5<sup>th</sup>, probably after

Terry's death, several Miskitu wrote Bobadilla stating that Terry is "a good man and friend of our nation," and that they would "permit him to live at the mouth of the Rio San Juan." Indeed, the Miskitu hoped to extend their peace with the "Virrey de Santa Fe and with King of Spain." In contrast to my analysis above, this letter was signed by both Sambo and Tawira leaders comprising King George II, Duke Isaac, Governor Briton, Admiral Predigos, Juan Esmil (John Smith), and Admiral Dilcem (Dilson II). The abundant signatures attest to the power of Terry, who had known the Duke and George II for many years. For no apparent reason, and without explanation, Prince Eugene effectively drops out of the historical record at this point and I have no further knowledge of who he was or what became of him.<sup>52</sup>

The unique conjuncture of events occurring between 1775-1778 suggest a correlation between increased British plans to establish themselves on the south shore of the Mosquitia, in the very mist of Tawira lands, and Miskitu (especially Tawira) efforts to make peace with the Spanish, indeed to receive lands at Matina. Lawrie's efforts to purge Spanish influence from King George II and Governor Colvil Briton, including his likely role in murdering Jeremiah Terry, suggests that the British had become more serious in backing settler initiatives while strengthening control at a time when the British empire in the Americas was in jeopardy. All of these efforts appear to have paid off, if only temporarily. Following Terry's murder, the Spanish remained tentative in their approach the Miskitu. Still, in August of 1779, two months after the Spanish declared war on Great Britain, the new Governor of Costa Rica, José Perié, wrote King George II, Governor Briton, Duke Isaac, and Admiral Dilson. He requested that if they were not responsible for Terry's death that they should come to Cartago and pick up their canes, fowl, and cows, as they had requested the previous year.<sup>53</sup> The strong Miskitu role in the British military campaign against Spain in 1779 suggests that Perié's letters marked the end of this conjuncture of amicable Spanish-Miskitu relations.

## **The Conjuncture of 1787-1791**

Many of the details concerning the Miskitu role in the Anglo-Spanish warfare carried out 1779-1783 have already been presented in this study, and are described elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Of importance to the present analysis, however, is the interesting narrative that underscores the internal Miskitu struggles between 1787 and 1791. The roots of this conflict can be traced to Governor Briton's warming to the Spanish following the 1783 Anglo-Spanish peace. During the war in early 1782 Governor Briton and some Englishmen ascended the Rio Escondido and attacked Lóvago, Lovigüisca, and Juigalpa in the Chontales district of Nicaragua. In the process, Governor Briton took some 40 prisoners including the 10 year-old girl María Manuela Rodríguez Mojica and Ana Sanabria, two women who have become enshrined in Nicaraguan history for their 'heroic role' in bringing the light of Christianity to the barbarous heathens. Depending on which historian is imposing *his* imagination onto the subject, we learn that shortly after Governor Briton returned to Twappi with his prisoners, he fell in love with María. At her insistence, Briton then 'turned his life around' by consenting to have Ana baptize him along with four of his concubines, his brother Rabinly, his 10 year-old son Caluil, and his young daughter Mirimal. Although, Briton continued to have other wives, María quickly rose to become, according to Salvatierra, the "head wife," like the "leader of a Turkish harem."<sup>55</sup> The dominant historical narrative, without any hint of dissent, argues that María's efforts, and Briton's love for her, single-handedly led the Tawira leader to seek Spanish protection. I tend to take a different view on the matter entirely.

Although no historian considers Briton's young daughter, Mirimal, the offspring of Briton and María, she is about four in 1788 when she is brought, "in the care of María," to be baptized at León. We also learn during this same trip to León, which I presently describe, that although Briton sought to marry María, he also made it clear that he would accept "another señora of the same condition."<sup>56</sup> A

more Miskitu-centric interpretation of this fantastic turn of events in Spanish-Tawira relations, would be that Governor Briton astutely recognized the impact a British withdrawal would have on coastal developments. He moved quickly to make the best of a tumultuous situation by linking his fate to that of the Spanish, whose demonstrated power had ‘forced’ the British to withdrawal at the end of a war that the Miskitu thought they had helped the British win. Indeed, I would argue that Briton attempted to strengthen his own power by marrying a Spanish girl, which he knew would, as it did in Miskitu culture, symbolically wed him to the Spain. By having Mirimal baptized in León, Briton also insured that the Governor and first lady of Nicaragua would become his daughter’s God parents. Although his plan backfired in the end, it was a calculated risk that fits a pattern of Tawira diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis the Spanish.

Coastal events happened in rapid succession after the British agreed to comply with Spanish interpretations of the 1783 Treaty of Versailles and evacuate the Mosquito Shore in 1786. During January and June of 1787, English settlers and their possessions steadily packed their belongings and livestock from several ports along the Mosquito Shore. Gonzalo Vallejo, having come from Spain to oversee the process, along with Trujillo’s Gabriel de Hervías, insured that settler removal went according to plan. During their reconnaissance to Cape Gracias, Sandy Bay, and Twappi in February and March 1787, the Spaniards sought to pacify Miskitu resistance to Spanish rule, and in their own words at least appear very consoling and understanding what the Miskitu must have been experiencing. Although King George sent a letter stating he was sick and could not visit with them, adding he “would have loved to met [them].” The crew did meet with a Miskitu General named Pedro Moguel who asked “if the Spaniards would be able to provide all that the English had” in exchange for mahogany, carey, pipantes, and “other things that his country produced.” Governor Briton also received the Spaniards cordially at Twappi, a town which “consisted of fourteen large houses (*barracas*), that formed

two streets, although there were very few people because they were away laboring in their fields.”<sup>57</sup>

During his several meetings with Miskitu leaders, including King George who eventually conceded to meet with the crew, the Miskitu must have received word that some 992 Spanish colonists from Spain and 306 from the Canary Islands were en route to settle the Mosquito Shore within the year. In fact, Spanish settlers began landing at Trujillo and Black River in 1788.<sup>58</sup> On August 18, 1788, some 100 Spanish settlers arrived at Cape Gracias in the care of Captain Pedro Bricio and several soldiers. The Wangki Miskitu apparently received their new guests congenially, but they complained about receiving “only stupid little things” by way of gifts, and when the money ran out to pay them they refused to assist.<sup>59</sup> By 1789, King George was ordering Captain Bricio to send him provisions, and that if he could not provide them “he should leave the coast and let another nation come and occupy the Cape.”<sup>60</sup>

Only 37 settlers remained one year after arriving at Cape Gracias, and by 1791 only 3 settlers endured, albeit protected by 135 soldiers. By 1800, most all the surviving Spanish settlers had moved to Trujillo or into Honduras proper. Sorsby notes that costs were high, £22,333 to support the 186 colonists at Black River alone, not counting the 2,500 pesos providing gifts for the Miskitu.<sup>61</sup> The Scottish doctor, Robert Sproat, who was one of six Britons who received permission to remain at Black River, noted that there was “generally a considerable number of Musquitomen at Black-River.” The Miskitu enjoyed free access to the Spanish Governor’s table, and they intermingled with officers and soldiers, and they became familiar with the Spanish language. Sproat warned that they were forming habit of intimacy, which if not eradicated, would weaken “their predilection for their old friends,” who they often rile against for “having so unkindly deserted them.”<sup>62</sup>

Some time during the Anglo-Spanish conflict before 1782, Robert Hodgson had been captured by the Spanish and taken to Cartagena. After spending some time in prison, Hodgson switched his allegiance to Spain and agreed to try and lure

Miskitu leaders into supporting Spanish rule in the Mosquitia. He left Cartagena in January of 1787 to carry out this task. In the midst of settler evacuation, Hodgson visited several Miskitu leaders, including those of the Ulwa and Kukra. In May, Hodgson met with Governor Briton at Twappi who felt a trip to Cartagena was “premature,” and that they should wait until all the British had evacuated. Later Hodgson went to the Rio Grande and Pearl Lagoon and met with Admiral Dilson: he called these Miskitu “the worst on the coast.” Many intrigues and Sambo-Tawira divisions ensued. At one point Hodgson wrote that the king did not wish to travel together with the governor “because of a great jealousy, or unequal power, that exists between the governor and him.” Meanwhile, General Lee was urging the Sambo to hold fast, that despite the evacuation, the British would continue sending shot and powder, and that the Spanish would seek revenge against them for having murdered some 30 Spaniards at Brewers Lagoon during the war in 1782.<sup>63</sup>

In the end, Hodgson was able to persuade the king and several Wangki-Sambo leaders to make the journey to Cartagena with him, however, Governor Briton and several other leading Tawira including Admiral Dilson II, Colonel Sweet, and Captain Sow, traveled separately. Although the available information is contradictory on several accounts, King George II and the other Sambo leaders refused baptism but accepted presents including canes while staying only a short time.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, the Tawira group allegedly pulled into Cartagena as the king and his group were leaving, and at least some of them remained for seven months. Governor Briton and his crew had arrived displaying the Spanish Flag amidst ritual cannon fire and banquets. Tawira leaders appeared in elegant uniforms and Briton carried a gold-headed cane.<sup>65</sup> The Spanish definitely considered Governor Briton to be more influential than King George II, and they were also impressed with Colonel Smith (a. k. a. Sweet William), who spoke good English. On July 6, 1788 Governor Colvil Briton was baptized and given the name don Carlos Antonio de Castilla.<sup>66</sup>



While don Carlos remained in Cartagena, a Tawira admiral and colonel escorted María and all the other prisoners taken in Chontales during the war to Nicaragua. Traveling via the Rio San Juan, the group arrived at Granada on April 14, 1788. Although we cannot know this with certainty, I suspect that the leaders escorting the group were Admiral Dilson II and his brother, an important Tawira named Sulera, both of whom likely returned from Cartagena to carry out Governor Briton's request.

The group arrived in León on June 25, 1788 and met with Nicaraguan Governor don Juan de Ayssa. The purpose of their visit was to have the governor's daughter, Mirimal, baptized, to return the prisoners as a demonstration of Tawira peace, and to seek María's hand in marriage for don Carlos.<sup>67</sup> The Miskitu visit was given extreme attention by the Nicaraguans, and Ayssa worked hard to treat them with "exaggerated tenderness" to dispel the grave or deceitful image the Miskitu may have harbored. Ayssa described the admiral as about 40 years old, which fits with Governor Bobadilla's description of Admiral Dilson II as 28-30 years old ten years before. The admiral told Ayssa that he was the nephew of a black Panamanian, but a "son of a Mosquita." Ayssa was impressed with the admiral:

He presented himself in a worn, silk military uniform, sword and cane. He insinuated that he did not wear one of the more decent and gallant uniforms that he had brought (in which he met don Luis Tije in Granada), because this uniform was of English style, and he judged that he should renounce even this form of dress.<sup>68</sup>

On the same day don Carlos was baptized in Cartagena, Sunday July 6, the Nicaraguan Bishop Juan Félix de Villegas baptized his daughter Mirimal in León, giving her the name Carlotta Luisa Jacinta. It appears this date had been coordinated. Governor Ayssa and his wife were named God parents, and the act was celebrated with great fanfare and attended by "the most distinguished people of the city and many of the town's people." In the evening the Miskitu delegation was regaled with a dance and a dinner at the Governor's house. The group left on July 10, "after saying goodbye to all the important people of León," bringing the priest

Manuel de Barrueta, and possibly María, back to the Mosquitia. Traveling down the Rio San Juan in a boat operated by Luis Tije, who had been hired to bring don Carlos back to León by the end of the year, the group reached Bluefields at roughly the same time don Carlos returned from Colombia.<sup>69</sup>

Although don Carlos had outwardly switched his allegiance to the Spaniards, he knew that instituting this change among his people would be an ardent task. After meeting up with Fray Barrueta, don Carlos decided to return to Twappi first, that is without his guests “to prepare his people for the arrival of a priest.” After waiting a few months, Fray Barrueta made his first trip to Twappi in September 1788 and he remained there even when don Carlos traveled to León. Barrueta’s testimony does not state what he did during this period, but it appears he was not well received and spent a good deal of his time with Robert Hodgson at Bluefields.

Don Carlos arrived in León in December of 1788 to consummate his union with the Spanish by marrying María. Ayssa described him as about 50 years old and intelligent: “He is learning the rudiments of speaking and writing Spanish, and he already understands and pronounces some words.” Ayssa noted that Carlos “managed himself freely,” and that he “hardly tried any liquor.” Among discussions that must have included the future of the Spanish-Miskitu relations, don Carlos requested that he be commissioned with the title of “*Gobernador de la nación de Mosquita y Zambo*,” stating that the people are discontent with King George. Following the wedding on January 11, 1789, the city held numerous parties in their honor, including banquets, dances, and a parade of horses.<sup>70</sup>

Departing León on February 2, 1789, the couple was accompanied by two Recollect Priests, Cristóbal de Navarro and Josep Gil Solís, in addition to the governor’s son, and a sister of María whose son was don Luis Tije. After several route changes due to Ulwa discontent with Carlos, the group opted to travel down the Rio Wangki. The party was met at King George’s pueblo, which was probably Kum, by 40 zambos with shotguns, bows and arrows, lances, and who were

apparently “ready to make war.” A formal meeting between the two groups occurred at the king’s house, which Fray Navarro described as a “carpenter’s workshop.” Here the group found the king “dressed in a uniform and sitting below a portrait of himself affixed to a post.” Although George greeted the Spaniards cordially, he did not get up from his hammock and “did not say one word to don Carlos” during their entire two hour stay. From the king’s village to Cape Gracias, Navarro recorded seven “*pueblecitos* of Sambos with habitations that only serve for the summer.”<sup>71</sup>

When the group reached Twappi in April of 1789, they found the Tawira leadership following Alparis Dilson II, who Fray Navarro called “the Governor elect.” Dilson II had apparently declared himself governor, and broke all relations with don Carlos. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, don Carlos sent off his *bastón* to Alparis Dilson II “requesting that he come and show his vassalage.” As a sign of future proceedings, not only did Dilson refuse to come but he kept the *bastón*.<sup>72</sup> Fray Barraeta also recorded this incident, however, he noted that the elevation of Dilson to the top Tawira position “has caused such a clamor recently even to the point that [the Miskitu] may attack León.”<sup>73</sup> It is unclear what prompted Dilson to break with don Carlos. Spanish language writers assume that their differences stemmed from Carlos’ baptism and alignment with the Spanish, but Dilson’s own behavior up to this point, especially if he first took María to León, does not suggest that he would have been against moving closer to the Spanish. It could be that Dilson simply did not wish to go as far as Carlos had in his symbolic vassalage to Spain, or that he was riding a popular crest of anti-Carlos discontent among the Rio Grande and Pearl Lagoon Miskitu. Whatever the case, since the 1760s the Tawira of the Rio Grande-Pearl Lagoon admiralty had steadily distanced themselves from the governor’s authority.

Together, the three priests had little success initiating “the spiritual conquest” of the Miskitu, although we learn that many “among the Moscos and the Zambos desired” to receive Christianity.<sup>74</sup> The Miskitu of Alabara (likely Wounta),

however, reportedly stated that “if the Governor continued with his intentions to obligate them to become Christians, they would kill him.”<sup>75</sup> Although don Carlos was active in meeting with various leaders, spiritual conversion did not occupy his attention:

The most stunning thing is that carlos never attended to any of the most basic chores to which he should attend. He had many reunions with people at Alabara, whereby he dealt with many matters, but María, with all her intelligence with the language assured me that he never once touched on any of these crucial (religious related) matters.<sup>76</sup>

Porta Costas, who spent a good deal of time with Carlos around January of 1790, characterized the Governor as deceitful, an infidel, and ungrateful:

With no treat is he satisfied, the more one does for him the more he thinks he deserves, arriving at such a state of ingratitude, while informing the entire world that his compliments have been the object of the Archbishop Virrey, the Governor and Bishop of Comayagua, or Nicaragua, he took the liberty to tell me that he owes nothing to the Spanish.<sup>77</sup>

Nicaraguan efforts to introduce Catholicism among the Miskitu—which would not be tried again for another hundred years—came to an abrupt end in May of 1789 when Frays Navarro and Solís set sail for Trujillo, followed by Barrueta and María some months later.<sup>78</sup>

The sociopolitical processes leading up to don Carlos’ death at the hands of Admiral Dilson II and Sulera around October of 1790 remain unclear. We do know, however, that King George II temporally aligned with Admiral Dilson II. According to Navarro, George had learned that several Sambo leaders had approached don Carlos and asked him to become the “head of their nation of zambos.”<sup>79</sup> These Sambo leaders are likely the same Admiral Gualtin (Walton), General Malchin, and Maltis (Maltize) that Porta Costas found in opposition to King George and “who embrace [the Spanish] side.”<sup>80</sup> Navarro stated that “the intrusive Governor Alparis [Dilson]” had formed an alliance with King George against don Carlos because he noticed “many frequent messengers that have passed between the two by sea or by land.”<sup>81</sup> The alliance between George and Dilson, has led some

analysts to interpret the events as a popular Miskitu uprising against the Spanish. That is, as a reflection of an inbred Miskitu dislike for the Spanish, or evidence of Anglo hegemony. While this scenario is certainly possible, I would suggest that processes set in motion by Carlos and the rapid transition from ‘Spaniard as foe’ to ‘Spaniard as friend’ intruded on an incipient ‘ethnic space’—which the very transformation helped forge—that the Miskitu were unwilling to accept. The Miskitu could and would put aside, what in other circumstances appears to be, significant differences to meet a common political objective. As evidence of this theory, once the Spanish threat dissipated the alliance between King George II and Admiral (now Governor) Dilson II promptly dissolved.

Just before Dilson and his brother Sulera killed don Carlos at Twappi—possibly in June of 1790—the Nicaraguan Governor Ayssa descended the Rio San Juan and erected “a group of houses thatched with palm.” This cannot be a coincidence. The record of Governor Ayssa’s trip, provided almost entirely in Ayssa’s own words by Tomás Ayón, represents the highest ranking Spanish or Nicaraguan official to ever visit the east coast of Nicaragua until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his letter of October 22, 1790 Ayssa records hearing of Carlos’ murder by Dilson and Sulera. Ayssa had intended to ply these two Tawira leaders with clothes and money in an attempt to lure them back into the Spanish fold, but he was prevented from leaving the mouth of the Rio San Juan due to *prari kati*, or the bad weather of the hurricane moon.<sup>82</sup> Either just before or just after don Carlos was killed, Dilson, Sulera, and Colonel César, along with some 300-500 Miskitu set upon Robert Hodgson and his estate at Bluefields. The group, “assisted by Hodgson’s black slaves,” sacked Hodgson’s supplies, tore down the Spanish flag, set his ship aflame, and made off with some of Hodgson’s 3,000 cattle and 10,000 pigs.<sup>83</sup> Although several versions have trickled down over the years, it appears that Hodgson along with his son Guillermo and wife were escorted by Colonel César to Panamá, where they traveled to León and/or Guatemala via the Pacific. Other accounts suggest that Hodgson died en route to León, or that his wife never left and was unharmed by the

‘zambos’ because she was the daughter of William Pitt. This attack, while clearly sending Spain a message, also reflected the long-standing and mutually constituted strife between Dilson’s family (which includes Sulera) and Hodgson that had festered since the death of Dilson I, the father of Dilson II and Sulera.

After conferring with Hodgson’s son, Guillermo, on his return to León, Ayssa recommended to the Guatemalan Audiencia that a strong Comandante must be sent to the coast to oversee Spain’s interests. However, he also noted that any fundamental changes in the current geography of power among the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu should be avoided:

The Mosquitos [Tawira] and zambos do not maintain a good relationship amongst themselves . . . [and therefore he] judged it convenient that the coast remain divided in two jurisdictions, each with its respective leader, whereby the leader of the zambos would reside at Sandy Bay and the leader of the mosquitos at the Rio Grande or Pearl Lagoon. Both should have a salary assigned to them along with some uniforms in the name of the Comandante. In this way the government will attain their loyalty . . . he who is accustomed to live with a salary should not have to be forced to live without one.<sup>84</sup>

As it turned out, Ayssa’s plans were proved null and void by the continuation of political unrest on the coast.

In October of 1791, King George II ended his temporary alliance with Governor Dilson II and allegedly declared that “all of his nation [of Zambos] enemies of the mosquitos.” To prove his point, King George II hung Governor Dilson II, burned his house, killed three of his wives, and murdered 12 other important Tawira leaders.<sup>85</sup> Note how the Spanish version accords in several details with the oral tradition recorded by missionary Ziock in Chapter One, as well as with the 1804 English account, which I repeat here:

The Indian race of Mosquito men inhabited the coast from Blue Fields to Tibuppy [Twappi], under the orders of two of their own chiefs, called the Admiral and Governor. They were ever considered the best class of Mosquito men, from their industry and orderly disposition; but they were not liked by the Samboes, who some years ago, . . . nearly extirpated the whole

of them, burnt their dwellings, and hung their chiefs; by which this tribe has become almost extinct.<sup>86</sup>

José del Rio, who visited along the coast in 1793 noted that King George II was “excited with the death of his adversary Sulera, whom he just killed in Pearl Lagoon.” Del Rio noted that the king hoped to eliminate all his rivals so that he could rule as a total despot.<sup>87</sup>

Despite del Rio’s claim, there is evidence that Sulera survived. On November 11<sup>th</sup> the Comandante at Fort San Carlos, Francisco Muñiz, received two Miskitu called Suinta and Llimst who had been sent by Admiral Sulera, who had been elevated to this position by Governor Dilson—clearly illustrating that the Miskitu internally recognized title rankings and adhered to them even after the superintendency—and Colonel Sutuilem (Sweet William). They informed the Comandante of events on the coast and sought refuge “below the protection of the Royal flag and that they be permitted to live among the Spanish in the lands that they have presently occupied” at the mouth of the Rio San Juan. The group consisted of 86 Miskitu, including men, women, children and 4 piraguas, a pipante, and a boat.<sup>88</sup> If Sulera was killed after this, or never was, remains unclear. What we do know is that Sulera was also known in English as Heullet or Hewlitt, and in 1816, Dunham was visited in Pearl Lagoon by a sukia named Hewlett.<sup>89</sup> Whenever Sulera died, his name has endured in the lore of Pearl Lagoon. During a trip there in 1997, Ted Gordon heard one Creole man claim that “the entire [Creole and Indian] community of Pearl Lagoon was descended from the ‘Sulira’ Miskitu.”<sup>90</sup>

## **Epilogue**

Sociopolitical processes that rocked the Mosquitia in the five years following the British withdrawal continued during the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, ending with the symbolic death of King George II at the hands of his own people. In this final section I briefly discuss two of the processes transforming

Miskitu society at this radical and discontinuous conjuncture. First, the Sambo Miskitu, especially those of the north coast actively sought the return of British settlers and formal British recognition. The international processes leading up to and propelling this development further divided the Miskitu of the north coast from the Miskitu of the south coast, setting the stage for competing loyalties during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The movement to compel a British return, as well as more mature signs of Anglo-affinity, was led by a new generation of Sambo and Wangki leaders who were born during the superintendency and had been educated in Jamaica and England. Second, the Sambo Miskitu instituted the subordination of the Tawira Miskitu. Although I have already discussed the tributary nature of the Tawira in Chapter Eight, it is important to recognize that even the title of governor disappears in official correspondence, and only appears in traveler accounts in the context of Tawira discontent with Sambo rule. Indeed, rarely do any identifiable Tawira leaders appear in official Miskitu communiqués to the British, and then only with the title of captain. The proliferation of admirals, generals, majors, and colonels in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century only refer to Sambo Miskitu, a significant point that has been entirely overlooked by all historical commentators that I am familiar with. That is, any discernible identity variance between the Sambo and Tawira effectively disappears from the official historical record. This has aided the false interpretation that the disappearance of rhetoric such as ‘two nations’ or ‘separate Miskitu districts’ somehow mirrored developments in Miskitu society, that 18<sup>th</sup> century antagonisms simply disappeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Few things could be more misleading.

The decade between Dilson’s 1791 death and George’s death in 1801 is shaped by a rapid succession of regional developments. Just as the few remaining Spanish settlers and Captain Bricio departed Cape Gracias for Trujillo in 1791, former Mosquito Shore settlers at Belize began clamoring to return. In a 1793, 14 former settler families “and their negroes” claimed they were unable to support themselves at Belize, and stated “we do not wish to be half British Subjects as we



are at present. . . . [We wish to be] back in our country the Mosquito Shore again.”<sup>91</sup> The appeal marks the reemergence of British settler influence among not only the Miskitu but also the framers of British policy in the region. Meanwhile, in 1796 Spain issued a royal *cédula* designating the ‘costa norte,’ or the stretch of coastline from Cape Gracias to the Rio Chargés, Panamá under the care of Nueva Granada, or Colombia. While interpretations of this *cédula*, and a more definitive one issued in 1803, bolstered Colombia’s 1824 claim to the north coast following Independence, the *cédula* also set in motion numerous government machination processes in Honduras, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua that were probably sensed by the Miskitu.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps coincidentally, in the same year, 1796, King George II traveled to England to seek support for a renewed British presence in the Mosquitia.<sup>93</sup> George’s visit to England may have inspired the British decision to relocate hundreds of Garífuna from the Lesser Antilles to Roatán in 1797. Many of these Garífuna moved quickly to the mainland, where King George II granted them lands east of the Rio Plátano.

The British victory over the Spanish in the 1798 Battle of St. George Cay (Belize), in which British settlers defended the Belizean colony, boosted Sambo Miskitu willingness to take on Spain along the north coast. The infamous Miskitu attack at the Spanish colony at Rio Tinto, or Black River, effectively ended Spain’s efforts to settle the Mosquitia for another 60 years. According to Sorsby’s description:

Under a deluge of rain early in the morning of September 4, 1800, a large force of Zambos Mosquitos commanded by King George overran the ramparts of Rio Tinto and captured the fort and town without a fight. Outposts elsewhere on the Shore were seized by other bands of warriors. All negro slaves were freed by the victors, and Spaniards who surrendered in Rio Tinto were allowed to sail to Truxillo. Those who fled, or lived elsewhere, however, met fates “Shocking to humanity,” according to one British resident.<sup>94</sup>

On November 1, 1801, approximately one year after the successful attack at Black River, word reached Jamaica that King George II had died and that his brother

Stephen had proclaimed himself Regent, or the acting king, until young George Frederic III could come of age.<sup>95</sup>

In a letter dated February of 1802, a group of Miskitu explained to Jamaican Governor Nugent that King George II had been assassinated at his house on August 10, 1801 “by the people from Sandy Bay.” The Miskitu authors stated that “none of us to Leeward of this [the north coast] know any thing of it, we have since Elected his Br. Stephen King for life.” The Miskitu then proceeded to ask for muskets, machetes, powder, balls, flints, axes, and small hatchets, because they suspected a Spanish attack “as soon as the dry season sets in which is soon.” They assured the governor that they look upon the English as allies and would be happy to see British settlers come back to Black River, whereby they offered to “clear the Land for them ourselves,” a radical departure from earlier times. Hinting at Stephen’s commission, they noted he remained in great want of a suit, sword, and pistols. The letter was signed “Your most Sincere Friends & most Obedient and Faithful Servants” by General Marshall Wayatt, General Robertson [Robinson], General Perkins, Admiral Saint John, Major Jasper Hall, Captain Thomas Pitts [Potts], Colonel Quaco, Captain Smith, and Captain Abraham, and Captain Ross, all Sambo Miskitu with the exception of the captains.<sup>96</sup>

Hearing about George’s death 20 years after the fact, Orlando Roberts stated that Stephen was actually George’s half brother, and that George’s death came after he had abused one of his wives to death “under circumstances of peculiar barbarity.” George’s behavior apparently generated “the resentment of her friends, who created a riot, during which the King was fired upon, and killed, by his own people.”<sup>97</sup> In his account, Belizean Captain George Henderson believed that King George had been killed by Stephen because George advocated stronger ties with the British while Stephen advocated stronger relations with the Spanish. Henderson traveled from Belize to Caratasca on September 27, 1804, “having under my charge a variety of presents ordered by government for the chiefs,” to re-establish ties with the north coast Miskitu.<sup>98</sup>

Henderson's visit was a response to a Miskitu letter dated March 17, 1804 in which the Miskitu expressed the hope that the Belizean Superintendent would "send someone out," to confer with them. The Miskitu insisted that they were now "fully determined and resolved one and all of us to pay the most punctual obedience in every point whatever to your Orders and those of British Officers in general and firmly to abide by your directions in Peace or War." The letter was signed by Adm. Knowles, Adm. Dalby, Capt. Clements, Capt. Negroe, General Wyatt, Gen. Robertson (Robinson), King Stephen, Prince Brydge, Capt. Rhode Island, and Capt. Kelly Harris.<sup>99</sup> Illustrating the importance of this high level visit, the first of its kind following the evacuation, the 30 year old General, "as well as most his attendants," met Henderson "dressed in British regimentals, with epaulettes, sword, sash, &c."<sup>100</sup> During his stay, however, Henderson only met with the north coast Sambo Miskitu and eschewed King Stephen. This symbolic irreverence for the king reflects the concerns of several north coast Sambo leaders. In their letter to Belize, these leaders said they expect a Spanish invasion and asked for "a colour [flag] if you can spare it, as we have none to hoist, if [the Spanish] should come we mean to fight them under English colours." The letter also included incriminating evidence allegedly showing Stephen's loyalty to Spain: that is, a copy of a letter Stephen had received from Thomas O'Neille, the head of the Spanish government at San Andrés, chiding Stephen for neglecting the Spanish during "his trip to Guatemala." This letter, and Henderson's negative views of Stephen, imply that the north coast Sambo felt, and resented, Stephen's warming to the Spanish.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, Stephen's sound Anglo credentials suggest that General Robinson was trying to frame Stephen and boost his own stock. It is well known that General Lawrie Robinson (c. 1795-1820) and his son General Lowry Robinson (1830-1847) resented the Wangki-Sandy Bay kings. The movement toward separation of the north coast from the realm of the Miskitu king was finalized after General Robinson signed over his dominion to Honduras in 1843.<sup>102</sup> Although the Spanish did actively attempt to lure King Stephen to their side, other evidence

suggests that Stephen remained Anglofied and simply fell in with a crowd of British citizens who lived under Spanish rule and likely supported the independence movements. The Scotchman Sproat wrote in 1803 that Stephen was English educated and “willing to serve Britain once again.” He had known Stephen since 1786, when he found:

he had acquired a wonderful proficiency in the English tongue, so much so that no one could have discovered him to be a foreigner by his speech. In learning the language he had also learnt the customs of the Country . . . and was truly shrewd in his remarks on whatever came within his knowledge.

Sproat also noted that, as an agent for King George II, Stephen negotiated more business “than all the other chiefs . . . he always sold to the best bidder, but reserved his friendship for the English.”<sup>103</sup> In 1802, an Irishman named Quin of Corn Island “met a craft belonging to the Mosquito king at Boca del Toro.” The Miskitu told him that they “had been to San Juan de Nicaragua to receive from the Spanish 400 dollars as tribute for King Stephen,” which they said was being paid annually for the use of that port.<sup>104</sup>

If King Stephen or any Wangki Miskitu had expressed any affection for the Spanish, such feelings seem to have disappeared with the crowning of 18 year old King George Frederic III at Belize in 1816 “with as much formality as the occasion demanded, in the presence of all his Captains and their followers.”<sup>105</sup> The crowning of King George Frederic, and his subsequent residence at Cape Gracias, marks a significant shift in the personality, behavior, and Miskituness of the Miskitu kings. George Frederic, and all the subsequent kings, had been educated in Jamaica or London and expressed an outward level of Anglo-affinity that 18<sup>th</sup> century settlers only dreamed of establishing.<sup>106</sup> By the time George Frederic returned to the Mosquitia, he could barely speak Miskitu and felt himself a stranger in his own land.

Let me turn to my final point, the subordination of the Tawira by the Sambo Miskitu following the death of don Carlos and Admiral Dilson in 1790 and 1791

respectively. As I elaborated, Tawira leaders do not appear in official communiqués with the British with anything higher than the rank of Captain, and in some cases do not appear at all. The Captain Clements signing the 1804 letter cited above, is, however, called Governor Clemente by Dunham (1816-1819) and Governor Clementi by Roberts (1820-1824). Roberts, however, suggests that as the brother of don Carlos, Governor Clementi was a self-appointed and hereditary governor, but that King George Frederic had himself bestowed the title of governor upon a Rio Grande Tawira named Drummer:

There are several settlements of [Tawira] Indians on its banks [of the Rio Grande], chiefly within a few miles distance from its entrance; they are subject to the Mosquito King, to whom they pay tribute; but, like every other tribe of unmixed Indians they are discontented with the authority assumed over them by the Mosquito men, or Samboes. Their headmen, Drummer and Dalbis [Alparis Dilson III?], two brothers, possess considerable influence over them, and the other Indians adjoining, on the prinzipolka and Rio Grande settlements. The late King had the good policy to bestow the title of ‘Governor’ on Drummer, and ‘Admiral’ on Dalbis, and ‘Captain’ on the headman at prinzipolka; the latter being also an Indian of unmixed breed.<sup>107</sup>

For his part, Dunham refers to Drummer as an “Admiral,” probably reflecting the fact that he met with Governor Clemente first, in contrast to Roberts.<sup>108</sup>

Recall in the last chapter that Roberts attended an all Miskitu congress at Sandy Bay following tribute collection around 1820. As noted, neither Governor Clementi nor any Tawira attended this celebration. Nevertheless, after the festivities had wound down, the king asked Roberts to visit Clementi and convey a letter. Roberts stated that since don Carlos’ death Clementi had not visited the king “nor any settlements of the real Mosquito-men.” By attempting to reconcile with Governor Clementi, King George III sought to avoid “a civil war” and strengthen his hand against General Robinson and Admiral Earnee, who had just married into Clementi’s kaimka.<sup>109</sup> Accompanied by General Blyatt and 20 of the king’s men, Roberts was to present and read a letter written by King George Frederic to

Clementi; Blaytt was then “to explain [to Clementi] that ‘*the paper which spoke, was the King’s own self order, and must be obeyed*’” (italics in original).<sup>110</sup>

Before their arrival to Clementi’s savanna community which was likely Twappi, but possibly Yulu or Krukira, Roberts and his group “dressed themselves” and fell into “marching order” with their “flag and drum” proceeding them. Upon arriving at the governor’s house, Clementi remained seated, “dressed in state,” and greeted only Roberts and Blyatt, “but took no notice of those who accompanied us.” Roberts described Clementi as a “tall stout man” between 50-60 years old “with an Indian countenance, peculiarly expressive of thoughtful dignity.” Roberts “could not help thinking, that he looked as if he felt degraded by the yoke of the Mosquito-men.”<sup>111</sup> The governor was dressed:

in an old Spanish uniform, of blue cloth with red collar and facings, decorated with a great profusion of tarnished gold lace; an old embroidered white satin vest, ornamented with spangles, and having large pocket holes with flaps; a pair of old white kerseymere breeches; white cotton stockings; shoes with silver buckles; and, a large gold headed cane, similar to those used by the superior Corregidores and Alcaldes of the South American provinces. . . . These clothes . . . had descended to him from his unfortunate brother [don Carlos]. . . . After dinner I read the King’s letter, at the contents of which, the Governor expressed satisfaction; a tall young pine-tree was cut, the English flag hoisted upon it in front of the house, and the Governor seemed to feel he was now treated with proper respect and reinstated in his rights and privileges. . . . [At the Governor’s request] I repeatedly read over the King’s letter “which spoke,” and the Governor seemed pleased to find himself freed from the probability of further annoyance from the King’s people.<sup>112</sup>

The excerpt shows that a two century contraposition between the Tawira and the Sambo Miskitu continued to significantly configure Miskitu society and geography well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The discord, as conveyed by Roberts, is figuratively expressed by contrasting Clementi’s Spanish uniform, the suit of don Carlos and by extension the Tawira people, with the British flag and drum, the self-selected symbols of the Sambo delegation. The temporary reconciliation occurs after a white man relayed the king’s words from a piece of paper during a solemn

ceremony in which the Union Jack was raised at the end, symbolically noting the Sambo-Tawira union and the Miskitu nation's growing Anglo-affinity. Indeed, the king's magical letter 'which spoke,' was figuratively 'answered' by Clementi's own marvelous "letters, and certificates given to him, and his late brother, by traders, and others."<sup>113</sup> Although the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu spoke the same language, and had symmetrically woven the same European symbols of power into their particular cultural identities as Miskitu peoples, the Sambo and Tawira remained incongruous across some nebulous yet porous divide. While the nature of this identity boundary is never completely clear from the historical record, it is no less definite for being ambiguous.

## Notes to Chapter Ten

<sup>1</sup> Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral."

<sup>2</sup> Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 164; Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 297; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 164.

<sup>3</sup> Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 65-67, 81-84.

<sup>4</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 104; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 118-123.

<sup>5</sup> Otway to Commissioners, Black River, 12 July 1765, PRO, CO 137/33.

<sup>6</sup> Several Tawira raids at Matina could have brought Dilson in contact with Nava. During a 1757 raid the Costa Rican Governor Francisco Fernandez de la Pastora was killed. In 1760, Tawira plunder was again substantial, as was the June 1762 attack, only a month prior to the Anglo-Miskitu assault on El Castillo along the Rio San; "Informes de los Gobernadores de Comayagua, Nicaragua y Costa Rica sobre el proyecto de develar a los Mosquitos, 1769-1778," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 311; "Manuel López de Llano informa que moscos y sambos había invadido el Valle de Matina, 28 Nov. 1760," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 310.

<sup>7</sup> Olien, "General, Governor, and Admiral," 305; "Pedro de Salazar, Guatemala, 11 Nov. 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 341. Although Nava had sent a letter to Dilson on May 23 that was intercepted by an Englishman named Lestrangle this appears to have been in response to an earlier communication from Dilson; "Joseph de Nava, Cartago, Feb. 1770," BAGG VI, no. 1 (1940), 19.

<sup>8</sup> In attempting to take Yarrince's statement at Camoapa in Chontales in 1769, Domingo Cabello had to first ask the corregidor of Matagalpa to send down two Indians who spoke "Parrastra," which Yarrince apparently spoke despite the fact that this was a highland language. This remark attests to the significant trade or other relationships maintained between the highland Indians and the lowland Ulwa and Kukra; "Domingo Cabello to Salazar, León, 30 Nov. 1769," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 141.

<sup>9</sup> "Declaración de el Capitán Yarrinse indio de la nación Caribe de edad de 40 años, León, 9 Sept. 1768," BAGG V, no. 2 (1940), 121-123. Yarrince's Sumu distinction and their differentiated relations to the Miskitu is corroborated by Dunham who heard Tawira Admiral Drummer circa 1816 refer to the Twahka Indians as "mountain Indians . . . not under his control;" *Journal of Voyages*, 65.

<sup>10</sup> "Gobernador de Costa Rica Joseph Nava a don Pedro Salazar, Cartago, 14 July 1769," CDHCR, 16.

<sup>11</sup> "Joseph de Nava to Pedro Salazar, Cartago, 14 July 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 338-339; "La Costa de Mosquitos," CRC, 238.

<sup>12</sup> "Pedro de Salazar, Guatemala, 11 Nov. 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 343.

<sup>13</sup> "Luis Diez de Navarro, Guatemala, 24 Nov. 1769," BAGG V, no. 4 (1940), 347.

<sup>14</sup> "Don Pedro de Salazar to Joseph Nava, Guatemala, 15 Dec. 1769," CRC, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Account of the late Expected Insurrection of the Indians, 25 July 1768, PRO, CO 137/64, 3-8.

<sup>16</sup> "Mr. Alexander Patterson to Capt. Hodgson, concerning the Communication of the Governor of Cartago with the Mosquito Admiral Dilson, Pearl Key Lagoon, 11 Sept. 1769," in *The Defence of Robert Hodgson*, Appendix V: 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 170. From this moment forward, Hodgson spent more time on the coast, and especially the southern coast. Indeed, Hodgson's accusers conveyed "a strong Crimination of him for having neglected visiting the Country, and insinuated that he had resided wholly at Black River . . . from the First to the last of his being Superintendent." Hodgson responded to this accusation that from October 1768 to June 1777 he took 14 voyages, employing 22 vessels, whereby each trip lasted approximately 3-4 months; Robert Hodgson Jr., *The Defence of Robert Hodgson*, 75.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Jones to William Trelawny, no place, 4 April 1770, PRO, CO 137/65, 183-188.

<sup>19</sup> Admiral Israel had been baptized, along with several other Sambo leaders, by Reverend Warren in 1769; Klingberg, "Efforts of the S. P. G.," 316. It appears to



me that the Sambo admirals or colonels at Pearl Lagoon or elsewhere were always envoys of the king who had limited power; a sharp distinction from the Tawira admiral who in effect broke off from oversight by the governor.

<sup>20</sup> Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 171; Olien, "Miskito Kings," 211.

<sup>21</sup> "Joseph de Nava, Cartago, 12 Feb. 1770," BAGG VI, no. 1 (1940): 16-17; "Joseph de Nava, Matina, 15 Feb. 1770," BAGG VI, no. 1 (1940): 15-16; "Joseph de Nava, Cartago, Feb. 1770," BAGG VI, no. 1 (1940): 18-20.

<sup>22</sup> Agreement, King George with John Bourke, Sandy Bay, 29 Oct. 1775, PRO, FO 53/44, 287-288.

<sup>23</sup> A British Admiral Rodney had asked to be reimbursed £30 for regaling the king; "Committee Meeting 10 Dec. 1774," APCE, 5: 385.

<sup>24</sup> Hodgson Jr., *Defence of Robert Hodgson*, 38, 39.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Jones to Gov. Elletson, Jamaica, 3 Aug. 1768, PRO, CO 137/35, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Robert White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects having property in and lately established upon the Mosquito Shore in America* (London: T. Cadell, 1789), 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> "Juan Fernández de Bobadilla to Martín de Mayorga, Cartago, 15 July 1776," CDHCR, X: 53.

<sup>28</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 171. Bobadilla stated John Bourke was one of the coast's richest men and held over 100 black slaves; "Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 15 July 1776," CDHCR, X: 53.

<sup>29</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 169.

<sup>30</sup> Gastelu's voyage and deeds are among the most jumbled of the Mosquitia's historical narratives. Sorsby says that the *Morning Star* was captured in November 1775, but this obviously refers to the first ship Gastelu captured, the *Antelope*, which was probably unrelated to the Irwin expedition. Floyd gets the date of the *Morning Star* capture right, but claims that young King George II, the Duke, and General were aboard and taken to Cartagena. This is important to his narrative, because when George does go to Cartagena in 1787, Floyd claims that this was his second time. While George II and Duke Isaac did return from London aboard the *Morning Star*, Equiano claims that they had disembarked before the ship was captured; Sorsby, "British Superintendency," 215; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 126; Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 171; see also Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 460-461.

<sup>31</sup> Estimate of the loss sustained by Mistery Blair and Irving by the Capture of the Sloop Morning Star, Black River, 30 April 1777, PRO, CO 137/71, 223.

<sup>32</sup> [Settler Testimonies to James Lawrie,] Twappi, 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73, 199.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrie to Germain, Black River, 3 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/72, 164-165.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrie to Germain, Black River, 24 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/72, 141.

<sup>35</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 455. There are many instances where the English term Governor, referring to the Tawira governor, was reproduced in Spanish as *Capítan General*, or *Gobernador*, which the Spaniards often assumed was the supreme Miskitu leader, or king.

<sup>36</sup> “Fragmentos del reconocimiento de la Costa de Mosquitos practicado por Francisco Javier de Vargas, Cartagena, 6 June 1777,” CDHCR, X: 48; see also Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 107-109.

<sup>37</sup> Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 126; Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 219. Cairns, who died in 1788, had to be among the richest men on the south coast. In 1790, Nicaraguan Governor Ayssa, noted that the executor of Cairns’ will, Federico Cairns, asked the court to resolve the issue of 20,550 pesos Cairns had deposited in strong box in Trujillo; Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 186.

<sup>38</sup> Vargas’ two Miskitu pilots apparently provided the place names for the river mouths noted in his rough sketch of the coast. The sketch does, however, contain a detailed drawing of the Rio San Juan harbor; [Francisco Javier Vargas,] *Plano de la costa desde Cabo Gracias á Dios hasta Portovelo, 1777*, Servicio Histórico Militar, Madrid (copy CIDCA, Managua).

<sup>39</sup> James Lawrie to Germain, Black River, 28 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/72, 147.

<sup>40</sup> Colvil Briton to Governor of Jamaica, Twappi, 18 December 1777, PRO, CO 137/73, 203-204.

<sup>41</sup> Colville Cairns to James Lawrie, Tebuppy [Twappi], 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73, 197.

<sup>42</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 108.

<sup>43</sup> King George II, Duke of York [Isaac], General Maltize, and Captain Kissel to Governor Basil Keith, Sandy Bay, 12 April 1777, PRO, CO 137/73, 205-206. Campbell is a free man of color, the son of a Black River settler of the same name.

<sup>44</sup> Note how Lawrie contrasts the “Mosquito men” with the “Indian Governor;” James Lawrie to Germain, Black River, 24 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/72, 141. In an earlier letter, Lawrie refers to Prince Eugene as the “nephew of the late King;” James Lawrie to Germain, Black River, 3 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/72, 164.

<sup>45</sup> Colville Cairns to James Lawrie, Twappi, 10 May 1777, PRO, CO 137/73, 199.

- <sup>46</sup> “Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 13 April 1777,” CDHCR, X: 55-56.
- <sup>47</sup> “Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 12 July 1776,” CDHCR, X: 51-52; “Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 15 July 1776,” CDHCR, X: 52-54; “Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 23 Dec. 1777,” CDHCR, X: 58-59.
- <sup>48</sup> “Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 15 Feb. 1778,” CDHCR, X: 63.
- <sup>49</sup> “Bobadilla to Mayorga, Cartago, 18 Feb. 1778,” CDHCR, X: 66-67.
- <sup>50</sup> Hodgson had accused Isaac of murder, to which Isaac proclaimed his innocence and “demanded of the Superintendent to be brought to trial, either before our people, or his own;” “Meeting, 24 May 1776,” JCTP, 31.
- <sup>51</sup> Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 127; Olien, “General, Governor, and Admiral,” 300; Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 252.
- <sup>52</sup> “Carta del rey y principales jefes de los Mosquitos al gobernador de Costa Rica, San Juan del Norte, 5 Sept. 1778,” CDHCR, X: 78.
- <sup>53</sup> “Carta del gobernador de Costa Rica al rey Mosco, Cartago, 5 Aug. 1779,” CDHCR, X: 79-81; “Carta del gobernador de Costa Rica a Bretón, gobernador de la nación Mosca, Cartago, 5 Aug. 1779,” CDHCR, X: 84; “Carta del gobernador de Costa Rica a Isaac, duque regente de la nación Mosca, Cartago, 5 Aug. 1779,” CDHCR, X: 82-83.
- <sup>54</sup> Gov. Dalling to Despard, Jamaica, 23 April 1781, PRO, CO 137/80, 157-162; Arch Campbell to Earl of Shelburne, Jamaica, 10 Oct. 1782, PRO, CO 137/82, 304-305; New York Historical Society, ed., *The Kemble Papers. Vol. II, Expedition to Nicaragua, 1780-1781* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1884); A. S. Brown, “The British Expedition to the St. John's River and Lake of Nicaragua 1779-1780,” *Caribbean Historical Review* 2 (1951): 26-46; Great Britain, *A Full Answer to the King of Spain's Last Manifesto, Respecting the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore . . . and the importance of the Mosquito Shore to Great Britain . . .* (London: T. Cadell, 1779); Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 143-164; Sorsby, “British Superintendency,” 271-290.
- <sup>55</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 497; see equally fantastic accounts in Gámez, *Historia de la Costa de Mosquitos*, 145-147; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 174.
- <sup>56</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 160, 164.
- <sup>57</sup> “Diario de Ocurrencias Particulares, Trujillo, 15 July 1787,” BAGG VI, no. 2 (1941), 134-139. It is unclear who General Pedro Moguel might be, as he and the ‘Admiral Predigos’ noted above, do not appear again in the historical record. The diary was written by Pedro de Obregon see RHGAC, 291.

- <sup>58</sup> The crossing was rough: 290 died and 488 arrived extremely sick; William J. Sorsby, "Spanish Colonization of the Mosquito Coast, 1787-1800," *Revista de la Historia de America* 73-4 (1972), 146.
- <sup>59</sup> Sorsby, "Spanish Colonization," 147.
- <sup>60</sup> "Cristóbal de Navarro to Juan Hurtado, Guatemala, 27 June 1790," BAGG VI, no. 3 (1941), 184. Without Miskitu assistance, Bricio suffered severe food shortages; "Luis Tije to Juan Hurtado, Tubappi [Twappi], 24 April 1789," BAGG VI, no. 3 (1941), 189-190.
- <sup>61</sup> The comandante at Trujillo noted that between 1788 and 1791 over 100,000 pesos had been spent and that the port town had actually deteriorated since its re-establishment; Sorsby, "Spanish Colonization," 147-152. Floyd claims that King George II chased all the settlers away from the Cape in 1790 but there is not evidence that the Sambo 'forced' them to leave; *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 184.
- <sup>62</sup> Robert Sproat to Col. Thomas Barrows, New Egypt, 5 April 1803, PRO, CO 123/15, 61; see also Frank Griffin Dawson, "Robert Kaye y el Doctor Robert Sproat: dos Británicos expatriados en la Costa de los Mosquitos, 1787-1800," *Yaxkin* 9, no. 1 (1986): 43-63.
- <sup>63</sup> Enrique Sánchez Pedrote, "El Coronel Hodgson y la Expedición a la Costa de Los Mosquitos," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 24 (1967), 1223-1227.
- <sup>64</sup> Among the Sambo group was the king, Admiral Walton, Colonel Hall, Admiral Rodney, and Captain Augusto, a roster showing the proliferation of titled names given or used by the end of the 1780s; Sánchez P., "El Coronel Hodgson," 1230-31.
- <sup>65</sup> Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 505.
- <sup>66</sup> Sánchez P., "El Coronel Hodgson," 1229-1231; see also Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 112-117; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 175-177.
- <sup>67</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 161-162.
- <sup>68</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 165.
- <sup>69</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 165-168.
- <sup>70</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 174-175.
- <sup>71</sup> "Navarro to Hurtado, Guatemala, 27 June 1790," BAGG VI, no. 3 (1941), 181-183.
- <sup>72</sup> "Navarro to Hurtado," 185.
- <sup>73</sup> "Barrueta to Hurtado," 180.

- <sup>74</sup> “Navarro to Hurtado,” 186; “Barrueta to Hurtado, 1 May 1790,” BAGG VI, no. 3 (1941), 181.
- <sup>75</sup> García P., *Memorias*, 3: 167.
- <sup>76</sup> “Barrueta to Hurtado,” 179.
- <sup>77</sup> Porta Costas, “Relación del Reconocimiento,” 55.
- <sup>78</sup> García P., *Memorias*, 3: 170; Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 182. Governor Ayssa requested that Doña María receive a lifetime pension of 400 pesos annually; Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 198.
- <sup>79</sup> From Navarro we also learn that George had killed six of the 24 “negros Jicareños,” or black Nicaraguan boatmen from Nueva Segovia, that accompanied Carlos down the Rio Wangki upon their return; Navarro to Hurtado,” 187, 188.
- <sup>80</sup> Porta Costas, “Relación del Reconocimiento,” 54.
- <sup>81</sup> “Navarro to Hurtado,” 187.
- <sup>82</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 187-194.
- <sup>83</sup> Romero Vargas insists that don Carlos was killed after Hodgson was attacked. However, the traditional interpretation claims that Hodgson tried to intervene unsuccessfully at Twappi and then the Miskitu turned on him; Romero V., *Sociedades del Atlántico*, 113; Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 195. For further variations on the standard narrative see Gámez, *Historia de la Costa de Mosquitos*, 159-160; Salvatierra, *Historia de Centroamérica*, I: 518; Sánchez P., “El Coronel Hodgson,” 1232.
- <sup>84</sup> In his discussions with Guillermo Hodgson, Ayssa noted that the younger Hodgson turned over the copies of several books containing official correspondence left by his father; Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 199, 202; see also “Copia de la descripción y explicación que del Puerto de Bluffiers hizo el Inglés D. Guillermo Pit Hodgson,” RHGAC, 321-23.
- <sup>85</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 205.
- <sup>86</sup> Wright, *Memoir of the Mosquito Territory*, 25-26.
- <sup>87</sup> José del Río, “Disertación del viaje hecho de orden del Rey, Trujillo, 23 Aug. 1793,” CRC, 159.
- <sup>88</sup> Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 3: 205-207.
- <sup>89</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 73.
- <sup>90</sup> Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas*, 263.
- <sup>91</sup> “Petition for Former Mosquito Shore Settlers, 13 Aug. 1793,” ABH, I: 203.

<sup>92</sup> On context, development, and interpretations of these Royal Cédulas, see Memorandum respecting the Regulations of the Colombian Government, relative to Trade with the Coasts of Goajivia, Darien, and Mosquito, no date, PRO, CO 123/45; Victoriano de D. Paredés, *The Coast of Mosquito and the Boundary Question between New Granada and Costa Rica* (New York: 1855); Felipe Molina, *Mosquito, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica*, Second ed. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1849); Gordon Ireland, *Boundaries, Possessions, and Conflicts in Central and North America and the Caribbean* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 164-69; Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism*, 95; Augusto Zamora R., *Intereses Territoriales de Nicaragua: San Andrés y Providencia, Cayos, Golfo de Fonseca, Río San Juan* (Managua: Editorial de la Jurídico, 1995).

<sup>93</sup> Olien, "Miskito Kings," 214. In making this claim, Olien cites Mrs. Nugent's journal, a reference I could not verify in the 1966 reprint; Wright, ed., *Lady Nugent's Journal*.

<sup>94</sup> Sorsby, "Spanish Colonization," 152.

<sup>95</sup> George Frederic was the eldest surviving son of King George II. An older brother had been sent to school in Kingston where he died of smallpox; Wright, *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 36, 211.

<sup>96</sup> "Letter to General Nugent from the Mosquito Indian Chieftains, Cape Gracias, 8 Feb. 1802," in *Lady Nugent's Journal*, Appendix: 279. Captian Smith might be related to the Tawira Col. Smith, and Captain Abraham might reflect the name of the Englishman Abraham Tennonston, a longtime Corn Island and Pearl Lagoon resident, but the rest of the names indicate north coast, or 'Leeward,' residents.

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 146; see also Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 96.

<sup>98</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 133.

<sup>99</sup> Miskitu leaders to Col. Thomas Barrow, Cape Gracias Adios, 17 March 1804, PRO, CO 123/16, 62.

<sup>100</sup> Henderson, *British Settlement of Honduras*, 133, 145, 184. Robinson had recently rescued shipwrecked sailors and sent them to Belize asking to be compensated with £ 40; "General Robinson to Col. Barrows, Patuca, 29 Jan. 1803," ABH, II: 62.

<sup>101</sup> In his letter O'Neill refers to the fact that he had taken King George to Cartagena, that he rode horses with Stephen at Sandy Bay, and that he was saddened to think that "he might one day have to fight against his old friends;" "Mosquito Indians to Col. Barrows, 12 July 1804, ABH, II: 71-73.

<sup>102</sup> Convenio celebrado entre el Supremo Gobierno del Estado de Honduras y el General Tomás Lowry Robinson de los Mosquitos, 16 Dec. 1843, *Memoria de Relaciones Exteriores* (Managua, 1920), II: 394-396.

<sup>103</sup> Sproat to Barrows, 5 April 1803, PRO, CO 123/15, 61.

<sup>104</sup> Anon., *Mosquito, Nicaragua, and Costa-Rica* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1849), 19.

<sup>105</sup> Earl Bathurst, Superintendent of Belize to King of England, Belize, 19 Jan. 1816, PRO, CO 123/25; see also Superintendent of Belize to Prince George Frederick, Belize, 14 Jan. 1816, PRO, CO 123/25.

<sup>106</sup> George had been educated at least six years in Jamaica and “was furnished with a large outfit from the duke, consisting of a suit of clothes with eighteen hundred dollars, and four thousand dollars’ worth of goods and presents to distribute among his subjects;” Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 96.

<sup>107</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 113.

<sup>108</sup> Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 64.

<sup>109</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 137-138.

<sup>110</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 139.

<sup>111</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 140.

<sup>112</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 141-142.

<sup>113</sup> Roberts, *Voyages and Excursions*, 142.

## Chapter Eleven

### Conclusion

Few aspects of pre-Columbian Miskitu culture and society remained unaffected by contacts with Spaniards, Africans, and northern Europeans by 1700. Two of the most important outcomes of the colonial encounter were the intermarriage of Africans into select Miskitu family networks and Miskitu political associations with northern Europeans. Prior to European arrival some 2,000 to 5,000 Miskitu-speaking Indians lived within 100 miles of Cape Gracias a Dios. More populous and upland Mayangna Indians probably persecuted the Miskitu people by the time Spanish priests traveled up the Rio Wangki in the 1620s and English colonists settled at Providence Island in the 1630s. By the time Africans shipwrecked and integrated themselves into Miskitu society in the 1640s, the Miskitu had already shifted the balance of power between themselves and neighboring Indians. In marked contrast to other indigenous groups of the Mosquitia, the Miskitu established mutually beneficial trade relations with northern Europeans during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. With the rapid appropriation and integration of European technologies such as the sail, new keel designs, muskets, and iron tools, the Miskitu reigned as masters of a large geographic expanse bounded by Cape Camerón in the northwest, the Rio Waspuk in the west, and Pearl Lagoon in the south no later than the 1720s.

The Jamaican move to institutionalize the indiscriminate commissioning of Sambo and Tawira Miskitu leaders had a profound effect on Miskitu identity and



regional developments by the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Social unrest brought about by a small pox epidemic in the 1720s threatened the unity of the incipient colonial institution known as the Miskitu Kingdom. The resulting Tawira migration to the south from villages near Sandy Bay by 1730—an event dutifully recorded in Miskitu oral traditions—reinforced a growing geographic division between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. The development of this intra-Miskitu identity variance could have taken a different turn, but British interests in the region worked to forge a cohesive Miskitu polity within the context of Anglo-Spanish conflicts during the 1740s. By backing district-level commissions of the Sambo king and general, as well as the Tawira governor and admiral, British colonialists nurtured the Miskitu Kingdom and helped fashion a shared Miskitu ethnic identity. During the British Superintendency for the Mosquito Shore, cyclical periods of peace and war combined with internal contradictions in British colonial society in ways that periodically divided and united the Miskitu along or across inter-ethnic and geographic lines. The spatially configured contractions within the Miskitu Kingdom, the fissured British agenda, and Mosquitia geography came to head after the British settlers and their African slaves evacuated the Mosquitia in 1787. Subsequent Sambo-Tawira and Sambo-Spanish political conflicts in the 1790s set the stage for political developments that occurred over the next two centuries.

Throughout the previous nine chapters I have attempted to explicate my major themes by highlighting geographic variation within a text-based reconstruction of historical events and processes. I have specifically set out to challenge ideological assumptions embedded in primary texts, but I have also tried to explore the ways in which historical misconceptions have combined with newer ideological assumptions in Nicaraguan historiography. The depth of these misinterpretations and their subsequent discursive spin necessitated that the bulk of the study be directed towards regional specialists. At the same time, I have shown how colonial and predominantly Anglo social structures, strategies, contradictions, ideologies, religions, and symbolic forms shaped Miskitu ideas about themselves

and their relative position among competing nations in the Western Caribbean. Throughout this exercise, I have tried to establish a dialogue with primary texts, historiography, and salient theoretical currents to achieve a significant reworking of the way we think about the Miskitu past. To be sure, the Miskitu past has not lapsed its significance: it dwells amongst the living as a sustenance for identity nourishment and as a catalyst for many state policies that attempt to negate the former.

There is considerable need for fresh interpretations of the past. The economic and political subordination of living indigenous and Afro-Amerindian descendents within nation-states since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century suggests that their neglect within the regional historiography is directly related to their contemporary marginality. This is a universal process in the operationality of power in 20<sup>th</sup> century nation-states, especially the discursive nature of power. In Nicaragua, this is particularly evident. Still, reconstructing the past of a people who have left virtually no written nor material record of their own thoughts or actions is slippery business. This study, like all explications of the past, is really about interpretation: especially the way historical texts can be cross-examined with non-traditional sources such as stories, place names, memories, landscapes, and fieldwork. In this sense, I have not tried to reproduce a chronology of events, but rather reflect on some of the possibilities excluded from conventional historiography.

One of the strategies that I have employed to justify my particular interpretation is to present as much primary data as possible. The inclusion of large textual excerpts minimizes authorial gloss and, if done well, maximizes an illustration of the contradictions in colonial attitudes and strategies. The ambiguity in historical sources also reminds us of the heterogeneity in the lives of people we are trying to illuminate. Transcribed reproductions of archival material, or rare excerpts of published information, also generate a data set that might otherwise be unavailable to a wider audience. Many Miskitu and Twahka Indians, as well as Creoles and Nicaraguans helped shape the scope and style of this project by

implored me to make the work relevant to their lives, accessible to their traditions, and available to their communities. In this sense, the systematic and critical approach I have adopted is an attempt to comply with promises that I have taken seriously; suffice it to say, many commitments remain unfulfilled.

This conclusion summarizes my findings within the context of the atypical colonial space characterizing the Mosquitia and the emergence of Miskitu identity. A focus on Miskitu identity required me to develop a paralleling concentration on the nature of the colonial space in which Miskitu identity formed. This approach was indispensable in my challenge to axiomatic assumptions prevalent in much of the literature dealing with Nicaragua in general and Miskitu history in particular. Essentially, I have been suggesting that a formative Miskitu ethnic identity emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the commonplace notions of Miskituness and elite conceptualizations of a spatially configured Miskitu Kingdom within conditions of relative social autonomy, not as an outcome of British and Anglo-American hegemony in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The implications of this hypothesis should effect the ways in which we have conceptualized Miskitu activities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and especially their armed demands for regional autonomy over the last two decades.

### *An Atypical Colonial Space*

Fundamental to my analysis has been my assertion that the Mosquitia characterized an atypical colonial space before 1800. By an atypical colonial space I suggest that the Mosquitia was a physical setting influenced, but in no sense controlled, by Anglo or Spanish colonialists. The Mosquitia, like several other America regions during the colonial period, was a frontier region that remained on the margins of both British and Spanish interests and abilities, albeit circumscribed by both. This is not to say that Spanish officials and British colonialists did not try to institute direct or indirect control through one form or another. Indeed, British

settlers during the 18<sup>th</sup> century had a great deal of success implanting Anglo socioeconomic institutions such as slavery, capitalism, in addition to private property and aristocratic privileges. However, British society did not subsume Miskitu society. I have argued that the two societies remained for the most part separate, relatively co-equal, and mutually dependant on one another. It follows, therefore, that areas where Anglo and Miskitu societies were most closely integrated, such as between the north coast Sambo and the Black River settlers, the Miskitu incorporated a high degree of Anglo suppositions into their world view. In contrast, along the south coast, the Tawira remained apart from mainstream Anglo society, and indeed were closely affiliated to marginally loyal British traders not always of English heritage. Tawira overtures to the Spanish must be viewed in this context. The dichotomous Sambo and Tawira Miskitu geography interacted with an Anglo and Spanish bi-polarity in ways that initiated a set of conflictive processes and developments that shaped the Mosquitia as an atypical colonial place.

The peculiar circumstances of British settlement and society contributed to the peculiarities of the Mosquitia's colonial space. Half of all British settlers resided at Black River, quite distant from the nearest Miskitu community. At all times, the majority of British settlers lived apart from Miskitu communities. Approximately half of all British settlers by the 1770s were 'free people of color,' and were likely born in the Mosquitia. Many of these people had close relations with mulattos and mestizos living under Spanish rule, married indigenous or African women, and were likely bilingual. A minimum two-to-one and a maximum of five-to-one ratio of black slaves to British settlers, especially those settlers 'of property,' insured that slave owners had to negotiate their positions of authority in order to retain some degree of loyalty among their slaves. While these numbers are similar to other plantation colonies in the Caribbean, the threat of Spanish attack by land or sea was real and constant. Settlers invariably feared that slaves would take refuge among the Spanish or rise up with Miskitu aid. Those settlers that had large capital investments in the Mosquitia relied heavily on the Miskitu to not only cooperate

with their interests but to act as a foil against a Spanish attack. The precarious nature of colonial society insured that any regional power wielded by the British came as a result of negotiating internal power with those who protected them.

In contrast to conventional wisdom, I have argued that Miskitu manipulated and adroitly adapted to relatively weak economic structures in ways that maximized their social autonomy. Despite the significant changes in seasonal and cultural routines of household economies, the Miskitu did not work as common laborers for British settlers before 1800. Settlers enticed the Miskitu to acquire marketable resources such as carey, sarsaparilla, mahogany, and Indian slaves by providing goods in advance. The labor undertaken to procure these resources was carried out by the Miskitu themselves without oversight. Miskitu-produced goods such as boats, foodstuffs, meats, and artisan crafts such as hammocks, rope, or bark cloth were also traded for manufactured goods, but the British could never demand production beyond what the Miskitu were willing to concede. Meanwhile, whether acting as mercenaries in Jamaica or as hired guns against the Spanish, the Miskitu organized under their own leadership, often bemoaning the ineptness of British ways. In addition to ranked 'salaries,' the Miskitu made wartime claims on pillaged goods taken in joint operations. In contrast to a situation of economic dependency, the Miskitu retained their independence. The steadfast ability of the Miskitu to maintain such social freedom within changing economic circumstances was the result of a relatively secure subsistence economy headed by women and a strong set of social values that prioritized autonomy. In sum, closely integrated but semi-autonomous Anglo-Miskitu economic relations did not allow the former to impose their political objectives upon the latter in any type of unilateral or linear fashion.

The uniqueness of the Mosquitia's colonial heritage was the way in which layers of human and environmental diversity interacted with one another in space and time. On the one hand, early Miskitu society was configured spatially on several different levels. Traditional family networks interacted with one another in a spatial complex of seasonally varied dwelling arrangements that shifted between

coastal environments and upland ecosystems. By the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, sociospatial arrangements also reflected Sambo and Tawira identity distinctions.

On the other hand, the spatiality of the changing Miskitu society was constantly affected by changing geographic variations in Anglo, Spanish, Indian, and environmental influences. Every aspect of British consequence had a spatial component. Black River settlers had a different agenda than south coast settlers, and both often had different points of view from British officials in Jamaica. The effects of such contradictory influences call into question the meaning of what would actually constitute a singular 'British influence.' Meanwhile, Spanish influence was also multivariate over space. Spanish officials in Guatemala, Sonaguera, Trujillo, Matagalpa, León, Cartago, Portobelo, and Cartagena had distinct agendas and overlapping authorities in a way that fractured their ability to coordinate a unified position among the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu. The Spanish did have a common goal: to reduce the Miskitu and rid the coast of the British. Nevertheless, within this context, Spanish strategies, loyalties, and actual dealings varied substantially. As with the British and the Spanish, neighboring Indian groups within the Mosquitia established profoundly different relations with the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu, to say nothing of the Spanish and British. For the most part, the upland Twahka and Panamahka remained on good terms with the Sambo Miskitu, while the Ulwa and Kukra formed (or continued) antagonistic relations with the Tawira. Finally, the seasonal and spatial variability of the regional environment affected colonial economies and designs, and the outcome of actual events, in ways that can never be fully accounted for. Everything from the seasonality of shore currents, wind patterns, tidal flows, and river discharge, to the regional variation in soil fertility and the migration of the hawksbill turtle, affected the political economies and the cultural ecologies of all coastal residents. The unique characteristics of the atypical colonial space was fundamentally underscored by geographic variation and the human-relatedness within that variation.

### *A Miskitu Ethnic Identity*

A recognizable Miskitu identity has formed processually over gradual periods of gradual change punctuated by significant discontinuities. We can conceptualize this progression in terms of three chronological periods: the initial period, the early colonial period to 1740, and the late colonial period to 1820. Like all people in all times, the Miskitu have always made sense of themselves, located their place in the world, and socially reproduced their identity through interactions with other social groups in real places. In this sense, my reference to an initial, or traditional, period does not imply some static time before Europeans arrived, but rather the era before substantial African or European contact when the Miskitu contoured their subsistence lifeways and cosmological milieu to a specific kind of physical environment. The early colonial period, 1640 to 1740, can be characterized by modifications in Miskitu culture and society that reflect accidental chance of European expansion, as well as the purposeful adoption of Anglo cultural forms. The late colonial period, 1740-1820, reflects periodic unity and divisiveness between the Sambo and Tawira Miskitu, but also the conjoining of a shared Miskitu identity with a colonially reinforced construction of space symbolized by the Miskitu Kingdom. Contemporary expressions of a Miskitu ethnicity have their roots in these three formative periods of processual identity development.

Despite remarkable change in Miskitu culture over the past 500 years, the Miskitu retain several cultural values and practices associated with environmental variability. The seasonal round, which conditions Miskitu subsistence practices and was codified within calendrical traditions that ordered the passing of time, still fundamentally structures Miskitu economic activities. Commonplace relations with the environment have and continue to center around food production, acquisition, and preparation. Close and daily contact with the environment is especially pronounced in the lives of women who are at the heart of child rearing and Miskitu

socialization. Women transmit the norms of Miskitu culture and society in the context of environmental interactions in ways that inscribe the local landscape with a language of Miskituness. The necessity of intimate and functional environmental relationships continues to culturally reproduce the meaning of the cosmological landscape in people's daily lives, and provides a defining characteristic of what it means to be Miskitu. The importance of these relations can be heard throughout any given day as people communicate with one another in ways that 'call up' or 'tap into' a culturally coded Miskitu landscape. In this sense, commonplace and cosmological Miskitu landscapes form a symbolic reservoir of self-ascribing markers that both reflect and constitute Miskitu identity. The continuity of Miskitu landscape relations and the commonplace ways in which the Miskitu signify their landscapes with meaning furnish a relatively stable and self-referential base of Miskitu identity.

In the early colonial period, 1640-1740, Miskitu identity was influenced by three developments borne out of the colonial encounter: new models of social leadership, Sambo-Tawira variance, and an elite conception of nation. First, new leadership figures emerged that repositioned the traditional nature of sukia authority within a changing Miskitu society. New leaders did not displace sukias, who remain an essential and conservative element in Miskitu society to this day, but rather operated on a paralleling dimension of esoteric knowledge derived from Europeans. As an outgrowth of sustained European contact, forces emerged that eventually fell outside of sukia capabilities and created the need for a new type of leadership. Those leaders who developed an intimate and detailed knowledge of European systems became the elites of Miskitu society through the mimicking and appropriation of Western symbolic forms. Although the new class of leaders were first sanctioned by Europeans, the Miskitu only respected their authority to the extent that leaders fulfilled long-standing social norms, especially in the area of kin responsibility and redistribution. As population grew over time, kinship norms grew to include larger social networks within the same district, as well as broader



networks within Tawira and Sambo affiliations. The *miskitu laka* and *miskitu la*, Miskitu ways and laws respectively, governing leadership authority remain essentially the same today. As in the past, many leaders have failed to uphold their ends of the bargain, and predictably have seen their popular support erode. While authority was sanctioned externally, leaders needed to delicately balance external commitments and pressures with internally generated social conventions and responsibilities.

Sambo and Tawira identity variance within an emerging set of shared Miskitu social norms and cultural practices can be traced to the integration of shipwrecked Africans into select kinship networks. This event and subsequent working out period likely reinforced the significant meaning of kinship at the same time it spatially and socially divided *kaimka* networks that may have interacted previously. One of the important functions of *kaimka* networks in the past was to redistribute foodstuffs and resources in order to mitigate temporal or seasonal shortages. Different levels of *kaimka* security across the four Miskitu districts headed by the general, king, governor, and admiral allowed changing economic activities to create slightly different responses to changing political-ecological circumstances. Tawira efforts to confront the decline of the hawksbill turtle off a coast nominally controlled by Spain represents just the best known example of many ecologically-driven processes that remain obscured. Variation in Sambo and Tawira settlement created significantly different interactions with the neighboring peoples and colonial systems. This colonial and ecological differentiation contributed to a Sambo and Tawira identity variance, but did not create it. After 1790, the Sambo subordinated the Tawira and began to think of the Tawira as Miskitu of a lesser rank. The primary effect of a Sambo-Tawira self-referential distinction by the late-1700s may have been the constant inculcation of what it means to be 'Miskitu-men' on the part of the Sambo Miskitu.

Finally, through strategic and mutually beneficial relations with northern Europeans, the Miskitu began to see themselves in relation to the varied European

nations that sought their friendship. The strength of these relations created a contradiction in Miskitu values that was only resolved through the auspicious transculturation of Occidental forms into authentic Miskitu ways. On the one hand, the Miskitu prided themselves on their autonomy and independence. Numerous evidence from several colonial periods showed that the Miskitu were ‘jealous of their freedoms,’ insisted on ‘personal independence,’ requested and received special deferment from traders and colonial officials, required previous trust before accepting intendance, would only labor after ‘infinite cajolery,’ and they prided themselves on being ‘a free and unconquered people.’ After 1790, Spanish officials were advised to let elder Miskitu ‘maintain their lifestyle,’ or face ‘horrendous consequences.’

Still, the Miskitu transculturated European rituals and symbols in a way that fundamentally linked their identity to European norms and values. This development contoured Miskitu identity along the lines of what 18<sup>th</sup> century Europeans would have considered a nation. The Miskitu definitely did not think of themselves as ‘Indians’ in the sense that they were categorically similar to neighboring Indians who they enslaved or whom they otherwise attempted to establish rule over. Likewise, neither African slaves nor free people of color provided a model of comparable rank for the Miskitu to understand their exalted position within an increasingly diverse ethnic society cross-cut by issues of class, race, and geography. Rather, the Miskitu saw themselves as a ‘nation’ comparable with the European nations they interacted with. The self-ascribing and differentiating label ‘Miskitumen,’ suggests that the ‘Miskitumen’ viewed themselves apart from but akin to the Englishmen, Scotchmen, Dutchmen, and Frenchmen whom they continually interacted with. By the 1740s a shared, yet still predominantly elite, notion of Miskitu ethnicity transcended Sambo and Tawira identity variance and helped inculcate the larger Miskitu society to contemporaneous European ideas of nation, country, and kingdom.

During the late colonial period, 1740-1820, increasing Sambo and Tawira political interactions with both the British and the Spanish helped impute a budding Miskitu ethnic identity with a sense of spatiality. The territorial bounds of this self-ascribing place were shaped by topography and natural systems, but were fundamentally constituted by cultural and political constructions of space. Mountains, waterfalls, offshore shoals, as well as the natural ranges of deer, peccary, and the green and hawksbill sea turtles, affected Miskitu travel and their spatial conceptualization of what defined the Mosquitia. However, cultural constructions of space borne from the colonial encounter began to affix new meanings to more commonplace understandings. This development was especially pronounced after the creation of the 'British Superintendency for the Miskito Shore,' itself a juridical-territorial and colonial entity.

During the Superintendency, symbolic Miskitu interactions with the British and the Spanish revolved around negotiating authority over specific spaces. From Hodgson's initial treaty in which the Miskitu signed away 'their Country,' and the commissioning of leaders to oversee specific districts, to treaties with Spain that fostered mutually recognizable boundaries, the Miskitu continually interacted with figurative and actualizing characterizations of a territorially defined Miskitu Kingdom. Yet, constructions of space were not simply rhetorical or textual: the Miskitu instituted and negotiated their meanings in everyday life. Commissioned Miskitu leaders taxed settlers and Indians in their specific districts, regulated trade through their districts, granted land and resource concessions in ways that expanded the range of their spatial jurisdictions, subverted resource acquisition if concessions were not properly acquired, established distinct and hierarchical relations with upland Indians in their districts, traveled through their specific districts during wartime attacks on the Spanish, and managed feral cattle herds with particular district considerations in mind. Although district level distinctions among leaders and between the Sambo and Tawira persisted, the larger Anglo-Spanish colonial

context, especially during times of war, helped forge these peculiarities into a shared sense of a Miskitu Kingdom that was constituted by the sum of its parts.

The territorial dimension of the Miskitu Kingdom was reinforced through the integration and transculturation of Western symbols such as flags, banners, drums, uniforms, hats, crowns, swords, and canes. The use of these symbols in ritualized meetings with Europeans as well as pan-Miskitu gatherings suggest that they constituted an elite, self-referential, and ideological dimension of Miskitu identity. Numerous representations of Miskitu voices indicate that Miskitu leaders associated the meaning of these symbols with Western notions of a spatial polity such as a kingdom. Indeed, more than anything, these representations show the depth of Miskitu appropriation of Western terms and symbols to justify their own ambitions. Abstract and elite conceptions of a Miskitu Kingdom coalesced around and translated into a socially horizontal and spatial signifier for the Miskitu nation. Colonial and quintessentially political constructions of the Miskitu Kingdom, backed by transculturated symbols such as the canes positively reinforced commonplace notions of Miskituness, uniting both in a mutually supportive base-superstructure relationship that anchored Miskitu identity to the landscape.

The act joining commonplace notions of Miskitu landscapes with the appropriation of exogenous ideas is a long-standing Miskitu tradition. On the one hand, the Miskitu have constructed their identity around the transculturation, integration, and accommodation of Occidental categories and symbols for several hundred years. For elite Miskitu who have worked, and continue to work, closely with exogenous ideas, languages, and knowledge systems, they adapt their discourse to fit their circumstances, and in turn inform the processual development of Miskitu identity. On the other hand, elite Miskitu present their ethnic discourses in symbolic terms derived from commonplace Miskitu landscapes. In this way, the commonplace landscape supports and authenticates the symbols representing a Miskitu Kingdom and by extension the Miskitu people. In discussing the Miskitu identity politics, scholars have often overlooked implicit and commonplace notions

of Miskituness. This study suggests, however, that Miskitu identity politics have always filtered exogenous ideas through and derived strength from commonplace landscapes, just as the essential meaning of such landscapes has become resignified to contour Miskitu identity.

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